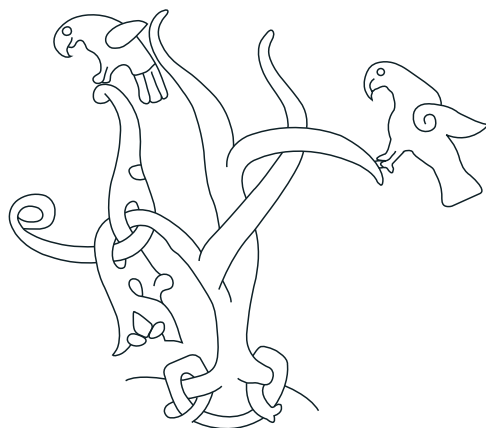


Preprint papers of
The 14th International Saga Conference
Uppsala, 9th–15th August 2009

Volume 2

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Saga and East Scandinavia



Preprint papers of

The 14th International Saga Conference
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Volume 2

Edited by

Agneta Ney, Henrik Williams and Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist
in cooperation with

Marco Bianchi, Maja Bäckvall, Lennart Elmevik, Anne-Sofie Gräslund, Heimir Pálsson,
Lasse Mårtensson, Olof Sundqvist, Daniel Sävborg and Per Vikstrand

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Mirrors of the Self – Deconstructing Bipolarity in the Late Icelandic Romances

Hendrik Lambertus, *Abteilung für Skandinavistik (Deutsches Seminar), Universität Tübingen, Germany*

In the late Icelandic romances, the hero travels the world in order to gain wealth, fame and an appropriate marriage partner. On his journeys through distant parts of the known *oikoumene*, he often reaches exotic, far away regions like Africa or India. Those regions are not only characterised by their geographic distance, but also by the fact, that the hero encounters here the *other* in many different representations: He fights against giants, berserks and flying dragons. He deals with helpful dwarves, interacts with members of far-away, magnificent courts and is confronted with monstrous races like headless *Blemmyae* and floppy-eared *Panoti* in the vast armies of foreign princes. In short, the distant corners of the world are a narrative space of diversity and uncertainty, where various forms of *otherness* lurk everywhere to cross the saga hero's path.

This rampant diversity has been regarded as mere escapism for the sake of entertainment by the older scholarship. In comparison to the 'classical' Icelandic family sagas, the late romances were rated as productions of cultural decay without any literary quality. Even M. Schlauch, who dedicates a first comprehensive monography to the study of Icelandic romances, feels compelled to state: "After a detailed study of these neglected stories one is forced to admit the truth of many of the severe judgments passed upon them in literary histories. Their merit as narrative art is slight." (Schlauch 1934:170)

Recent research has taken the late Icelandic romances more seriously.¹ One important aspect of this research is the analysis of the romances as examples for schematic literature, which is constituted by the repeated recombination of given narrative components and patterns. J. Glauser's study *Isländische Märchensagas* follows this approach (Glauser 1983). It tries to tame the diversity of motives by systematising the saga-plot, developing a structural analysis based on *Erzählschablonen* (narrative patterns), which refers to V. Propp's research on the morphology of *Zauber Märchen* (see *ibid.*:101–160).² Such a structural analysis helps to understand the general narrative exposition of Icelandic romances, but it also inevitably generalises its topic and ignores the special peculiarities of motives and patterns and their narrative functionalisation in the given context of their sagas. Particularly, the structuralistic approach tends to categorise the narrative world of romances according to bipolar oppositions. This tendency manifests itself in Glauser's characterisation of the romances' cardinal spatial constellation:

Die Anfangsphase jedes Märchensagageschehens und jedes Teilgeschehens beschreibt eine Ordnung, die durch die Oppositionen <innen-heimisch-höfisch-gut> – <außen-fremd-nicht-höfisch-bös> definiert ist und die die zentrale Kategorie <Raum> konkretisiert. Dieser Polarisierung, gleichzeitig wichtiger Bestandteil des Erzählkonzepts der Märchensaga, ist die Erzählstrategie untergeordnet. (Glauser 1983:196)

¹ An overview of the "critical response" to the late romances is given by Driscoll 2007:196–197.

² Driscoll emphasises that the term *schematic literature* does not imply inferior literature, but a special scheme of composition. "But if the *lygisögur* are entirely traditional in terms of structure, style and so on, this is not to say that they are 'all the same', essentially indistinguishable one from another [...]. [T]o those familiar with, or working within, these traditions, it is clear that the confines are not so narrow as to preclude diversity and innovation entirely; and there is also always the question of individual talent, and the undeniable fact that some combinations, for whatever reason, simply work better than others." (Driscoll 2007:198)

According to Glauser, the bipolar opposition is a basic feature of a romance's composition. This opposition draws a clear borderline between the saga hero and the representatives of *otherness* he encounters on his journeys.

In this paper, I will pick up this thesis of the romances' bipolar structure and expand it by questioning its generality. Is there really always an impassable gap between the hero and the world outside the court he belongs to, dividing the narrative world of romances into two oppositional poles – *inside* and *outside*, the *self* and the *other*, the *centre* and the *margin*? There is no denying that late Icelandic romances use bipolar oppositions as an important structural element. A classical example for this would be the hero meeting a monster, e.g. a giant, in the wilderness, blocking the path the hero follows to continue his quest. Negotiations are limited to fierce challenges, and the encounter ends with the giant being killed by the hero's superior fighting skills. In this example, the world is clearly divided between the hero as a representative of the court and the giant as the personification of wilderness and chaos, the outside world beyond social order. A direct confrontation in which one of those poles is eventually wiped out is the only possible outcome for such a dichotomic situation.³

But it would be too easy to reduce every encounter with the strange world outside in the late Icelandic romances to such an unambiguous, bipolar pattern. The *other* manifests itself in a great diversity of forms, and the hero's ways to interact with it are comparably diverse. This interaction cannot be reduced to fighting opponents from outside on the one hand and dealing with helpful representatives of the court on the other hand. The late Icelandic romances often use their narrative patterns in a very creative, even playful way in order to surprise the audience with new constellations emerging from well-known basics. The deconstruction of the assumed bipolarity between the courtly hero and his strange opponent from the wild world outside is one common way to create such interesting constellations. A central narrative device to reach this goal is the construction of situations where the hero and the *other* meet each other under symmetrical circumstances, one being a (sometimes distorting) mirror of the other.⁴

An example for such a mirror-constellation can be found in *Ectors saga*. Ector, the hero of the saga, is the son of king Karnotius of Tyrkland, whose lineage goes back to king Priamus of Troy. When the circumstances of Ector's birth are described in the saga, it is made clear that this Trojan ancestry is more than a topical sign for special royalty. Ector's mother, queen Gelfriðr, falls unconscious shortly before his birth and receives a vision of the original (H)Ector of Troy, son of Priamus, who speaks to her:

³ An example for such a clearly bipolar constellation is Áli's fight against the giant Kolr in *Ála flekks saga*: "En þá, er Áli fór um þann skóg, er heitir Myrkviðr – sá skógr er furðuliga mikill – þar finnr hann einn risa, þann er Kolr hét. Hann hafði stóra stöng í hendi. En er hann sér Ála, mælti hann: 'Far burt, maðr! ok aprt enn sama veg', segir hann, 'ef þú vilt halda þínu lífi!' Áli svarar: 'Eigi mun ek aprt hverfa at öllu óreyndu!' Ok er risinn heyrði orð hans, reiddiz hann mjök ok grípr sína stöng ok ætlaði at slá Ála; en hann skýtr sér undan, en stöngin hleypr niðr í völlin allt upp at höndum risanum. Hann lýtr þá eptir högginu; þat sér Áli, ok bregðr skjótt sínu sverði ok hæggr til risans um þvert bakit, ok tók risann í sundr, ok lætr hann svá sitt líf." (Lagerholm 1927:116) Quoted without numeration.

"And then, when Áli traveled through the forest, which is called Myrkviðr – this forest is amazingly wide – he encounters a giant there, who is called Kolr. He had a great pole in his hand. And when he sees Áli, he spoke: 'Go away, man! and back the way you have come', he says, 'if you will save your life!' Áli answers: 'I will not turn back without making an attempt!' And when the giant heard his words, he became very angry and grasps his pole and tried to strike Áli; but he [Áli] dodges, and the pole crashes into the earth up to the giant's hands. He stooped down after his strike then; Áli saw this and draws his sword quickly and strikes the giant across the back and splitted him into two, and he [the giant] loses his life this way."

⁴ A survey-like cultural history of the mirror as a metaphor is given by Konersmann 1991. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson calls attention to the instance that Icelandic romances often construct the encounter with the *other* in a clearly symmetrical way, when he comments on *Dínus saga drambláta*: „Aber trotz allem ist dieses reiche Phantasiespiel in ein festes Schema gebracht und eine strenge Symmetrie macht sich geltend.“ (Sveinsson 1929:53)

eg h(eiti) Ector, son Priami kongs af Troio. enn vit þat fyrir uist ath þinn unnðstri er af woru kyne og hefir einngi diðrfung til borit at kalla sinn sonn mijnu nafni. þuij gef eg þat nafn þeim suein(i) er nu gengr þu med. glediannði þig med þeirri spæsðgu ath hann mun ægiætaztur verða ath afli og yfirliti atgerui og ðllum kongligum soma. [...] ⁵ (Loth 1962:82)

Ector's Trojan name and his special aptitude for knighthood are legitimised directly by his famous ancestor. His Trojan descent forms a central part of his identity, making him the outstanding knightly hero he later proves to be. When young Ector grows up, his heritage manifests itself in his outward appearance, which resembles "Alexandur Parijs sonn Priami kongs" ⁶ (ibid.:83). This approach to characterise the saga's hero by his Trojan ancestry is additionally brought out by the fact that Ector's personal sword, the sign of his knighthood, is also an artifact from antique mythology, having once belonged to Hercules, while his shield is the legendary shield of Achilles (see ibid.:85–86). Ector's youth and education are described according to the classical topoi of the literary genre: He learns everything about the *artes liberales* and every language of the world within five years, is later dubbed knight by his father and provided with a most splendid equipment. After he has shown his outstanding mastery of the knightly arts in a tournament, he assembles a company of six young princes around him. They plan to go separately on a journey in order to gain fame and promise to tell each other about their adventures, when they meet again in one year's time. Even this quite topical plan is motivated by a link to Trojan antiquity, since the seven princes talk enthusiastically about heroes like Hector, Achilles and Hercules, before they come to their decision. In this context, Ector asks the question: "huar munu finnast vij riddarar slijkir ath afli og atgerui e(dur) audrum ijþrottum a austurlönnðum" ⁷ (ibid.:90), whereupon his companion Aprival guesses, that other knights like themselves might exist in the eastern world. From the beginning, their quest for fame is also a quest for finding an equal counterpart.

The adventures of the seven knights' errands are told one after the other while the saga continues, each of them forming a separate episode, in which the hero faces the marvels and dangers of the east in various forms, before he returns home victorious. The fate of Aprival, which is told as the last story of the six minor knights just before the adventures of Ector himself, is an exception to this narrative pattern: Aprival reaches the magnificent kingdom of Mesopotamia, competes against the local knights in a tournament and is eventually taken prisoner, when he is weakened by exhaustion. A Mesopotamian princess rescues and hides him, but he is not able to return to Tyrkland in time. When Ector and his companions realise that Aprival is missing, they set off for Mesopotamia with a grand army of several thousand knights. The battle between Ector's forces and the knights of Mesopotamia is described with great detail and forms the final climatic confrontation of the saga.

In this great battle, nearly equivalent opponents are fighting on both sides. Mesopotamia is characterised as a worthy counterpart of Tyrkland considering strength in warfare. But this is not the only aspect which sets both countries into a mirror-like constellation: King Troilis of Mesopotamia also is a descendant of king Priamus of Troy. His son, prince Eneas, is known as a most noble and powerful knight. He has assembled a company of six outstanding knights around himself. Eneas of Mesopotamia is characterised as an exact complement to Ector of Tyrkland in every respect: they both have alliterative names, going back to heroes of ancient Troy, and they both are excellent knights in the centre of an assembly of six minor compan-

⁵ "My name is Ector, son of king Priamus of Troy. And know that for sure that your beloved one is of our lineage and did not dare to give his son my name. Thus I give this name to that boy you are now bearing, delighting you with the prophecy that he will become most outstanding concerning strength and handsomeness and all kinds of royal fame."

⁶ "Alexander Paris, son of king Priamus"

⁷ "Where could seven knights comparable in strength, ability and other skills be found in the eastern lands?"

ions. The clue to this completely symmetrical constellation lies in their shared Trojan ancestry. Troy has been regarded as the origin of knighthood in the courtly literature of the Middle Ages, forming some kind of a historical home of nobility in the courtly self-expression, analogue to Jerusalem and the *terra sancta* as the spiritual home of Christendom. Ector and Eneas both owe their status as ideal knights to their Trojan origin. The saga tells that their families once fled from Troy and settled in different corners of the world, apparently each unaware of the existence of the other one. When Ector reaches Mesopotamia, he encounters his exact counterpart, because his remote relative Eneas stands in the same tradition of knightly virtues as Ector does himself. The courtly culture of knighthood, which is said to go back to Troy, proves to be a universal medium of understanding in *Ectors saga*. Ector sets out for foreign countries and eventually encounters himself. Therefore the conciliation and integration of both sides after the battle becomes possible, even including an alliance via dynastic marriage. Mesopotamia may be a far-away country of eastern marvels, but it shares an identical culture of courtly values with Tyrkland and hence forms a distant place of longing and a mirror of the self at the same time.

This constellation is accompanied by a change of perspective: at the beginning of the saga, the court of Ector's father is described from the inside, being the centre of the world for the knights of Tyrkland. The remote lands, which Ector and his knights plan to explore, lie outside of this sphere and form a marginal setting from this point of view. But amongst this alleged margins lies Mesopotamia, the centre of the world for Eneas at the court of his father. Every aspect of knighthood and courtly splendour, which legitimises Tyrkland's central position at the beginning of the saga, has a direct equivalent at the court of Mesopotamia. Ector and his companions leave the centre to explore the margins, but they find another centre, regarding it from an external perspective. So their monolithic, self-focused perception of the world as the peripheral surroundings of a central court is being questioned by the existence of another court which forms a comparable centre for itself. The binarity of *centre* and *margin* is deconstructed by this change of perspective and replaced by a splitted, multi-centred world which cannot be described with mere bipolar structures.⁸

In this context, Aprival's above mentioned answer to Ector's doubtful question gets a new meaning: Aprival assumes that there might be knights comparable to Ector's fellowship in the world. When he arrives in Mesopotamia, he visits a feast at the king's court in the disguise of a merchant and is firstly welcomed as a guest. But when a cup-bearer asks the widely travelled merchant, if he has ever seen a feast of comparable splendour, he answers analogously to his dialogue with Ector and states: "miog ertu ofrodr en unngi madur og ljítith ueiztu af prydi heimsins er þu ętlar eitt suo agiętt at eigi se annad þuilict"⁹ (ibid.:141). The question is brought before the king, where Aprival repeats his statement, praising the court of Tyrkland and the nobility of Ector. Eneas is very annoyed by the notion of a knight comparable to him in the world and pledges to meet Ector and his companions in combat, which leads to the above mentioned tournament in which Aprival is finally overcome. In both cases, Aprival acts as an uncomfortable respondent who confronts the proud young princes with the perspective that they might be not as unique as they believe. His statements incite both princes symmetrically to look for an equal counterpart, forming the symmetry axis which makes their mirror-like encounter possible. It is Aprival's relativistic doubt that makes their quest for fame eventually a quest for self-knowledge.

⁸ This constellation has some parallels to H. Bhabha's term of the "Janus-faced" boundary: "The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity [...]" (Bhabha 1990:4) The boundary between the *centre* and the *margin* is permeated in the saga, giving room for the double-perspective of seeing the *other* as a centre for itself and the *self* as a margin from the *other's* point of view.

⁹ "You are a very ignorant and young man and you know little about the world's splendour, if you regard one thing as so outstanding that no other comparable thing existed."

When Ector and Eneas meet in battle afterwards, they prove to be almost equally strong opponents: “og at lyctum fell Eneas af sarum og meði med godum ordztjir. war og Ector naliga yfirkominn af meði. war þat allra manna mal ath eckj hafi slijckt einnuigi verit <a austur londum> af .ij. riddurum.”¹⁰ (ibid.:181) Following the conventions of the genre, the protagonist Ector finally overcomes his opponent, but only after almost being defeated himself. Both young princes have to learn the lesson, that Aprival is right with his maxim that “dul og ranguirðing leika ath þeim monnum er suo treysta sijna ægięti ath þeir hyggia ónnguan ser fremra”¹¹ (ibid.:143). At this point, they are able to see the *self* in the mirror of the *other*. The war between Tyrkland and Mesopotamia comes to an end, when Eneas is taken captive by Ector and his sister, princess Trobil of Mesopotamia, enters negotiations with Ector. Eventually, all captured Mesopotamian knights are set free and the two families of Trojan origin are re-united by a marriage between Ector und Trobil. The *other* has been recognized as a mirror of the *self* and can finally be integrated, deconstructing the initial binarity. When Trobil enters the scene to meet Ector, the splendour of her cortege is described with the picture that “.ij. solir mundu æ himnum enn elldr loganndi mundi ur lopti koma”¹² (ibid.:182). The sun itself, symbol of unique, indivisible grandeur, is metaphorically doubled. This description implies the fluctuation away from the mono-centred worldview of the *self* in the beginning towards the possibility, that several equivalent centres might exist, each of them forming a point of view for another *self*, each of them being a mirror of self-knowledge. The exploration of the world eventually proves to be an exploration of the self.

This example from *Ectors saga* provides the rather plain constellation that two princes of the same origin face each other as representatives of *otherness* from each other’s point of view. But there are also situations in the Icelandic Romances, where mirror-constellations are used in a more complex way, establishing several different perspectives of looking into the mirror. In these cases, the reflection of the hero often has stranger forms, transforming the mirror of the self into a distorting mirror. An example of such a constellation can be found in *Victors saga ok Blávus*.

Victor, the young king of Frakkland, has wasted his fortune and travels the world in search for fame and wealth. When he is crossing the wilderness, he encounters a knight called Blávus, whose strange, exotic nature is depicted by the fact that he is travelling on a flying carpet. The two knights compete with each other in their knightly skills and finally have to admit that they are totally equal. They swear *fóstbræðralag* and continue their journey together on Blávus’ carpet, eventually reaching a most splendid kingdom, whose ruler proves to be Blávus.

At first glance, this constellation resembles the confrontation with Eneas of Mesopotamia in the *Ectors saga*: A young knight finds an equal counterpart from a far-away court. But while Ector and Eneas reflect each other symmetrically, one being the exact reflection of the other, Blávus differs from Victor in some essential issues: Not only that he is shown in a far more exotic fashion, riding on his magic carpet, he is also called “B(lauus) kyniadur wr Afrika”¹³ (ibid.:16) in the following course of action. This appellation indicates that his kingdom seems to be a region of Africa, the less well-defined of the three parts of the *oikumene*. Together with the proper name *Blávus*, reminding of the adjective *blár*, this provenience gives

¹⁰ “And in the end, Eneas went down due to his wounds and exhaustion gloriously. Ector was almost overcome due to exhaustion, too. All folk agreed that there had not been a single combat like this between two knights in the eastern lands before.”

¹¹ “Delusion and misjudgement play pranks on those men who trust in their gloriousness so much that they think nobody is better than themselves.”

¹² “Two suns would come in the sky and burning fire from the air.”

¹³ “Blávus, originating from Africa”

a strong indication for Blávus being a king of black Africa.¹⁴ So the loyal *fóstbróðir* and equal counterpart to the courtly saga hero seems to be a *blámaðr* from the strange, sun-burned regions of a widely unknown continent. *Blámenn* are usually depicted as fierce and hostile warriors in Icelandic romances, often mentioned in the same breath with berserks, vikings and monstrous races or directly identified with them.¹⁵ The knightly king Blávus does not fit into this topos at all. He shares the same courtly values with Victor and can be his equal on the level of knightly perfection, ignoring all exotic peculiarities that might separate them. Once again, the value system of the court proves to be an universal mean of understanding.¹⁶

Victor and Blávus set off for further adventures and seek out the famous sea kings Randver and Qnundr, two *fóstbræðr*, who are described as follows: “bader eru þeir væner menn at aliti. sterker ok storer ok grimazter allra herkonga ok reynder j framgongu. Randuer hefer fellt .xxx. berserkia j einuigum enn Aunundr .xx.”¹⁷ (ibid.:12) They are characterised as „huerri kempu uopnfimari ok huerium kappa hardari. huerium dreing diarfari. huerium risa sterkari”¹⁸ (ibid.:17). The two knights challenge them nevertheless to a *hólmganga*. Victor, the saga’s main protagonist, is going to fight Randver, the more dangerous of the two sea kings, while his companion Blávus competes against Qnundr. One more symmetrical constellation occurs in the plot: Two courtly knights on the one hand, two fierce sea kings on the other. And the apparent binarity of the encounter is deconstructed once again: The two sea kings are more than menacing opponents from the outside world who have to be destroyed as a threat to the order of things.

When the protagonists approach the sea kings in order to pronounce their challenge, the first impression of Randver and Qnundr is given as “storer ok sterkliger ok at aullu vel skapter [...] woru þeir brædur hin(er) bliduztu j mali”¹⁹ (ibid.:20). Victor and Blávus find handsome and friendly counterparts, who mirror their own idealised perfection. They have been told that the sea kings have been fighting against berserks and vikings and even cleaned the Baltic Sea from their presence. Randver and Qnundr are defenders of order themselves, being clearly divided from the usual opponents of the saga heroes and serving the king of Kaldea as *landvarðarmenn*.²⁰ Consequently, they hesitate to accept the challenge of the two young kings and

¹⁴ Also M. Schlauch notes that “the name of Blávus himself indicates blackness”. (Schlauch 1976:218) Sveinsson assumes that „[s]uch an interpretation, according to which the name would mean ‚the blue one’, may well be correct.” He also suggests an alternative symbolical interpretation, associating “blue=‘true-blue’, faithful, loyal”. (Sveinsson 1964:155)

¹⁵ *Kirjalax saga* gives an example of the ‚monstrous’ *blámaðr*-topos:

“Oss er flutt, at Solldan kongr hefir oflyianda her allra kynia ok þjoda, blamanna ok iotna, ok skringiligar skepnur med hræðiligum ásionum [...]” (Kálund 1917:28)

“It is reported to us that king Soldan has an army of all peoples and nations, which never takes flight, blacks and giants and terrible creatures with frightening appearance.”

Blámenn, giants and monsters (later specified as members of the topical monstrous races) are all listed on the same level in this description of an exotic army from Asia.

¹⁶ M. Schlauch regards it as “curious” that *blámenn* and vikings are hunted by Samarion, a sea king allied with Victor and Blávus, while Blávus seems to be a black king himself. See Schlauch 1976:218. But Blávus is separated from the ‘typical’ wild *blámenn* of Icelandic romances by his courtly background and behaviour, which make him an equal counterpart to an European king like Victor. The *blámaðr* is not defined in an absolute way by *Victors saga* but relatively to his attitude towards the court, showing once more that the world of Icelandic romances is characterized by diversity and ambiguity.

¹⁷ “They are both handsome men concerning their appearance. Strong and big and the most ferocious of all *herkonungar* and well-proven in battle. Randver has slain 30 berserks in single combat and Qnundr 20.”

¹⁸ “more skilled with weapons than any fighter and grimmer than any warrior. bolder than any man. stronger than any giant”

¹⁹ “big and strong and in every respect formidable [...] the brothers were most friendly in their speech”

²⁰ Randver and Qnundr are mainly characterised with the terms *kappar* (warrior) or *fóstbræðr* (sworn brothers) throughout the saga, but they are never called pejoratively *vikingar* (vikings) or *berserkir* (berserks). The term *viking* only occurs once in this context, when Blávus asks an experienced follower, “huar þeir siokongar sie edur

come forward with the counterproposal to join forces instead. But the ambitious knights reject the proposal and insist on a duel. Eventually, Randver and Qnundr are killed by Victor and Blávus in single combat.

An asymmetrical, distorted version of an encounter with an mirrored image of oneself is presented here: Two knights set off to fight for fame at the margins of the world and come across a pair of warriors who are at least equal to them concerning appearance, fighting skills and manners. While such a mirror constellation led to the integration of the *other* via recognizing oneself in it in the cases of Ector and Eneas or Victor and Blávus, this situation has a completely different outcome: the protagonists refuse to appreciate Randver and Qnundr as equal counterparts worthy of allying with them and fight them instead, ignoring their offer of integration. Driven by their hunger for fame, the young knights act as if the sea kings were hostile strangers, like giants or berserks, who have to be wiped out by the representatives of courtly order. They follow the pattern of a bipolar situation, although the behaviour of the sea kings makes clear that such a situation does not exist. The bipolar opposition of the hero from the *inside* fighting a threat from the *outside* is nothing more than the self-promotion of the heroes in this situation.²¹

The absurdity of the situation is brought out by the means the heroes use to defeat the sea kings: Randver and Qnundr are not killed by superior fighting skills but by deceit. Victor and Blávus convince a dwarf called Dímus to remove the invincible weapons he has crafted for the sea kings and replace them with replicas, while he equips Victor and Blávus with excellent swords he forged himself. During the fight, he is secretly assisting the heroes under the cover of invisibility. So the victory over the sea kings cannot even be seen as a proof of the heroes' superiority. Fighting the *other* is completely senseless and avoidable in this situation. "litil frægd hefer mier aukizt j þott at ek hafa Aunund at velli lagt. þuiat þat var meir af viel en karlmensku"²² (ibid.:26), is the quintessence that Blávus draws from this fight. Victor has to agree.

When the sea kings are defeated, they are buried with ostentatious grave goods according to their rank by their former opponents. Victor and Blávus even pledge to call their unborn sons after Randver and Qnundr. Not willing to associate with the sea kings in live, the protagonists carry out some kind of posthumous integration by treating their dead counterparts adequately and integrating their names into their own families, which usually is a sign of a close bond. The forced bipolarity of combat is overcome and the heroes reluctantly accept the sea kings as reflection of their own ideality – but not after the mirror has been broken by death.

In the course of their further travels, Victor and Blávus compete once more against a pair of outstanding warriors. Their next opponents are the berserks Falr and Sóti, rulers of Kypur, who are described with a multiplicity of strange and xenophobic attributes: "þeir eru blaer berserker ok suo miklar hamhleypur at þeir bregdazt j ymissa kuikinnda liki. eru ymiszt j iordu edur aa. spyja þeir eitri j bardogum ok eingi jarn bita þa."²³ (ibid.:27) Falr and Sóti ac-

uikingar edr hermenn at frægazter eru ok uti liggia j hofunum ok fleuoner væri mestar." (Loth 1962:12) "Where sea kings or vikings or warriors are, dwelling outside by the sea and being most wealthy." This appellation seems to reflect rather Blávus' expectations than the character of Randver and Qnundr, who do not show any threatening behaviour. Also Einar Ólafur Sveinsson states that "[t]he coast guards Randver and Qnundr receive a highly favourable treatment at the hands of the author". (Sveinsson 1964:192)

²¹ There is only one hint in the text that adds a strange and probably dark note to the two sea kings: The instance that the sea around their ships is black as coal. See Loth 1962:14. But the saga does not dwell on this aspect any further and it is not mentioned anymore during the course of action.

²² "I have won little fame, although I have slain Qnundr. Since this was achieved rather by deceit than by prowess."

²³ "They are black berserks and so great shape shifters, that they can turn into the shape of different creatures. They dwell both in the earth and above. They spit poison in battle and no iron harms them."

cumulate a formidable range of monstrous features from all kinds of typical saga opponents – the rage and invulnerability of the berserk combined with the alien appearance of the *blámaðr*, the poison of the dragon and the transformation abilities of the shape shifter. They are hybrid and monstrous in a peculiar exaggerated way, almost to the point of parody.²⁴

The symmetrical encounter-constellation is very clear and plain in this case: Two heroes representing the court fight two monsters representing the chaos of the world outside. Consequently, there is no elaborated interaction and no offer of alliance between the two pairs. They quickly start fighting each other, Victor confronting Falr and Blávus dealing with Sóti.²⁵ The outcome is equally plain: Victor and Blávus are victorious, the berserks lie dead on the ground. Before they are slain, Falr and Sóti each turn into the shape of a wild animal, leaving their human nature behind. This episode shows bipolarity at its best: The hero on the one hand, the monster on the other. A symmetry, which is only for as much mirror-like, as the opponents form the exact contrary of each other.²⁶

But is this episode really as plain and clearly bipolar as it may seem? This is questionable, if one keeps in mind that Victor and Blávus just left the fight against Randver and Qnundr behind them when they encounter the berserks. Both episodes must not be seen isolated from each other but linked by the arch of a carefully constructed story-line. They are obviously constructed in a parallel way, both times showing the heroes in battle against a pair of foreign warriors set symmetrically against them. But, as I have shown above, those fights cannot be regarded as equivalent at all. Randver and Qnundr are equal counterparts of the heroes worthy of integration and bearing names sounding familiar for an Icelandic audience, while Falr and Sóti are incarnations of monstrosity and strangeness to the extreme.²⁷ *Victors saga* deals with the narrative pattern of symmetrical battle-constellation in a witty and playful way. At first, the heroes set out for fame and come across opponents who are far more potential allies than enemies. Then they encounter the two berserks and find all kind of strangeness they might wish in an enemy, having the right to slay this break of order.

Falr and Sóti are reflections of Randver and Qnundr in a distorting mirror, bearing all signs of monstrosity the heroes might have missed when meeting the sea kings. The duplication of the two-against-two-combat puts the bipolar saga pattern of the hero slaying the monstrous representatives of the outside world in question. On the one hand, there are opponents which are not really enemies and who are slain by deceit in a futile, unprovoked duel. On the other hand, there are opponents assembling so many signs of monstrosity that they resemble personifications of the monster inventory of the Icelandic romances. The fight against Falr and Sóti forms an ironical addition to the fight against Randver and Qnundr. While the heroes

²⁴ This corresponds to M. Schlauchs statement that “the total effect” of *Victors saga* is “predominantly comic”, comparing the saga to French forms of literary parody. In this context, Schlauch mentions amongst other things “the humorous repetition of double combats” and “the pejorative [sic] treatment of Vikings, who are heroic figures in the classical sagas”, but she does not dwell on this any further. See Schlauch 1976:221.

²⁵ In this fight, the heroes use Dimus’ support, too, wearing garments made by the dwarf providing them protection from the berserks’ poison. They also carry their dwarf-made swords again. See Loth 1962:28–29.

²⁶ It should be mentioned that Falr and Sóti are also buried with rich treasures by their surviving opponents. But their gravesite is not described with comparable detail and the important aspect of passing on the names is not repeated here. See Loth 1962:31.

²⁷ While Randver and Qnundr are consequently characterized with neutral or even slightly positive terms like *kappar* and *fóstbræðr* (see above, footnote 20), the two rulers of Kypur are clearly called *berserkir* in the text, separating the two pairs of opponents not only by their behaviour but also by the terminology used. Also the names of the two pairs of opponents make a clear distinction between them, as the following remark by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson shows: “Sóti is a name frequently given to fierce vikings and berserks in younger sagas, while Falr occurs as the name of a sorcerer and a dwarf. The names of the second pair [i.e. Randver and Qnundr] are old names from the heroic legends [...]” (Sveinsson 1964:158) The berserks bear exotic names typical for hostile strangers in romance tradition, while the names of the sea kings are derived from Scandinavian heroic tradition, implying familiarity.

were fighting opponents in the latter case whose ‘monstrosity’ is more than questionable, they are virtually lavished with monstrosity in the previous case, leading the bipolarity of the narrative pattern ad absurdum.

Victors saga deals with encounters with the *other* in at least three different ways: In the first place, there is the meeting of Victor and Blávus, which ends with an integration due to shared courtly values. The possibility of integrating the *other* is made clear at this point. Then there is the confrontation with Randver and Qnundr, who behave politely toward the heroes and offer integration by allying, but are slain by the heroes following a bipolar structure which does not really exist in this case. Integration is shown as an alternative course of action and ignored, leading to an outcome which is rather dissatisfying for the heroes. The fight against Falr and Sóti eventually follows a bipolar pattern to the extreme, showing the two berserks as exaggerated and xenophobic distorting images of Randver and Qnundr and thus questioning the bipolarity of such encounters with the strange and monstrous in a quite subversive way.

While *Ectors saga* presents a clear, symmetrical mirror-constellation, confronting two young knights with their own reflection perceived in a representative of the *other*, *Victors saga* establishes a complex system of mirrors and distorting mirrors reflecting each other. Thus the narrated world of the saga is shown as a place of uncertainty, which cannot be explained adequately by mere bipolar structures like the *hero* and the *monster*, the *inside* and the *outside*, the *self* and the *other*. The plain narrative pattern of dichotomic encounters is skillfully broken in both sagas, creating thus a multipolar universe of diversity in which the recipient has to find his position in the same way the saga hero has to deal with different images of himself.

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Troll and Ethnicity in *Egils saga*

Paul S. Langeslag, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, Canada

One of the structural pillars of *Egils saga* consists in its juxtaposition of handsome, cheerful, and popular men with their ugly, moody, and antisocial counterparts. Alongside this contrast, however, runs the line's generic characterisation as tall, strong, and proud people, an identity that wins the family a mixture of praise and hatred, success and trouble. The interplay of these two aspects of the family, its division and its unity, merits a study of its own: it is where the two meet that the compiler's designs may be most clearly discerned. This paper examines the author's purpose in the dichotomy, proposing that it represents an attempt to explain differences within the family with reference to a mixed ethnicity, signalled by the association of the darker half with *troll*. This divided ancestry enabled the compiler to draw on a heroic past while salvaging a proto-Christian heritage for the *Mýramenn* of his own age. The similarities among the kinsmen, meanwhile, express an understanding of family as a distinct, recognisable social group, the deeds of all of whose members contribute to the common identity of the line.

Contrast

The saga's interest in the family's dichotomy of characters is brought into clear focus from the outset. The introduction of each of the central characters centres around physical appearance in conjunction with aspects of personality, and these combine to form two distinct groups within the family. Immediately after the description of Kveld-Úlfr in chapter one, which characterises him as a hard-working man rumoured to be *hamrammr*¹ on account of his daily rhythm, his two sons are described in contrasting terms:

Var Þórólfr manna vænstr ok gerviligastr; hann var líkr móðurfrændum sínum, gleðimaðr mikill, qrr ok ákafamaðr mikill í qllu ok inn mesti kappsmaðr; var hann vinsæll af qllum mǫnnum. Grímr var svartr maðr ok ljótr, líkr feðr sínum, bæði yfirlits ok at skaplyndi. (Ch. 1)

(Þórólfr was a most handsome and accomplished person. He took after his mother's relatives and was a very sociable person, active and very eager in all things, and most ambitious. He was popular with everyone. Grímr was black-haired and ugly, like his father, both in appearance and in character.)

Þórólfr is described as handsome, cheerful, and popular, whereas his brother Grímr is black-haired, ugly, and of unpleasant character. Significantly, Kveld-Úlfr is drawn into Skalla-Grímr's camp when the latter is said to be *líkr feðr sínum* in appearance and character.

The dichotomy persists into the next generation, which receives the saga's central focus. After Þórólfr and Grímr grow up, the former dies childless, so that the narrative automatically shifts to Skalla-Grímr's children, of whom only Þórólfr and Egill are discussed in any detail. The former, like his uncle, is called *vinsæll* and *gleðimaðr mikill*, the verbal repetition driving home the compiler's point that they converge not just in name, while his description as an *íþróttamaðr* is close in meaning to the adjective *gerviligr* as applied to his uncle. His brother Egill, by contrast, echoes the darker half of his ancestry both in looks and behaviour:

Enn er hann óx upp þá mátti þat brátt sjá á honum at hann mundi verða mjök ljótr ok líkr feðr sínum, svartr á hár. En þá er hann var þrevetr þá var hann mikill ok sterkr svá sem þeir sveinar

¹ On the saga's usage of this term, see below, under "Unity" and "*Troll*."

aðrir er váru sex vetra eða sjau; hann var brátt máluðgr ok orðvís; heldr var hann illr viðreignar er hann var í leikum með öðrum ungmennum. (Ch. 31)

(But when he grew up it soon became clear that he would be very ugly and take after his father, being black-haired. And when he was three years old he was as tall and strong as other boys aged six or seven. He soon grew to be talkative and witty. He was very hard to govern when playing with other youths.)

The continuity of characters throughout the generations is brought out not just in the verbal repetition of qualities, but also in the repeated, explicit recognition of shared characteristics: Egill is *líkr feðr sínum* just as his father was *líkr feðr sínum*, while Egill's brother Þórólfr is "líkasti Þórólfi Kveld-Úlfssyni er hann var eptir heitinn" ("most like Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson, after whom he had been named"; chs. 31, 1). Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson, in turn, is dissociated from his father's character by the observation that he is "líkr móðurfrændum sínum" (ch. 1).

It is important to recognise at this point that the characters' shared characteristics of strength, height, and accomplishments, rather than determining the individual's nature, become meaningful only in conjunction with personality. Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson's physical strength is given great emphasis in chapter 31. Since he is sociable and well-liked, it only adds to his overall value as a man of accomplishments. In Egill's case, by contrast, the same strength combines with his problematic character to render him ungovernable (ch. 31).² The family's social and military attitudes divide accordingly: the darker characters, for instance, are skeptical of royalty while the socially desirable characters serve the king of their own choosing;³ and the Þórólfrs achieve military fame while Egill carries out a series of ignominious enterprises.⁴

Unity

That there is more to Egill's family than differences is brought to the reader's attention when King Haraldr first receives Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson. In response to Þórir's mediation with the king on Þórólfr's behalf, it is said that "konungr svaraði heldr stutt, sagði at þeim hafði ótíli mikill staðit af Kveld-Úlfi ok sonum hans, ok lét þess ván at sjá Þórólfr mundi enn vera skaplíkr frændum sínum" ("the king responded rather curtly and said that great harm had been caused them by Kveld-Úlfr and his sons, and he expressed the expectation that this Þórólfr would yet turn out similar in character to his kinsmen," ch. 36). The king's reaction is, in fact, no cause for surprise: regardless of their initial attitude, all of the family's central characters end up at odds with the king, quite in line with Kveld-Úlfr's predictions (chs. 5, 6). While Kveld-Úlfr, Skalla-Grímr, and particularly Egill earn this enmity quite actively by their hostile attitude towards the royal house, Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson loses a favoured position following the slander exerted by others, though eventually substantiated retroactively by his own greed. Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson, having inherited Haraldr's hostility, nevertheless makes himself well-liked by Eiríkr and Gunnhildr; but his brother's rash actions⁵ and the queen's radical change of heart (chs. 37, 48, 49) soon cost him every last bit of royal favour (ch. 49). The

² See also ch. 40, esp. p. 53 ll. 19–21: "Egill var mjök at glímum; var hann kappsamr mjök ok reiðinn, en allir kunnu þat at kenna sonum sínum at þeir vægði fyrir Agli" ("Egill engaged in wrestling a great deal. He was very competitive and hot-tempered, and everyone knew to teach their sons to give way before Egill").

³ Skepticism is expressed in chs. 3, 5–6, 19, 25, 37; willingness to serve the king as well as good relations with the royal house are found in chs. 6 and 36–7.

⁴ An interest in military glory is suggested in chs. 1, 6 and 53; Egill's contrary notions of glory are illustrated in chs. 46, 59, and 73. That Kveld-Úlfr and Skalla-Grímr set little store by military glory is suggested in chs. 3, 5, 9, 25, and 26.

⁵ e.g. Egill's behaviour at Bárðr's feast (ch. 44) and his killing of Eyvindr *skreyja* (ch. 49).

members of the darker half of the line make no such attempt to win the king's respect: Kveld-Úlfr and Skalla-Grímr refuse to serve the king, the former with polite resolution but the latter, having lost his brother to the king, with veiled threat (chs. 3, 5, 25). Finally, Egill gives Eiríkr ample reason to dislike him, killing several of the king's men as well as his son (chs. 44, 49, 58, 59). Ultimately, however, these differences in attitude and behaviour fail to yield contrary outcomes, as all these characters fall into royal disfavour. Despite all the contrasts, then, Kveld-Úlfr and his descendants may indeed be characterised as a unified family in certain respects, not all of which are portrayed as favourable.

The shared characterisation of the *Kveld-Úlfsætt* may be understood to extend to a subtle association with the superhuman. This is first suggested by the particular frequency in the family of names with animal associations, such as Úlfr, Hallbera, Hallbjörn, Bjálfi, and Þórólfr. Furthermore, Kveld-Úlfr's uncle Hallbjörn has the cognomen *hálftröll* (ch. 1). The term *tröll* will be discussed in some detail in the section that follows, but it may be recognised at this point that the nickname is inspired on a supernatural category. Despite the general presence of names associating members of the family with the non-human, however, it is only the darker characters that engage in superhuman practices, notably *hamremi*. Kveld-Úlfr, the family's patriarch within the narrative present, is at first merely rumoured to be *hamrammr* (ch. 1), but these rumours are substantiated later in the saga when he is seen to engage in the practice (ch. 27). Throughout the work, however, the concept of *hamremi* is associated with the *berserks-gangr* rather than with other traditions understood by the term; that is to say, *hamrammir* characters in *Egils saga* are characterised by a strength with supernatural connotations coming over them at particular times, whether at night (ch. 40) or during battle (ch. 27, esp. p. 37 ll. 22–7). Kveld-Úlfr's son Skalla-Grímr is likewise *hamrammr* (see ch. 40 p. 54). In conclusion, then, supernatural connotations are in place on a superficial level throughout the family line, but they appear to be dormant in the lighter half of the family, being no more than hinted at in their animal names as well as their superlative size and strength. It is only the dark characters who make active use the superhuman property of *hamremi*.

Tröll

Regardless of the precise reference of the word *tröll* in *Egils saga*, the cognomen *hálftröll* bears considerable implications not just for its bearer Hallbjörn, but indeed for the entire line. For whether it is to be taken literally or simply awarded on account of Hallbjörn's unusual looks, *Egla's* emphasis on the inheritance of physical and character features suggests that whatever blood gave rise to Hallbjörn's unusual qualities would be equally present in his siblings. Either way, therefore, *tröll* blood pervades his family line, and likely that of Kveld-Úlfr as well,⁶ as he is Hallbjörn's sister-son (ch. 1). It may thus be posited that Egill's line is one of mixed ancestry, indeed mixed ethnicity, between *tröll* and its complement, responsible for the family's more socially desirable characteristics.

Like most supernatural categories in Old Norse literature, that of *troll* or *tröll* eludes sharp definition. In the most extensive studies of the concept to date, Martin Arnold and especially Ármann Jakobsson have demonstrated that the word was used to denote a wide variety of creatures, dispositions, and attributes. When they did attempt definitions based on unifying characteristics, they found that only the most general delineations would do. Thus *tröll* is “a generic portmanteau in the sagas [...] signifying all that is most threatening and offensive to social stability” (Arnold 2005:124); “öll sú viska sem ekki er jákvæð, rétt og frá guði, allt sem er ókunnugt og framandi og ómennskt” (“all lore that is not positive, just, and from God; all

⁶ Cf. the account of Hallbjörn and his son Ketill in *Ketils saga hængs* (in: *Fornaldar sögur norðrlanda* 1829–30), and also *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, in which King Dumbr's particular character is explicitly a consequence of his mixed *risi-tröll* ancestry (ch. 1).

that is unfamiliar and foreign and inhuman,” Jakobsson 2008a:111); “every strange thing that is evil and imbued with magic” (Jakobsson 2008b:63) The semantic range of these definitions is surely appropriate to the richness of the material. However, the recognition that *tröll* is polysemous should not detract from the understanding that it does represent relatively well-defined concepts, if more than one. Indeed, several of Jakobsson’s thirteen (2008b:44–52) or seventeen (2008a:105–10) characteristics of *tröll* may be combined to form a single definition, constituting what is arguably the word’s dominant sense across the sagas. This is the sense that I will discuss here, since it corresponds to the usage of *tröll* in *Egils saga*. Accordingly, I will leave aside earlier, later, and more peripheral senses.

Among the forty-six texts and redactions published as *Íslendinga sögur* by Bragi Halldórsson et al., the simplex noun *tröll* occurs fifty-eight times, while forming the first element in thirty-six more compounds.⁷ A few representative passages may be cited that contribute towards a definition. In *Finnboga saga*, a man’s foreign and/or hideous looks seem to earn him the description *tröll*: “Finnbogi sá hjá stólinum hvar stóð einn blámaður og þóttist hann eigi hafa séð leiðilegra mann [...] . Finnbogi segir: ‘Það ætla eg herra að fleiri kalli þetta tröll en mann’” (“Finnbogi saw a black man standing near the chair, and it seemed to him that he had never seen an uglier person [...]. Finnbogi said, ‘I believe, sir, that more people would call that a *tröll* than a man,’” ch. 16).⁸ Further evidence may be found in *Egils saga* itself, where a messenger describes Egill as being *mikill sem tröll* (ch. 61), indicating that large height was considered a trollish feature. Indeed, the phrase *tröll* at vexti is common throughout the sagas and has survived into present-day Icelandic (*Íslensk orðabók* s.v. *tröll*). A similar notion is conveyed in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* when the title character is described as “tröllum [...] líkari að afli og vexti en mennskum mönnum” (“more like *tröll* than like human beings in terms of strength and stature,” ch. 6). Here body height provides half the definition, and physical strength the other half. However, it is particularly when these features are used in battle that the categorisation *tröll* tends to come up (cf. Jakobsson 2008a:101; 2008b:48). In *Kjalnesinga saga*, Búi Andriðarson is called *mikið tröll* for single-handedly killing six men and wounding others (ch. 16). This account may be compared with a passage from *Grettis saga* in which Þórir seeks out Grettir with a large company but Grettir, his back being guarded by Hallmundr without either Grettir’s knowledge or Þórir’s, manages to fight them off, in which conflict Þórir loses eighteen men. The latter, unaware that Grettir has received help from Hallmundr, responds with the words, “[n]ú sé eg að hér er við tröll að eiga en ekki við menn” (“now I see that we are here dealing with *tröll* rather than with people,” ch. 57). It is not spelled out whether Þórir is impressed by Grettir’s supposed great strength in battle or by the mysterious disappearance of the men he has sent around the back to attack Grettir from behind. Either way, the contrast here expressed between *tröll* and human beings identifies the former category as superhuman if not supernatural (cf. Arnold 2005:125–6). In a similar vein, in *Heiðarvíga saga*, a man named Þorbjörn strikes at Barði Guðmundsson’s bare neck with a sword but the weapon bounces off him. Þorbjörn responds by concluding, “[t]röll, er þig bíta eigi járn” (“you *tröll*! Weapons cannot cut you,” ch. 30). Here, as in the episode from *Grettis saga*, the sense seems to be one of magic or superhuman protection in battle. Accordingly, there is overlap between the concepts of *tröll* and *hamremi*, as becomes clear in the phrase *að hamast sem tröll* in *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* (ch. 14; cf. Jakobsson 2008a:102–3, 106;

⁷ The count is based on data provided in *Íslendinga sögur* 1998. The number comes out slightly lower if occurrences in multiple redactions are discounted. Cf. the tally in Schulz 2004:39, which lists 72 instances of *tröll* and seven of *trollkona* in the *Íslendingasögur*, plus 96 counts of *tröll* and 21 of *trollkona* in the *fornaldarsögur*. Since Schulz does not provide references for these findings, it is not transparent what accounts for the differences between these figures.

⁸ References to *Finnboga saga*, and to all *Íslendingasögur* cited hereafter that have no separate bibliographical entry, are to *Íslendinga sögur* 1998.

2008b:49–8). On the evidence of these episodes, then, a *tröll* in the tradition of the *Íslendingasögur* is a creature of unusual (dark) or unfavourable appearance and/or remarkable height and strength, whose success in battle is further enhanced by superhuman means, and particularly by *hamremi* or immunity to weapons.⁹

This overlap between the terms *hamremi* and *tröll* may further elucidate the usage of both terms in Egils saga. *Hamremi* is used with various reference throughout the sagas. As was seen above, however, Egla closely associates it with the term *berserkr*. The latter word, in turn, is used on at least one occasion with the connotation “having skin impenetrable by weapons.” In the naval expedition that costs Bárðr his life, many of King Haraldr’s men sustain injury, but berserkr are exempt: “engi var ósárr á konungsskipuni fyrir framan siglu nema þeir er eigi bitu járn, en þat váru berserkir” (“none in front of the mast in the king’s ship were without wounds except those whom weapons could not cut, and they were *berserkir*,” ch. 9). The same condition clearly applies to Atli *inn skammi*, who is not called a *berserkr* but who is similarly supernaturally protected against weapons (ch. 67). Considering the close correspondence between *berserkr* and *hamremi* in this text (see esp. ch. 27 p. 37 ll. 22–4), the possibility presents itself that the author thought of *hamask* as involving, though not exclusively consisting in,¹⁰ a superhuman hardening of one’s skin. If *Egils saga* and some of the sagas referred to above may be thought of as using similar conceptual worlds, it is telling that *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* identifies *hamask* as a *tröll* characteristic, while *Heiðarvíga saga* speaks of impenetrable skin as a *tröll* feature. In other words, the *hamremi* engaged in by Kveld-Úlfr and Skalla-Grímr may have been thought of by a thirteenth-century audience as linking them up with the *tröll* element introduced into the family line, it may be presumed, by one of Hallbjörn’s parents.

With regard to the other *tröll* features found in the *Íslendingasögur*, it may be seen that they form a close match with the darker half – and, to a lesser degree, the lighter half – of Kveld-Úlfr’s line. Like all of the family’s central characters, *tröll* are tall and strong. Like the family’s darker characters, they are ugly in appearance and sport a superhuman advantage in battle, sometimes described as either *hamask* or having a skin that is resistant to weapons. In the passage from *Finnboga saga*, the man taken for a *tröll* is black, echoing the dark appearance of Kveld-Úlfr, Skalla-Grímr, and Egill. The characterisation of the line, then, but more particularly that of its darker half, is strikingly trollish, and it may well be that this is the notion the compiler wished to convey about the ancestors of the *Mýramenn*.

The future of the line

After Egill’s generation, the contrast between light and dark continues, though it is less pronounced at first. Whereas earlier members of the line were identified always with one side of the family at the expense of the other half, all of Egill’s children are “mannvæn ok vel viti borin” (“born handsome and with great intelligence,” ch. 68). Similarly, Þoðvarr is explicitly compared to both his father and his uncle when he is called “inn efniligsti maðr, fríðr sýnum, mikill ok sterkr, svá sem verit hafði Egill eða Þórólfr á hans aldri” (“a most promising man, of handsome appearance, tall and strong, as Egill or Þórólfr had been at his age,” ch. 80). This comparison, however, may concern physical strength only, an aspect that by itself does not determine disposition in *Egils saga*. This is illustrated in Egill’s only son to survive him, Þorsteinn, who is “mikill ok sterkr ok þó ekki eptir því sem faðir hans var” (“tall and strong and

⁹ It may be worth noting that in the modern mainland-Scandinavian languages, related terms such as *trolldom* are mostly used to mean “sorcery” with no sense of a superhuman creature (see, e.g., *Svensk ordbok* s.v. *trolldom*, *magi*, *trolla*, *trolleri*; cf. Motz 1987:229–30).

¹⁰ See e.g. chs. 27 and 40, in which Kveld-Úlfr’s and Skalla-Grímr’s *hamask* clearly involves a temporary increase in attacking strength.

yet not in the same way as his father,” ch. 81). The qualification indicates that while Þorsteinn partakes of the shared characteristics of height and strength, he represents the light side of the family and shows no unambiguous signs of *troll* ancestry, being “allra manna fríðastr sýnum, hvítr á hár ok bjartr álitum” (“the most handsome of all, fair-haired and of fair complexion,” ch. 81) as well as “trúfastr ok vel siðaðr” (“pious and well-mannered,” ch. 89).¹¹ It may be significant that Þorsteinn’s name is reminiscent of the names of his uncle and great-uncle, the Þórólfar, who represent the good-natured half of the family. Moreover, Egill’s one son to survive him and engender an offspring is Þorsteinn, who not only receives the greatest amount of, and the most unequivocal, praise of character and goes on to accept Christianity, but who is also his father’s least beloved child.¹² The mutual love between Egill and Bǫðvarr further suggests that the latter belongs to the darker half of the family (ch. 80 p. 144 l. 32). The only thing to suggest a disruption of the pattern of contrasts, then, is the explicit lack of characters of ugly appearance and the absence of socially undesirable character traits. These, however, would then be expected in Bǫðvarr, whose minimal role in the prose account may help explain the absence of such contrasts as are found in earlier generations.

Unlike in previous generations, it is now the most socially acceptable of the brothers, namely Þorsteinn, who is responsible for the continuation of the family line (ch. 89). This could be taken to imply that the socially desirable character is ultimately victorious. However, the physical outcome of the genetic battle suggests otherwise:

Frá Þorsteini er mikil ætt komin ok margt stórmenni ok skáld mǫrg, ok er þat kallat Mýramannakyn ok svá allt þat er komit er frá Skalla-Grími. Lengi helzk þat í ætt þeiri at menn váru sterkir ok vígamenn miklir, en sumir spakir at viti. Þat var sundrleitt, því at í ætt þeiri hafa fœzk þeir menn er fríðastir hafa verit á Íslandi [...]; en fleiri váru Mýramenn manna ljótastir. (Ch. 89)

(A large family has sprung from Þorsteinn, many great men and poets. It is called the house of the *Mýramenn*, as is all that is descended from Skalla-Grímr. For a long time it remained true in that family that they were strong and great warriors, and some were wise. It varied, because the most handsome people in Iceland have been born into that family [...]; but more of the *Mýramenn* were the ugliest people.)

The outward appearance of the *Mýramenn* is mostly a continuation of the darker half of the family, namely very ugly, with occasional divergences towards the other extreme (so also *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* ch. 1). Nothing is said regarding the social dispositions of the *Mýramenn*, although it was widespread medieval tradition to let physical appearances speak for themselves (see, e.g., Ziolkowski 1984, esp. pp. 8–10; cf. Williams 1982:32). Thus the ancestral division that seemed to have been ironed out after Egill’s generation is back, suggesting that the dichotomy in the line remains unresolved.

Purpose

The compiler’s aim in juxtaposing the two types of character throughout the line is a complex issue, and may ultimately have to be explained with reference to thirteenth-century sociopoli-

¹¹ A similar characterisation and contrast between Egill and Þorsteinn may be found in the opening chapter of *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, which is so close to the *Egla* account as to warrant its use as a model, probably in written form. It is only when the author of *Gunnlaugs saga* begins to develop his own plot that Þorsteinn receives any criticism (e.g. ch. 3).

¹² “Egill unni honum [Þorsteini] litit” (“Egill had little love for him [Þorsteinn],” ch. 81 p. 166 l. 14); “Þorgerðr var elzt barna Egils; Bera þar næst” (“Þorgerðr was Egill’s favourite child, and Bera his next-favourite,” ch. 68 p. 124 l. 26); “Egill unni honum [Bǫðvari] mikit” (“Egill loved him [Bǫðvarr] a great deal,” ch. 80 p. 144 l. 32).

tical circumstances. The scope of the present study, however, precludes the application of such external evidence.

When the juxtaposition itself is considered, the hypothesis may be posited that the author wished to have two groups within the ancestry, which may well have been his own, so as to be able to partake of two traditions. The Þórólfr as well as Þorsteinn Egilsson are admissible as proto-Christians, since their behaviour is honourable almost without exception.¹³ The darker characters, meanwhile, provided the *Mýramenn* with a superhuman *Hrafnistumenn* ancestry and thus with an occasion for the telling of adventurous tales. The glorification of viking exploits could be redeemed with reference to a complementary, virtuous ancestry. This hypothesis does not, of course, explain why the dichotomy remained after Þorsteinn's generation, unless the compiler had a division within the *Mýramenn* of his own day to explain. In view of the political tensions between and within families surrounding the time of composition of *Egils saga*, this reading is certainly possible.¹⁴

The consistent portrayal of the family as tall and proud, meanwhile, may express a belief that any intermarriage creates a distinct, identifiable family. Egill's stature made it easy for the saga's other characters to recognise not just his individual identity,¹⁵ but also his ancestry. In addition, specific family traits may have served to explain or inspire current affairs at the time of writing. It may be asked, for instance, whether the failure of Egill and his family to please the Norwegian royal house should be read as an explanation or even a justification for the *Mýramenn* to resist royal attempts to gain a foothold in Iceland.

Conclusion

It has been proposed in the above that the division of characters throughout *Egils saga* has an explanation in the author's deliberate creation of a mixed ethnicity for the central family. The looks and personalities of the family's darker characters, combined with their superhuman abilities, match with great precision the dominant sense of *tröll* as it may be distilled from the tradition of the *Íslendingasögur*. Viewed in this light, the high incidence of animal names in the family, and particularly the presence of the nickname *hálftröll* in an early generation, may be read as a clue to the mixed ancestry and its nature. The compiler's purpose with this division may ultimately have to be sought in thirteenth-century sociopolitical conditions. On text-internal evidence, however, the device may have served to enrich the history of the *Mýramenn* with legendary elements while retaining a claim to a righteous, potentially proto-Christian ancestry.

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¹³ One exception consists in Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson's theft from the king (chs. 17–19). Representatives of both types within the family, namely Egill and Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson, are prime-signed in England (see Tulinius 2004:58).

¹⁴ A discussion of tensions among the *Sturlungar*, for instance, may be found in Nordal 1998 ch. 2, esp. pp. 67–99. Some further political tensions are outlined in Sveinsson 1953:8–18.

¹⁵ He is *auðkenndr* (ch. 61, p. 102) and stands out by his size (ch. 44). His father Skalla-Grímr is similarly characterised by his height (ch. 25).

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Stjúpmæðrasögur and Sigurðr's Daughters

Carolyn Larrington, St John's College, Oxford, England

Stjúpmæðrasögur (stories of stepmothers) are mentioned twice in Old Norse narrative tradition, apparently referring to fornaldarsaga-type tales of young men forced by their wicked (sometimes lustful) stepmothers into dangerous adventure. Such stories are not well-regarded by clerical authors. Oddr munkr notes that the history of Óláfr Tryggvason is more beneficial for its audience: 'ok betra er slikt með gamni at heyra en stívmeðra saugvr er hiarðar sveinar segia er enge veit hvart satt er (It is better to be entertained by hearing such things, than stepmother-stories, which shepherd-boys relate, but no one knows whether or not they are true) (Jónsson 1932:2). Abbot Brandr Jónsson recognises the appearance of romance-type topoi in the story of king Sverrir of Norway: 'þuilikt sem segir j fornun sögum, er sagt er, at kongabörn yrði fyrir stíupmodr alöghum, (It was most like that which is said to have happened in old stories, where kings' children suffer from stepmothers' curses) (Kjaer 1926–86:8). Oddr munkr is disparaging of the kinds of fornaldarsaga stories which feature such salacious and scheming figures as lustful queen Lúða of Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis, the wicked Hvít in Hrólf's saga kraka and the unnamed stepmother of Svipdagsmál who sends her stepson on the impossible quest to win Menglöd (Guðmundsdóttir 1995; O'Connor 2000; 2009). Stepmothers, wicked or lustful or both, occur in numerous riddarasögur and folktales (O'Connor 2000:26; Guðmundsdóttir 2001:clxvii–clxxxi; Sveinsson 2003:243–7). We might also add, following Joanna Frueh, the figure of the amorous stepmother whose erotic attraction to and for her stepson is reciprocated (Frueh 2001:215–43). The stepmother's problematic role is frequently accounted for by folk- and fairy-tale scholars by following Bettelheim's suggestion that the stepmother represents the unacceptable face of the mother, in a kind of Freudian splitting (Bettelheim 1991:66–73; Warner 1995:201–17). The wicked stepmother in fairy-tale usually persecutes the heroine, or, as Tatar notes, prevents the daughter's access to the father's affections in the Oedipal conflict (Bettelheim 1991:113–15; Tatar 1994:142–54). The lustful stepmother functions as a misogynist warning, speaking to a horror of what Frueh calls 'midlife women's' sexuality. Also relevant are medieval aristocratic family patterns and contemporary anxieties about male sexual honour. Where women start their reproductive life in their teens, continue reproducing over twenty or so years and often die before menopause, a second wife is frequently little older than her predecessor's eldest son. Sexual competition within the household, anxieties about legitimacy, displacement, and the honour and sexual prowess of the older man are at stake. Dealing only partially with the amorous stepmother, Peggy McCracken emphasises the social tensions engendered within the aristocratic family by its marriage and inheritance practices (McCracken 1998). Pauline Stafford has documented the problems successive marriages generated for sons and stepsons in Anglo-Saxon Wessex (Stafford 1990). Viewed from a patriarchal perspective, the stepmother represents a profound political and psychological threat which must be carefully negotiated by all involved.

In this paper I intend to examine the stories of two very different stepmothers. Neither conforms to the two principal stepmother-types outlined above and they are in fact half-sisters, Svanhildr and Áslaug, the daughters of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani by Brynhildr Buðladóttir and Guðrún Gjúkadóttir respectively. Svanhildr originally had nothing to do with the Gjúkung or Völsung dynasties; her fate, to be killed by the Emperor Ermanaric, torn to death by wild horses is recounted by Jordanes in his epitome of Cassiodorus' *Gothic History* in 550 (see Dronke 1969:192–6 for the historic kernel of the story). Áslaug's tale is most fully presented in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, which in turn influences Þátr af Ragnarssonum, preserved in Hauksbók. Both *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* are preserved in NKS 1824b; the paired

stories of Sigurðr's two stepmother-daughters provide markedly different perspectives on the role.

Svanhildr's tragic fate is recounted in the latter part of the *Poetic Edda*, in the prose introduction to *Guðrúnarhvöt* (Ghv), the poem itself and *Hamðismál* (Hm). It is reprinted in brisk summary in *Skáldskaparmál*, at somewhat more length in *Völsunga saga* as well as in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* Book 8. Svanhildr is the bride of Jǫrmunrekkr, king of the Goths, but she becomes compromised in a relationship with his son, Randvér, and both she and he are executed by Jǫrmunrekkr. In Ghv and Hm Svanhildr is trampled – not dismembered – by tame horses while Randvér is hanged. The poems do not explain why Svanhildr and Randvér have been killed; brief information is given in the Prologue to Ghv (Dronke 1969:145). In *Snorra Edda* and in *Völsunga saga*, ch. 40, the relationship is instigated at the suggestion of Bikki, Jǫrmunrekkr's counsellor (ráðgjafi). He suggests to Randvér who has gone to fetch Svanhildr, that she is more suitable to be his bride than his father's. In neither text is it clear that Randvér and Svanhildr do any more than talk to each other on the journey home, but mutual attraction, if not consummation, is strongly implied. Randvér fetches Svanhildr by sea in *Völsunga saga*, recalling, as Schach suggests, Tristan's journey to fetch Isolde as bride for his uncle; Bikki's insinuation plays the role of the magic potion in catalysing the young couple's feelings for one another as they sit together 'á lyptingu' (on the stern deck) (Finch 1965:75; Schach 1969:122–24). No sea-voyage is present in the eddic accounts, while Brother Robert's translation of Tristan had been known in the north since the 1220s and was probably already current in Iceland when *Völsunga saga* was composed (Schach 1969:122–4).

In *Völsunga saga*, Jǫrmunrekkr has Randvér executed at Bikki's instigation; too late he sends to his father his hawk, symbolically plucked to indicate that his father is acting dishonourably in killing him. Jǫrmunrekkr tries in vain to prevent the hanging and then readily accedes to Bikki's suggestion that Svanhildr deserves to die a shameful death. Her beauty and the natural reluctance of horses to trample humans delay the killing until Bikki suggests the technique familiar from the treatment of witches in the *Íslendingasögur* and puts a bag over her head. Snorri tells the story very briefly, but he adds one interesting variation. Svanhildr does not die in a quasi-judicial execution as in *Völsunga saga* (and probably in Ghv and Hm), but rather seems to be killed on a whim. She is outdoors washing her hair, in a scene recalling the quarrel of her mother and Brynhildr at the river, when Jǫrmunrekkr rides home from hunting:

Þá lét Jǫrmunrekkr konungr, er hann reið ór skógi frá veiðum með hirð sína, en Svanhildr drottning sat at haddblikki, þá riðu þeir á hana ok tráðu hana undir hesta fótum til bana.

(Then king Jǫrmunrekkr had, when he rode out of the forest from hunting with his retinue, and queen Svanhildr sat washing her hair, then [he had them?] ride at her and trample her to death under the horses' feet) (Faulkes 1998:49).

Snorri did not find this combination of hairwashing and trampling in eddic sources, but seems to have elaborated it from the earlier scene in the *Völsung* narrative. Perhaps he takes his cue from Guðrún's evocation of her daughter's beautiful hair: 'inn hvíta hadd Svanhildar / auri tröddo' (the blonde hair of Svanhildr they trod into the mud) (Ghv 16). In none of the accounts is Svanhildr's point of view addressed; the erotic is startlingly absent in her relationship with Randvér. In the *Poetic Edda* her story is focalised through her mother, Guðrún: here the erotic appears in the tender maternal appreciation of the daughter's beauty and radiance. Svanhildr was a glorious ray of sunshine (sœmleitr sólar geisli) (Ghv 15), her mother proudly adorned her for her death-journey 'Gædda ek gulli / ok guðvefiom' (I adorned her with gold

and gorgeous robes). Through Guðrún's retrospective celebration of her most-loved daughter, the audience sees what Randvér saw in Svanhildr (if not her own reciprocal desiring gaze). Patriarchal insecurity, the power of the lustful stepmother figure, and the fundamental projection of masculine honour onto the chaste body of the bride powerfully combine in Svanhildr's fate.

In Ghv and Hm Guðrún dispatches her remaining sons, borne to her third husband Ionákr, to avenge their sister. Hamðir and Sqrli regard her mission as futile noting that she will drink the funeral ale for all three of her children: 'at þú erfi at qll oss drykkir / at Svanhildi ok sono þína' (Ghv 8). But Guðrún prefers revenge for Sigurðr's daughter to survival for her sons and ultimately for her lineage (Jochens 1996:147; Clark 2005:179). Whether she privileges her marriage to Sigurðr and its offspring over the marriage to Ionákr and her last set of sons is perhaps beside the point; revenge for a woman's death is rare in Norse literature and it is hard to gauge exactly which emotions might motivate Guðrún's revenge.

What of Svanhildr as stepmother though? Her appearance in the role is brief, but the *Völunga saga*-account suggests that Bikki may indeed be right; the age difference makes Svanhildr an unsuitable wife for Jormunrekkr. European fabliau consistently calls attention to the difficulties inherent in such a marriage, but more pertinent, I suggest, is the danger of adulterous queenship, as embodied in Tristrams saga. As McCracken notes, the queen's adultery poses the risk that any child she bears is not her husband's, but more pertinent is the damage to the king's honour, when his personal honour, his sovereignty, and his authority as father, are all guaranteed by his exclusive access to his queen's body. From Randvér's perspective, and looking beyond the purely affective, Bikki's suggestion that he, not his father, should be marrying Svanhildr, reminds the younger man that, in the absence of primogeniture, Jormunrekkr may father a new set of sons to the detriment of his own interests in eventual succession to the realm of the Goths. Randvér needs, for good political reasons, to circumvent the marriage if he can.

Thus the brief narrative of Svanhildr and Randvér diverges from the expected AT 567 'lustful stepmother' motif, evolving into Frueh's 'amorous stepmother' and unsettling the archetype of lustful stepmother and outraged stepson, more prevalent elsewhere in Europe and in later Icelandic stories (see also O'Connor 2009). Instead Svanhildr and Randvér tap into what may have been a widespread insecurity for the man who marries for a second time, the possibility that his new young wife and his adult stepson may be attracted to each other; they speak also to the anxieties of sons, fearing displacement from paternal affection and inheritance rights. Profound questions of honour, of trust and of dynastic continuity are at stake here: his trophy wife turns out to be disastrous for Jormunrekkr while his murder of wife and son precipitates Hamðir and Sqrli's attack. Although the Gothic king professes nonchalance when their arrival is announced, he cannot prevent their maiming of him. Just as Sqrli points out to his mother that, had she not killed her sons by Atli, they would be a more numerous kin-group uniting to avenge their sister, so Jormunrekkr's killing of his own son leaves him vulnerable. His line, like Guðrún's, ends in the Goths' hall; the pattern of kinslaying comes to an end only when all the younger generation are dead.

In contrast to Sunilda / Svanhildr, Áslaug is markedly successful as a stepmother; her story unsettles the wicked stepmother archetype in a different direction, for as Watson notes for the classical world, 'the bona noverca (good stepmother) is almost unknown in fiction' (Watson 1995:149; Sveinsson 2003:247). Áslaug's history is a complex one; as Rory McTurk has shown she is always Sigurðr's daughter from the moment she first appears in Norse narrative, and it is also clear that her exemplary behaviour as stepmother was recorded in the X-version of the saga, fragmentarily preserved in AM 147 4to, the Y-version in NKS 1864b and in the later Þáttir af Ragnarssonum found in Hauksbók (McTurk 1991). All three versions tell how Áslaug is married to Ragnarr loðbrók, but is recognised by him as the daughter of Sigurðr and

Brynhildr only after she has given birth to Sigurðr orm-í-auga. The serpent sign in the baby's eye convinces Ragnarr that his wife is indeed the daughter of the other dragon-slayer of the north. Áslaug is Ragnarr's second wife; he has two sons by Þóra borgarhjört, the daughter of the jarl of Gautland; he had killed the dragon guarding her chamber to win her. According to *Ragnars saga*, Ragnarr was distraught at his first wife's death and abandoned rule for a life of raiding once more. After the birth of Sigurðr orm-í-auga the two eldest sons, Eiríkr and Agnarr go raiding in Sweden; according to the saga this is because relations between the king of Sweden and Ragnarr have broken down since Ragnarr failed to appear to marry Eysteinn's daughter as he had previously agreed, having discovered his wife's true identity. In the þáttr, no marital alliance between Ragnarr and the king's daughter is mooted; rather the sons wish to compete with their father as overlord of Sweden, and demand that king Eysteinn should hold his lands from them rather than from Ragnarr; Eiríkr, the elder, offers to marry Eysteinn's daughter, Borghildr. In both texts the outcome is the same, the two young men are overcome by the Swedish army; Agnarr is killed and Eiríkr seized. Eiríkr refuses to come to terms with Eysteinn and chooses to die gloriously, impaled by spears on top of a heap of slain men. A series of verses (lv. 11–22 in *Ragnars saga*) memorialises the death of Eiríkr, the bringing of the news of their deaths to Zealand, Áslaug's response and the determination of her sons to avenge their stepbrothers. The verses evidently form part of a core narreme about Áslaug and her sons. Áslaug's admonition to her sons and their replies (vv. 18–22) is preserved in its entirety in the Hauksbók þáttr, and all but v. 21 are also present in AM 147. 1864b gives 4 verses recited by Eiríkr before his death (vv. 11–14), not now readable in AM 147. Áslaug's address to the messenger bringing the news from Sweden and his response (vv. 15–16) are also transmitted in the other versions of the story; v. 17, in which Áslaug comments on the earlier death of her son Rögnvaldr, appears in neither of the other versions (v. 15 in AM 147, v. 16 in Hauksbók respectively).

Vv. 11 and 13 of Eiríkr's death-song appear in both saga and þáttr. They focus on the relationship between Eiríkr, his dead mother who cannot mourn him, and his stepmother, who, he is sure, will both grieve for his loss and demand a response from her sons:

Vilkat boð fyr bróður
né baugum mey kaupa
(Eystein kveða orðinn
Agnars bana) heyra;
grætr eigi mik móðir,
munk øfstr of val deyja,
ok geitré í gognum,
görr, látið mik standa.

I do not want to hear of compensation for my brother
nor buy the girl with rings
(they say Eysteinn
has become Agnarr's killer);
my mother will not weep for me,
ready, I will die uppermost of the slain
let spear-shafts
pierce through me. (v. 11).¹

Þau berið orð et øfra,
nú ro austrfarar liðnar,
at mærl hafi mína
mjó, Áslaugu, bauga;
þá mun mest af móði,
er mik spyrja dauðan,
mín stjúpmodir mildum
mögum sínum til segja.

They take the latest word,
now the eastern men journey
to Áslaug, that the slender woman
may have my rings;
that will be deepest sorrow
when she hears I am dead
my stepmother
will tell her gracious sons. (v. 13).

¹ All *Ragnars saga* verses are cited from the skaldic project website;
<http://www.skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au/db.php?table=texts&id=81>. My translations.

In the saga, Áslaug receives the messengers formally, enthroned in her *háseti* (high-seat), but also in the act of combing her unbound hair over a linen-cloth spread over her lap. This detail recalls her past, her wit in going to meet Ragnarr neither naked nor clothed, her modesty shrouded by her hair and a fishing-net. Unbound hair is also a sign of mourning: Áslaug seems already to anticipate the messengers' news. The whole scene combines symbols of authority with a strong emphasis on an intimate femininity. When she hears of the young men's deaths and receives Eiríkr's ring, Áslaug is profoundly moved, 'hún felldi tár, enn þat var, sem blod veri aliz, enn hart sem haglkornn' (she let fall a tear, and that was the colour of blood and as hard as a hailstone) (Olsen 1906–08:142). No one had ever seen her weep before, nor would she weep again. Áslaug vows to avenge Agnarr and Eiríkr 'iafnnt sem þeir vere minir synir' (just as if they were my sons, p. 142). When her own adult sons return home, Áslaug enters the hall to tell them the news. Brushing aside the information that her son Rögnvaldr died on their last raid, she informs them of 'fall þeirra Eiríks ok Agnars, bredra ydara, enn stiupsona minna' (the fall of Eiríkr and Agnarr, your brothers, and my stepsons) (Olsen 1906–08:142) and offers her support for an expedition of vengeance. When Ívarr, speaking on behalf of all the adult brothers, demurs on the grounds of the Swedes' mastery of magic, Áslaug delivers this verse:

Eigi myndi yðvar	You brothers would not
óhefnt vera bræðra	be unavenged
eitt misseri eptir,	half a year later
ef ér dæið fyrri;	if you had died first;
lítt hirðik því leyna,	I do not much care to conceal that
ef líf hafa knætti	if they had their lives
Eiríkr sitt ok Agnarr,	Eiríkr and Agnarr,
óbornir mér niðjar.	the offspring, not born to me. (v. 18).

Preserved in all three mss., this important verse apparently echoes Eiríkr's play on the mother who would not weep for him (being dead herself) and the stepmother who will experience *mest af móði* (the greatest of sorrow) for him, evidenced by Áslaug's powerful reaction to the news of the deaths. Her challenge to her sons' understanding of what brotherliness means is not at first effective. Ívarr responds contemptuously, recognising the onset of a maternal *hvöt*-sequence: 'Eigi er vist [...] hvart þat stodar nackvat, þottu kvedir aðra visu at annaRi' (It's not clear how that helps at all, even if you recite one verse after another) (Olsen 1906–08:143), and he once more expresses his fear of Swedish magic, especially of Sibilja, the king's magic cow. Áslaug is about to abandon her attempt to rally the brothers when the three-year old Sigurðr orm-i-auga speaks up. He is the last of her sons, and temperamentally the one most like her, for he bears the sign of his maternal grandfather, Sigurðr fáfnisbani in his eye. His verse sympathetically notes his mother's unhappiness and vows to get an expedition ready within three nights (a more practicable three weeks in the þáttr).

Þat, skal þriggja náttu,	In the course of three nights,
ef þik tregar móðir,	if that is what grieves you, mother,
leið eigum vér langa,	we have a long way ahead of us,
leiðangr búinn verða	a war-troop will be got ready (v. 19/1–4).

Sigurðr's support for Áslaug's plan wins him her lavish praise; this in turn triggers the brothers' agreement. Each speaks a verse; Björn jealously notes his mother's apparent favouritism towards her youngest child, the one with the snake in his eye:

eigi er oss í augum	we don't have in our eyes
ormr né fráñir snákar,	a worm nor shining snakes,
bræðr glöddu mik mínir,	but my brothers made me glad,
mank stjúpsonu þína.	I remember your stepsons. (v. 20/5–8).

Hvítserkr's more cautious verse (v. 21), advises deliberation before they set out, but still urging that ships be got ready follows. Ívarr capitulates in the final verse of the sequence (v. 22), noting that he will have to be carried and punning 'þó gatk hǫnd til hefnda, / at hváriga nýtak' (yet I can have a hand in the vengeance / though I cannot use either of mine) (v. 22/7–8).

Within the Ragnars saga narrative, Áslaug rises to the challenge set by Eiríkr in his dying strophes. Can a stepmother truly replace a mother? Are her stepsons as important to her as her own children? Áslaug's emotion, manifested in a single bloody tear, shows that she values her predecessor's children at least as much as her own; she sheds no tears for Rögnvaldr, simply noting that he died heroically. Though Ívarr, the brains of the brotherly band, regards a raid on Sweden as ill-advised, his mother's warlike temperament manifests itself in little Sigurðr and Áslaug makes strategic use of the mechanisms of sibling rivalry. Caressingly repeating the affectionate address 'son minn', she praise him, 'Yfir lysir þu nu, son minn, at þu villt giora minn vilia [...] ok vel þicki mer þer fara, son minn' (you make clear now, my son, that you want to do my will [...] and it seems to me you are behaving well, my son), (Olsen 1906–08:144–5). Sigurðr registers his mother's sorrow 'ef þik tregar móðir' (if [that] grieves you, mother) and gains maternal praise; both are instrumental in changing the older sons' minds. Ships are swiftly readied, and although Ívarr still seems to be sulking with his mother 'Þat er vist [...] at þu kemr eigi a var skip' (That's for certain [...] that you aren't coming on our ships), (Olsen 1906–08:147), he is happy for his mother to lead the land-troops. Randalín (as she is now called) successfully guides her contingent to a rendezvous with the naval force.

The stepmother's revenge is one of only three significant episodes which the author of Þátr af Ragnar sonum decided to recount. The brief narrative in Hauksbók tells of the dragon-slaying, the stepsons' sequence, the death of Ragnarr and his sons' vengeance, then attends to the sons' prominence in the genealogies of the kings of Denmark and Norway. The þátr-author only reproduces the verse sequence examined in this paper from the 41 verses available to him if his source were something like 1824b (the other two verses cited are the lines from Sighvatr in Knútsdrápa about the 'blood-eagle' cut on king Ella's back and an otherwise unattested verse spoken by Áslaug at the death of Sigurðr orm-í-auga). It is clear then that the stepmother-story attached to Áslaug is regarded by the þátr-author as her main claim to fame. Her expedition to avenge her stepsons occasions her name-change to Randalín (Randa-Hlín, goddess of shields) with its implications of protectiveness and maternity. That the base-word of the kenning, Hlín, is considered on the basis of Vsp 53 to be a by-name of Frigg, that famously grieving mother, only amplifies the way in which the Áslaug-tradition probes into motherhood, whether biological or social, and its reaction to the loss of sons. Significant too is the evidence for the name Randalín in the genealogy of the Oddverjar: Randalín Filuppusdóttir, born around 1230, as McTurk notes; a version of Áslaug's story containing the stepmother-sequence must already have been known in Iceland at that time (McTurk 1991:179).

Áslaug's exemplary stepmothering is not inhibited by the kinds of family politicking which may underlie Randvér's bid to appropriate his father's bride as his own, to close down his father's procreation of further legitimate heirs and to consolidate his own position. Already dead, the stepsons pose no threat to Áslaug's boys and their long-term interests. Ívarr is correct in his prudent estimation that a possibly futile pursuit of revenge against the trolldomr-wielding Swedes would not avail him and his brothers (step- or otherwise). Pure altruism seems to be at stake here; though the Ragnarssynir win glory in killing Sibilja and Eysteinn and annoy their father (see Tulinius 2002:135–7), Sweden is not conquered and the young

men turn their attention to more challenging territories further south. Nevertheless, Áslaug's determination to dissolve the distinction between step- and natural sons, to ensure their revenge and to impress on her own children that brotherliness should be extended to half-brothers is an important lesson for intra-family dynamics. As the eddic story of Hamðir and Sqrli illustrates as a kind of negative exemplum, and the tales of Helgi Hundingsbani and his half-brother Sinfjötli positively demonstrate, power accrues to the family which understands and acts on fraternal solidarity (Larrington forthcoming). Áslaug's instinctive understanding of fraternity and its obligations affects her sons, even the level-headed Björn (bræðr glöddu mik mínir; my brothers made me happy). The success of the dynasty depends on the sons ultimately dividing up their spheres of influence; Ívarr rules over England, Hvítserkr (who has no significant descendants) dies raiding in the Baltic, Björn járnsíða features strongly in Icelandic genealogies as Elizabeth Ashman Rowe has shown, while Sigurðr the favoured youngest child – is the progenitor of the kings of Norway and Denmark (Rowe unpublished). Solidarity between brothers, courage and daring bring the twin rewards of fame and dynastic success.

Although Svanhildr and Áslaug are linked only loosely together as daughters of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani in NKS 1824b, their shared parentage and contrasting fates are suggestive. Svanhildr's implacable mother Guðrún drives her remaining sons to certain death; they in turn rhetorically invoke the power of fraternity even as they capitulate to their mother's demands:

‘Urðo þér	For you revenge
bræðra hefndir	for your brothers
slíðrar oc sárar,	became tearing and painful
er þú sono myrðir;	when you murdered your sons;
knættim allir	we might all
Iqrmunrecci,	on Iqrmunrekkr
samhyggiendr,	all of one mind
systor hefna.’	have avenged our sister. (Ghv 5)

Ironically, in Hamðismál, the upbraiding of their mother for the loss of their (half-) brothers, Erpr and Eitill is followed by their own murder of Erpr, the sundrmœðri (of a different mother). Erpr's rejected offer of assistance ‘Hvat megi fótri föeti veita / né holdgróin hond annarri’ (how may foot help foot / or flesh-grown hand another) (Hm 13) seems to be echoed in Ívarr's punning reference to hands when he finally consents to the revenge expedition: ‘þó gatk hond til hefnda / at hváriga nýtak’ (yet I can have a hand in the vengeance / though I cannot use either of mine) (v. 22/7–8). The powerful conceptual metaphor of family members as parts of the same body underlies both usages. Guðrún's circumscribed understanding of family loyalty, blinkered by the revenge imperative and transmitted to her sons, brings her dynasty to ruin.

In contrast, Áslaug teaches her sons that the distinction between full- and half-brother is meaningless on an emotional level. The Ragnarssynir establish an empire stretching from Northumberland to northern Germany, achieved through loyalty and lack of rivalry amongst themselves. Love between brothers is perhaps the most important affective relationship in medieval texts, and Áslaug's sons come to exemplify this in the broadest possible terms. The youngest of them, Sigurðr ormr-í-auga, transmits his grandfather's dragonslaying courage and understanding of family imperatives to his royal descendants; Áslaug's reward for her good mothering is to become the ancestress of two royal houses of Scandinavia through Sigurðr and of the most prominent families of fourteenth-century Iceland, through Björn járnsíða, when the fullest version of her stepmotherly narrative was preserved for us.

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Alle islændingesagaer i nye danske oversættelser¹

Annette Lassen, Den Arnarnagnæanske Samling, Københavns Universitet, Danmark

I 1997 udkom, som bekendt, en ny engelsk oversættelse i fem bind af samtlige islændingesagaer med samt et udvalg af totter til engelsk (*The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*). Størstedelen af teksterne er her oversat efter Svart á hvítu-udgaven af islændingesagaer og totter, mens enkelte tekster er oversat efter andet tekstgrundlag. Der er tale om et korpus på i alt ca. 2300 tætskrevne sider. De engelske oversættelser blev af redaktørerne defineret som et "koordineret oversættelsesprojekt", idet oversætterne havde lister til rådighed over sagaernes navnemateriale og en række nøglebegreber. Disse lister skulle sikre et homogent præg i oversættelserne.

I disse år udføres det samme projekt igen, men nu i nordisk regi, idet det er planen, at alle islændingesagaer skal udkomme i nye danske, norske og svenske oversættelser i 2011. Det er også planen, at alle islændingesagaer skal oversættes til tysk efter samme model. Det panskandinaviske oversættelsesprojekt sker på islandsk initiativ. Jóhann Sigurðsson, ejeren af Saga Forlag i Island, er initiativtageren til projektet, og det er ham, der skaffer finansiering til det via ansøgninger om bevillinger fra forskellige nordiske fonde. Gísli Sigurðsson er udnævnt som hovedredaktør for de norske, svenske og danske oversættelser, Karl G. Johansson og Kristinn Jóhannesson er redaktører for de svenske oversættelser, Jon Gunnar Jørgensen og Jan Ragnar Hagland for de norske, og jeg selv for de danske. Det bør også nævnes, at oversættelsesprojektet nyder godt af Viðar Hreinssons hjælp og erfaringer fra det engelske oversættelsesprojekt, som han var hovedredaktør for.

Det skandinaviske oversættelsesprojekt gik så småt i gang i 2008 – og det befinder sig stadig på et tidligt stadium. I februar i år mødtes størstedelen af oversætterne til et oversættelsesseminar i Lysebu i Oslo, hvor vi diskuterede det igangværende projekt. Det viste sig, at problemerne, som man som oversætter støder på, oftest er de samme, men at løsningerne i vid udstrækning vil være individuelle for de tre lande.

Projektets tidsplan er stram, men det er målsætningen, at alle tekster oversættes i løbet af 2009, gennemlæses og revideres i løbet af 2010, hvorpå de – hvis alt går vel – kan udkomme samtidig i 2011. Når en saga eller tot er oversat, bliver den gennemlæst i forhold til originalteksten. Det er planen, at skjaldestroferne vil blive gennemgået af Rolf Stavnem, hvorved der sikres et homogent præg i kvadene fra saga til saga. Senere i forløbet vil oversættelserne, både prosa og kvad, blive gennemlæst af flere skønlitterære forfattere for at sikre, at de er velfungerende på målsproget.

De danske oversættere udgør en gruppe på elleve forskere, professionelle oversættere (hvoraf nogle har mere erfaring med oversættelse fra moderne islandsk) og en enkelt studerende. Der er fra Jóhann Sigurðssons side et eksplicit ønske om, at nye oversættere også får lov til at prøve kræfter med sagaoversættelse, med håb om at oversættelsesprojektet på denne måde kan inspirere til yderligere oversættelser af middelalderens islandske tekster. Gruppen af danske oversættere består af: Helle Degnbol, Karen Bek-Pedersen, Peter Springborg, Erik Skyum-Nielsen, Gísli Magnússon, Rolf Stavnem, Finn Hansen, Kim Lembek, Kirsten Wolf, Lisbeth Torfing og jeg selv. Afdøde Margit Lave Rønsholt skal også nævnes i forbindelse med oversættergruppen, for projektet har fået tilladelse til at anvende hendes oversættelse af en række totter, som blev udgivet i 1986 under titlen *Tyve totter* (København: C.A. Reitzel).

¹ Helle Degnbol og Birgit Nyborg skal begge have tak for gennemlæsning, kritik og inspiration!

Tidligere oversættelser af islændingesagaer til dansk

Mange islændingesagaer har været oversat til dansk før, og der er lagt forskellige principper til grund for disse oversættelser. En række islændingesagaer har opnået klassikerstatus og er blevet oversat flere gange, mens andre aldrig har været oversat til dansk før. Interessen for islændingesagaerne begyndte, som bekendt, mod slutningen af 1700-tallet. Fra 1772 og frem udkom en række islændingesagaer, udgivne af Den Arnamganæanske Kommission og Det nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab i København. I 1772 udkom *Njáls saga* (udg. Ólafur Olavius), i 1775 *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* (udg. Jón Eiríksson), 1786 *Víga-Glúms saga* (udg. Guðmundur Pétursson) og i 1787 *Eyrbyggja saga* (udg. Grímur Thorkelín), for nu at nævne nogle. De nævnte udgaver indeholdt oversættelser til latin, på nær udgaven af *Njáls saga*. Oversættelser til dansk af disse tekster har vi imidlertid først fra 1800-tallet. I 1804 oversatte og bearbejdede N.F.S. Grundtvig passager fra de omtalte udgaver af *Njáls saga* og *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* til dansk (Lundgreen-Nielsen 1980: 120, 126). Grundtvigs oversættelse af to handlingsgange fra *Njáls saga* udkom dog aldrig, men i 1811 udgav han oversættelsen *Gunlaugs og Rafns saga*. I 1804 havde Grundtvig lært sig islandsk (på grundlag af Finnur Jónssons Kirkehistorie, der var på latin med oversættelser af islandske citater), og han oparbejdede med tiden både lingvistiske og filologiske kundskaber. Få år senere, 1817–1820, udkom Peter Erasmus Müllers *Sagabibliothek med Anmærkninger og indledende Afhandlinger* i tre bind. Disse bind indeholdt genfortællinger af en stor del af de islandske sagaer, både islændingesagaer, fornaldarsagaer og kongesagaer. 1819–21 udgav Knud Lyhne Rahbek to bind med oversættelser af islandske sagaer og totter. Her udkom bl.a. *Njáls saga* på dansk med den talende titel *De ulige Hustruer eller Gunnars og Nials Endeligt*. Det blev imidlertid Niels Matthias Petersens oversættelser af islændingesagaerne, som udkom i fire bind i årene 1839–44 med titlen *Historiske Fortællinger om Islændernes Færd hjemme og ude*, som skulle få en helt særlig betydning for receptionen af islændingesagaer i Danmark.² N.M. Petersens oversættelser er ikke længere omfattet af loven om ophavsret, hvad der måske er grunden til, at de i de senere år er blevet udgivet gentagne gange med relativt få ændringer i teksten. Dette betyder, at mange danskere i dag har lettest adgang til N.M. Petersens hundrede-og-nogle-og-tres-årige oversættelse. På mange måder er 1800-tallets oversættelser således stadig afgørende for islændingesagaernes reception i Danmark. I de senere års udgivelser af N.M. Petersens oversættelser har man imidlertid undladt at trykke N.M. Petersens eget forord. Man kan tænke, at det i for høj grad ville afsløre oversættelsernes alder. I 1969–70 udkom hans oversættelser med et forord af Peter P. Rohde, og denne udgave er blevet udgivet flere gange, bl.a. i 1998.³ I udgaven fra 1998 placeres N.M. Petersen i romantikken, men det nævnes ikke, hvornår hans oversættelser udkom. Man fornemmer endda en anerkendelse hos forords-skribenten af, at oversættelserne i 1969 (for fyrré år siden!) forekommer lidt *altmodisch*:

I denne udgave er N(iels) M(atthias) Petersens oversættelse benyttet. [...] Hans virksomhed falder i romantikkens tid, og hans sprog er ikke upåvirket deraf. Men den patina, det i tidens løb har fået, er en ekstra værdi, når det gælder oversættelser af ældre værker, hvis sprog naturligvis også i århundredernes løb har erhvervet patina. Og i øvrigt var store dele af den islandske sagalitteratur selv udtryk for en romantisk retning. Det er derfor lykkedes oversætteren at komme tæt ind på sit stof og give det en klædedragt på dansk, der virker overbevisende. (Rohde 1998 [1969]: 11)

² Første bind indeholdt *Egils saga*, andet bind *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, *Laxdóla saga* og *Kormaks saga*, tredje bind *Njáls saga*, fjerde bind *Vatnsdóla saga*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Grettis saga* og *Svarfdóla saga*.

³ N.M. Petersens oversættelser er også udgivet flere gange med introduktion af historikeren Palle Lauring.

Dertil er N.M. Petersens oversættelse af *Laxdóla saga* blevet udgivet for sig af Jørgen Haugan og Jan Sand Sørensen for Dansklærerforeningen i 1980, men man skal lede længe i bogen, før man forstår, at der er tale om N.M. Petersens gamle oversættelse, for det fremgår kun af en fodnote mod slutningen af bogen (s. 238).

Næsten 100 år efter N.M. Petersens oversættelser af ti islændingesagaer udkom 1930–32 endnu et samleværk, tre bind med fjorten islændingesagaer oversat af syv digtere, en filolog og en litterat, nemlig Johannes V. Jensen, Hans Kyrre, Knud Hjortø, Thøger Larsen, Gunnar Gunnarsson, Ludvig Holstein, Tom Kristensen, Johannes Brøndum-Nielsen og Vilhelm Andersen.⁴ Udgaven var et pragtværk med tegninger af Johannes Larsen. Som N.M. Petersens oversættelse i sin tid var også denne ambitiøs; den blev udgivet under videnskabelig medvirken af Jón Helgason og Brøndum-Nielsen. Den redaktionelle ledelse bestod af Hans Kyrre, Johannes V. Jensen og Gunnar Gunnarsson. Også denne udgave er udkommet gentagne gange, tredje udgave i 2007.

Udover flerbindsudgaverne af islændingesagaer er der udkommet en række sagaer enkeltvis, eller enkelte sagaer sammen. I 1986 udkom fx Finn Hansens oversættelse af *Gísla saga*, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* og *Gunnlaugs saga*, i 1994 udkom Keld Gall Jørgensens oversættelse af *Egils saga*, og i 1997 udkom Preben Meulengracht Sørensens *Sagaen om fostbrødrene*, for nu at nævne nogle eksempler. Nogle af de tidligere oversættelser er meget vellykkede, og det kunne have været fristende at indlemme dem i det nye projekt. Men det er en overordnet beslutning, at der (pånær ovennævnte udgivelse af totter fra 1986) nu kun bringes nyoversættelser, og der er ingen tvivl om behovet: Langt de fleste sagaer foreligger i gamle og utilstrækkelige gengivelser, og en del værker har aldrig før været overført til dansk.

Det nye oversættelsesprojekt

En af de store værdier ved det nuværende oversættelsesprojekt er, at det vil tilvejebringe den første samlede (og koordinerede) oversættelse til dansk (og jo også til svensk og norsk) af samtlige islændingesagaer og totter. Der er tale om et korpus på ca. 40 islændingesagaer og 54 totter.

Der findes en tommefingerregel inden for oversættelsesteori, som lyder, at enhver klassiker bør nyoversættes med ca. halvtreds års mellemrum. Længere tid tager det ikke, før en klassikeroversættelse anses for forældet. I løbet af et sådant tidsrum vil den litterære smag, sprogbrugen og den metodiske holdning til oversættelse af ældre tekster med al sandsynlighed have ændret sig.

Målsætningen med de nye oversættelser er at viderebringe sagaerne i et mundret og nutidigt dansk, så lægfolk og nye læsere kan være med, unge som gamle. Arkaiske vendinger skal helst undgås, samtidig med at der sigtes mod at holde oversættelserne så tæt ved originalteksterne som muligt. Så vidt muligt skal oversættelsen imitere originalens stil og ordforråd. Originalens replikker, halvreplikker og indirekte tale bør så vidt muligt bevares, således også tempusskift⁵ og dens ofte parataktiske sætningsfølge. Småord som *nú*, *þá*, *þar*,

⁴ Første bind indeholder *Egils saga* (overs. Johannes V. Jensen), *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* (overs. af Knud Hjortø), *Laxdóla saga* (overs. Thøger Larsen) og *Fóstbróðra saga* (overs. Hans Kyrre). Andet bind indeholder *Njáls saga* (overs. Ludvig Holstein), *Kormaks saga* (Tom Kristensen) og *Hallfreðar saga* (overs. Johannes Brøndum Nielsen). Tredje bind indeholder *Grettis saga* (overs. Gunnar Gunnarsson), *Víga-Glúms saga* (overs. Hans Kyrre), *Gísla saga* (overs. Vilhelm Andersen), *Eyrbyggja saga* (overs. Thøger Larsen), *Bandamanna saga* (overs. Hans Kyrre) og ('samlet og indarbejdet i en enkelt fremstilling') *Grónlendinga saga* og *Eiríks saga rauða* (overs. Johannes V. Jensen).

⁵ I 1963 undersøgte Rokkjær tempusskift i islandsk indtil 1250 og påviste brug af 'dramatisk præsens', men derudover viste han, at ytringsverberne *segja*, *svara* og *spyrja* medsam bevægelses- og overgangsverber meget hyppigt forekommer i præsens. Kunz konkluderer om gengivelse af tempusskift i oversættelser: "attempts to imitate the immediacy and drama of the saga narrative through a slavish imitation of the tense usage can only

en og *ok* udgør et særligt problemfelt, idet oversætteren nogle gange kan bevare dem med godt resultat, men andre gange må luge ud i dem for at opnå en fungerende tekst på dansk. Men ideen er grundlæggende, at islændingesagaerne i de nye oversættelser får lov til at fremstå i al deres mangfoldighed. Stilen varierer fra saga til saga, og det må afspejles i oversættelserne, så man ikke skaber en illusion om en homogen *sagastil* på tværs af sagakorpuset. Således vil man med god virkning kunne bevare tempusskift i nogle sagaer, mens det vil blive sværere i andre. At opfylde alle disse krav repræsenterer en stor udfordring.

I tidligere oversættelser er der ofte udeladt både strofer, kommentarer om fortællingen (vendinger som “nú víkr sögunni til [...]” o.l.) og længere passager (for eksempler fra oversættelser af *Gísla saga*, se Jørgensen 1995: 151–82). N.M. Petersens oversættelse af fx *Grettis saga* indeholder kun en brøkdelen af originalen, og i udgivelsen fra 1930'erne er to sagaer kogt sammen til én beskrivelse af “Grønlands- og Vinlandsrejserne”. Sådanne omarbejdnings og udeladelser vil ikke være at finde i de nye sagaoversættelser, selvom man kunne have været fristet til at flytte visse passager ned i fodnoterne (som fx Hermann Pálsson og Magnús Magnússon gjorde i de populære Penguin-udgivelser). I det igangværende oversættelsesprojekt oversættes der så vidt muligt ikke efter syntetiske udgaver. Denne oversættelsesmetode – med troskab over for originalteksten – har Robert Cook karakteriseret som tidstypisk:

Just as period instruments have come to the fore in performances of early music [...] and paintings are restored to their original colors, and old texts are edited faithfully according to one manuscript rather than presenting a modern editor's conflation of texts, I aim at an authentic recreation of the original [...] (2002: 113)

Cook går i denne sammenhæng også ind for, at oversætterne bør stræbe efter en efterligning af sagaernes knappe ordforråd. Som eksempel tager han bl.a. verberne *segja*, *mæla*, *svara*, *spyrja* og *róða* og konstaterer, at “The translation should accordingly limit itself to “say”, “speak”, “answer”, “ask”, “talk” and “discuss”” (2002: 114). Men i passager, hvor fx verbet *segja* bruges gentagne gange, og indimellem mere end én gang ved den samme replik for at markere direkte tale (fx ‘hann segir [...], segir hann’), kan det måske nogle gange af æstetiske grunde være at anbefale, at et *inquit* udelades, eller der kan erstattes med et andet verbum med lignende betydning, fx *tilføje*. Originalsprogets på dette område knappe ordforråd overføres derved ikke præcist til målsproget, men spørgsmålet er, hvor stor tolerance moderne læsere har over for manglende sproglig variation. Det vil fx næppe være vellykket at gengive verbet *fara* med kun et og samme verbum på dansk, og det samme gælder oversættelser af substantivet *saga*, som afhængigt af konteksten kan oversættes med *saga*, *historie*, *fortælling* eller *beretning*. Men der er også eksempler på det modsatte, fx hvor der findes en lang række adjektiver og substantiver, som alle beskriver en persons udmærkede egenskaber: *skörungr*, *atgervimaðr*, *garpr* og *efniligr maðr*. De moderne sprog, i hvert fald det danske, synes fattigere på udtryk for den prægtige og ideelle mand/kvinde.

I efterligningen af norrøn stil har man i de ældre oversættelser ofte stræbt efter at undgå fremmedord fra græsk, latin og fransk.⁶ Dette vil i nogen udstrækning også være tilfældet i de nye oversættelser, hvor nu også engelsk er tilkommet som et indflydelsesrigt sprog, men hvis et fremmed eller fremmedlydende ord rammer betydningen af et ord i originalen mere præcist end et tilsvarende ord af germansk oprindelse, bør fremmedordet foretrakkes.

result in a distorted image” (1994: 107). Rokkjær demonstrerer imidlertid også, at den danske forfatter Steen Steensen Blicher i nogle af sine værker bruger tempusskift på en måde, der minder om sagaerne, og at disse tempusskift øger spændingen i narrativen. Man bør derfor så vidt muligt forsøge at bevare forlæggets tempusskift i oversættelserne.

⁶ Dette gælder fx N.M. Petersens oversættelser, jf. Jørgensen 1995: 206.

Samtidig bør norrøne termer anvendes med forsigtighed. Visse norrøne termer har vundet indpas i sproget og er blevet knyttet til formidlingen af norrøn kultur, og en del af dem vil også blive brugt i de nye oversættelser. Det gælder for eksempel termer som *herse*, *blot*, *galder* og *sejd*, som jo egentlig kunne ersattes med andre ord, som har samme denotationer. Man kunne i princippet tale om *høvding*, *offer/ofring*, *tryllesang* og *magi* uden det store betydningstab. Når man alligevel vælger de norrøne låneord har det flere årsager. Grundlæggende er idealet at gengive sagaerne i et sprog, der ikke er præget af patina. Således bør fx et ord som *frænde*, som ikke bruges i hverdagsdansk, nogle gange undviges til fordel for *slægtning* (eller fx *fætter*, *morbror*, osv.). Og ordet *æt* må betragtes som forældet, her må *slægt* foretrækkes. Et andet ord, som bør undlades på grund af dets noget patinerede klang er *vennesæl*, som på dansk er optaget fra oldislandsk, *vinsæll* (allerede Rafn blev i begyndelsen af 1800-tallet skældt ud for at bruge dette adjektiv i stedet for *afholdt*, jf. Jørgensen 1995). En god grund til at holde fast i norrøne termer, måske endda introducere nogle flere i sproget, kan være ønsket om begrebsdannelse blandt læserne. Danskerne har – muligvis i takt med Vikingeskibsmuseet i Roskildes stigende popularitet – vænnet sig til skibstypen *knar*, og de vil også kunne vende sig til ordene *byrding* og *skejd*. Når først gloserne er forklaret, vil de give et præcisere begreb om disse skibstyper, end hvis der i teksten søgtes beskrevet store lastfartøjer og krigsskibe. Ordene ville referere direkte til *knørr*, *skeið* og *byrðingr* – og de klinger godt. Det bør også overvejes, hvordan man bedst oversætter *skáli*. Skal det gengives med *skåle*, *langhus* eller *storstue*? Et verbum som *vandøse* (som er dannet på grundlag af *ausa vatni*) bør ligeledes overvejes. Nogle gange betegner handlingen at *ausa vatni* en tilsyneladende hedensk skik før kristendommens indførelse, mens det ved beskrivelse af forhold efter kristendommens indførelse ses brugt synonymt med fx *kristna*, altså med betydningen at *døbe*.⁷ Hvis der er tale om det kristne dåbsritual, er det måske misvisende at omtale handlingen som at *vandøse*. Spørgsmålet er da, om man sådanne steder må foretrække verbet *døbe*, eller i det mindste skrive ‘øse med vand’ e.l. Det samme gælder i øvrigt ved oversættelsen af verbet *jarða* på islandsk. Hvis der er tale om en kristen begravelse ved en kirke, kan det for mig at se blive misvisende at oversætte *jarða* med at *lægge i jorden*, fordi oversættelsen da kan komme til at insinuere en afstand til kristendommen, som ikke har hjemmel i det islandske forlæg. Oversættelserne må i sagens natur ikke fremmedgøre sagaerne og deres verden for læserne. Men man må også være opmærksom på, at en brug af begreber og ord, som vi kender fra vores hverdag, nogle gange vil kunne virke lige så fremmedgørende som en anvendelse af specifikke norrøne termer.

Sagaernes navnemateriale

En vigtig del af oversættelsesprojektet består i udarbejdelsen af stednavne- og personnavnelister, så personer og steder i sagaerne gengives i konsekvent fordanskede former i de forskellige tekster. Målsætningen bag gengivelsen af navnematerialet er at gøre sagaerne levende og tilgængelige for læserne. Navnene skal i sagens natur være genkendelige fra saga til saga – og tilnavne skal gengives eller oversættes på en og samme måde i samtlige fem bind. De norske, danske og svenske oversættelser lægger ikke de samme retningslinjer til grund for navnematerialet, idet der er forskellige navneskikke og traditioner i de tre lande.

Nogle stednavneled på islandsk er gennemsigtige, som fx *á*, *fjorðr*, *dalr*, *skógr*, *fell* o.s.v., mens andre er uigennemskuelige, fx *hraun*, der betyder lava. I de ældre oversættelsers gengivelse af stednavne er de gennemsigtige ord almindeligvis blevet erstattet med det

⁷ I Heggstad, Hødnebo og Simensens ordbog oplyses det, at der er tale om en hedensk dåb (1990: 41). ONP angiver ikke, at vendingen *ausa vatni* er knyttet særlig til et hedensk ritual, tværtimod ses vendingen (i det ikke trykte citatmateriale) at være brugt også ved kristen dåb, og definitionen er neutral: ”øse vand over (ngn) (ved navngivning) (1995: 826).

tilsvarende ord på dansk (*å, fjord, dal, skov, fjeld* o.s.v.). Men det er ikke altid tilfældet. Nogle gange bevares det islandske *nes* og *fell* i stednavnene i stedet for at blive gengivet med *næs* og *fjeld*. Man finder på den ene side former som *Bratteli* for *Brattahlíð*, mens *hlíð* i første led af *Hlíðarendi* på den anden side lades urørt og traditionelt gengives med *Hlidarende*. Der synes at være en stærkere tendens til at erstatte andet led i stednavne, mens første led oftere får lov at stå urørt selv i de tilfælde, hvor det kunne erstattes med det tilsvarende ord på dansk.

I nogle oversættelser bevares første led (i genitiv) af *Borgarfjörðr* (*Borgarfjord*), i andre ses den mere fordanskede form *Borgeffjord*, og i den store sagaudgivelse fra 1930'erne optræder navne med *Keldu-* og *Kilde-* side om side. I personnavne bevares nominativendelsen *-r* i maskulinum nogle gange (med svarabhakti-vokal), fx *Ömundur* og *Thorfidur* (hvor i det mindste varianten *Thorfinnur* burde foretrækkes), mens nominativendelsen i andre navne fjernes i den samme oversættelse, fx *Thorolf* og *Bård*. Der findes nylige danske oversættelser, hvor stednavnene er bevaret i deres rent islandske form med accenter og de islandske skriftegn *ð* og *þ*, mens man i tidligere tider har forsøgt at gå i radikalt modsat retning. I *Nyaarsmorgen* giver Grundtvig fx: "Niffelhjem, paa dansk Taagerup" (citeret efter Rubow 1968 [1923]: 53). Der findes m.a.o. ikke en stærk og fastlagt tradition for gengivelsen af navne i sagaoversættelser i Danmark.

Helle Degnbol ved Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog er konsulent på navnematerialet. Vi har ikke lagt os endeligt fast på principperne for navnegengivelsen i de danske oversættelser. Når navnelisterne foreligger, vil vi konsultere sproghistorikere og islandske navneforskere i detailspørgsmål. Dertil har navneforskeren Peter Gammeltoft generøst sagt ja til at gennemse navnelisterne.

Navnematerialet er en vigtig del af oversættelserne, idet navnegengivelsen har stor betydning for modtagelsen og læseoplevelsen. Oversættelserne skal kunne læses højt – og det er i øvrigt ønskværdigt, at oversættelserne udgives som lydbøger, og da er det nødvendigt, at man kan udtale navnene på dansk uden større problemer. Stednavne og personnavne, som er umiddelbart forståelige (fx *Skógar*) eller forklares i sagaen (fx *Austmannafall* i *Gísla saga*),⁸ bør bevare deres gennemsigtighed i oversættelserne. Men det er også vigtigt, at de islandske navne bevarer et element af genkendelighed i den danske gengivelse, selvom et uundværligt navneregister, hvoraf navnenes originalform fremgår, vil bøde på dette. Man må formode, at de fleste potentielle danske sagalæsere kender en håndfuld islandske navne, og at genkendelsen af disse navne vil være berigende for læsningen. Disse målsætninger, at navnene bevarer en genkendelighed, og at de samtidig bevarer deres gennemskelige betydning, er grundliggende idealer for arbejdet med navnematerialet. Men samtidig må vi tage hensyn til et tredje behov, nemlig at navnematerialet skal kunne udtales på dansk. Jeg ved fx ikke, hvordan man bærer sig ad med at udtale navne som *Hrut* og *Hlidarende* på dansk. Dette er et i bund og grund praktisk hensyn, som jeg tror er af stor vigtighed for sagaoversættelsernes modtagelse.

Helle Degnbol og jeg arbejder i øjeblikket med en opdeling af navnematerialet i to grupper: Den første gruppe består af navne, som er fremmede i den islandske kontekst (fx irske og latinske), og disse navne vil blive bevaret i deres fremmede form. De virker fremmede i den islandske kontekst, og denne virkning må gerne bevares i de danske oversættelser. Den anden gruppe består af islandske navne, og denne gruppe skal tillempes til

⁸ I sagaen fortælles der om drabet af nogle nordmænd (*austmenn*), og der nævnes et deraf afledt stednavn: "Nú eru Þorgrími sögð tíðindi þessi og býst hann þegar heiman [...] Hann kemur að þeim þar sem þeir lágu og vekur Þórarinn, stíngur á honum spjótkafti sínu. En hann hleypur upp við og vill taka til sverðs síns því að hann kenndi Þorgrím. En Þorgrímur leggur á honum með spjóti og vegur hann. Nú vaknar Þórir og vill hefna félaga síns. En Þorgrímur leggur hann spjóti í gegnum. Þar heitir nú Dögurðardalur og Austmannafall". *Gísla saga*, kap. 7: 857–8.

dansk. Nogle eksempler på mulige navnegengivelser er: *Hlaðgerðr* → *Ladgerd*; *Hrútr* → *Rud*; *Hliðarendi* → *Liende*; *Áki* → *Åge*; *Skati* → *Skade*.

I nogle tilfælde vil vi erstatte islandske ord med et dansk, hvis det islandske ord spejles i et dansk ord. *Skógar* og *Snæfellsjökull* kan således blive gengivet *Skovene* og *Sneffeldsjøkel*. *Reykjarvík* ville ifølge dette princip blive gengivet *Røgvig*, og her vil der i første omgang lyde et ramaskrig. Det positive ved denne løsning er imidlertid, at *Røgvig* har billedskabende associationer, det ligger godt i munden, og sidst men ikke mindst undgår man associationer til Islands moderne hovedstad *Reykjavík*. Et argument mod at kalde *Reykjarvík* for *Røgvig* kunne være, at vi derved tog genkendelsens glæde væk fra de læsere, som måske kun kender dette og enkelte andre stednavne i Island. Men det kan der bødes for ved en fodnote eller en parentes, hvor det oplyses, at der med *Røgvig* er tale om norr. *Reykjarvík*, nu *Reykjavík*. Man må samtidig være opmærksom på, at *Reykjarvík* kun nævnes et enkelt sted i islændingesagaerne, i *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* i sagaens tiende kapitel (s. 1261): ”En er Grímur hinn litli spyr þetta, fer hann heiman út í Reykjavík á fund Þorkels mána lögsögumanns”. I indledningen til *Kjalnesinga saga* møder vi samme lokalitet med en varierende betegnelse, da landnamsmanden Ingólfr Arnason omtales som *Ingólfr í vík* (*Ingolf i Vig*).

Afsluttende

Når oversættelserne engang er færdige, skal de ledsages af en indledning om islændingesagaerne, deres temaer, alder, overlevering, udgaver og lidt om hidtidige oversættelser. Obskure passager, eller elementer af særlig interesse i de enkelte sagaer skal forklares eller diskuteres i fodnoter, men sådanne fodnoter vil blive holdt på et minimum. Sidste bind – eller måske (hvis der bliver mulighed for det) et bind for sig – skal indeholde registre, forklaringer af norrøne termer (som fx *herse*, *blot*, *galder*, *skåle* o.l.), og tegninger af skibe og bygninger. Det er også ønskværdigt at indlemme kort og slægtstavler i et sådant bind, men det er ikke afgjort endnu, om der vil blive mulighed for det.⁹ En stor del af dette arbejde er allerede udført i *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, som *Alle islændingesagaer* kan bygge videre på.

Med de nye oversættelser håber vi at puste til lægmænds interesse for Islands oldtidstekster, som ser ud til at være stigende i disse år (jf. Lassen in spe). Den almene interesse er vigtig og vil forhåbentlig på sigt skabe en større interesse for norrøne studier ved universiteterne i Norden – og med oversættelserne vil vi samtidig tilvejebringe et undervisningsmateriale, som elever og studerende på skoler, højskoler og højere læreranstalter kan læse og/eller støtte sig til.

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⁹ Jf. Kennedys liste over, hvad en faglig oversættelse indeholder (2007: 27).

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Landscape and the Other World in the *Fornaldarsögur*

Helen F. Leslie, University of Bergen, Norway

The focus of this paper will be on the role of landscape in the creation of the dichotomous world view of the *fornaldarsögur*. Uneasy slipping between worlds is not normally seen as typical of the *fornaldarsögur*; generally two world views are presented simultaneously in the narrative to create a special “fairy-tale” world. Taking as a starting point the scene in *Egils saga Einhenda* where the *vættur* Arinnefja throws a king off a cliff on his wedding night, only to find he has mysteriously landed safely in the bridal-bed inside a hall, I will consider whether such a jarred transition between This World and the Other World is perhaps typical and if there is such a clear distinction between the landscapes the supernatural creatures and humans inhabit. In this paper I will look at how several distinct landscapes function in this saga ‘genre’ and, basing the discussion around *Egils saga einhenda*, demonstrate how landscape provides points through which to examine how the *fornaldarsögur* construct the reader’s experience of the Other World.

Scribal Presence in *Eggertsbók* and Modern Editorial Attitudes

Emily Lethbridge, Emmanuel College/Dept. of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, Cambridge University, England

In one of the many dramatic scenes in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, Gísli Súrsson sits down in the middle of a tense ball game to repair a bat that has been broken during the fierce competition. While so doing, Gísli looks at the burial mound beside the frozen pond on which the men are playing: the mound is the grave of his recently-deceased brother-in-law, Þorgrímr goði Þorsteinsson. There is snow on the ground but not on the slope of the mound where women – including Gísli’s widowed sister, Þórdís – are sitting and watching the games. Having fixed his gaze on the mound, Gísli utters a single *dróttkvætt* stanza: it is a riddling and intricate verse that makes use of punning and the skaldic compositional technique known as *ofljóst*. Gísli’s sister Þórdís overhears the verse and learns it by heart despite its complexity, thus establishing that her brother, Gísli, was her husband’s murderer.

This startling revelation is not news to us, the audience. Earlier in the narrative, we followed Gísli’s every step as he slipped out of his farm, Hóll, by night, and waded along the stream to the neighbouring farm, Sæból, where his brother Þorkell, Þórdís, and Þorgrímr live. As Gísli stealthily entered the cowshed, we accompanied him and watched him tie together the tails of the cattle standing inside, presumably in order to foil later attempts at pursuit. We were still on his shoulder as he crept into the hall and extinguished three burning lights. Finally, we stood with Gísli over Þórdís and Þorgrímr’s conjugal bed; held our breath as he held his, as he groped beneath the covers and grasped his sister’s breast in his cold hand. We watched as the couple turned to each other and, drowsily, initiated lovemaking. Transfixed, we witnessed this intimacy come to a brutal end as Gísli pulled the covers off the bed and impaled Þorgrímr with the same spear, Grásíða, that he pulled out of his blood-brother and brother-in-law Vésteinn Vésteinsson’s corpse, several scenes earlier.

Gísla saga is preserved in two extant medieval parchment manuscripts, each of which presents a distinctive version of the narrative: AM 556 4to (c. 1475, the ‘shorter version’) and AM 445 c I 4to (c. 1390, the ‘fragmentary version’), this latter badly damaged. Texts of the saga are also preserved in a further forty-odd post-medieval paper manuscripts, four of which derive from a lost fourteenth-century parchment known as the *Membrana Regia Deperdita* that contained a third distinctive rendering of the saga (the ‘longer version’). Traditionally, the text of *Gísla saga* in AM 556 a 4to (*Eggertsbók*) has been elevated over all other surviving texts, principally on the grounds that it was thought to reflect the textual contours of the projected ‘original’ *Gísla saga* text most closely, with its sometimes elliptical narrative style conforming more directly with projected ideals of ‘classical’ saga-style than the longer and fragmentary version texts of the saga.

One of the most striking features of the shorter version *Eggertsbók* text of *Gísla saga* is the way that the identity of Vésteinn’s murderer is never revealed at the diegetic narrative level: the audience must weigh up the evidence for themselves, in much the same way as the characters in the saga do. This subtlety – together with the shorter version’s more concise articulation of the narrative’s opening section – has appealed to modern readers: the *Eggertsbók* text has been used for the majority of editions and translations of the saga and consequently, this text is, for many, ‘the’ text of *Gísla saga Súrssonar*.

Close examination of the *Eggertsbók* *Gísla saga* text as found in the manuscript itself, and comparison of this text with a number of edited texts of the saga that use *Eggertsbók* as their primary witness, reveals the fact that in various places, the *Eggertsbók* text is, in fact, not

always as consistently understated and impersonal in its articulation as is generally assumed. With regard to the perpetuation of the mystery surrounding Vésteinn's death, for example, it is notable that a chapter-heading rubric on 58r states explicitly that Þorgrímr Þorsteinsson was Vésteinn's killer ('þorgrímr drap uestein'); this leads to an interesting tension between the diegetic and extra-diegetic narrative levels that is not necessarily conveyed in editions which do not represent the manuscript's rubrication.

Moreover, the quotation of Gísli's self-incriminating verse is preceded in the Eggertsbók text (60v) by an introductory third-person formula that jars with the oft-lauded narratorial objectivity expected of this paradigmatically 'classical' *Íslendingasaga*. The standard, neutral formula 'Gísli kuad þæ uisu' is present but it is immediately supplemented with the overt narratorial judgement 'er æfua skyllde'. It is as if, as Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson (2005) has written, the scribe of Eggertsbók (or the scribe of an earlier text of *Gísli saga*, from which the Eggertsbók text may have directly or indirectly derived), knowing what the fatal outcome for Gísli will be, could not restrain himself from holding his tongue – or rather, controlling his pen – at this point. As is well-known, Gísli's public admission of guilt, once decoded by his sister, sets in motion a chain of events that lead to a prolonged period of outlawry, and ultimately, to his death.

As stated above, the Eggertsbók text of *Gísli saga* is the oldest extant text of the so-called 'shorter version' of the saga; the descriptive 'shorter version' designation conveying the apparent tendency of this version to present the *Gísli saga* narrative more succinctly than the so-called 'longer version' of the saga. I have written elsewhere about the way that the extensive variation found in the diverging texts of *Gísli saga* testifies to quite distinctive, multiple interpretations of the narrative and also, the way that critical assumptions about the differences between the extant texts are often founded on misconceptions (Lethbridge 2009). In the longer version manuscripts, the 'er æfua skyllde' intrusion is not present: in contrast to the situation in the shorter version Eggertsbók text, therefore, the illusion of the objective and impersonal narrator so central to modern expectations of 'classical' saga style is sustained, despite this being the version whose stylistic expression has been denigrated by critics.

When we turn to the same scene in modern editions of the saga, it is interesting to note that, despite their respective editors' belief in the superiority of the Eggertsbók text, the phrase does not always make it into print, being either silently excised, or relegated to a variant apparatus. In some cases, where the phrase is allowed to stand in the main edited text, it is accompanied by a note that queries the 'authenticity' of the phrase. One example of this latter scenario is Björn K. Þórólfsson's 1943 *Íslensk fornrit* edition of the saga: a footnote states 'v[antar] í Y og er vafalaust viðbót í E' (1943:58; 'lacking in Y [the longer version texts] and doubtless an addition in E [the shorter version texts]'). The phrase is simply not there in Finnur Jónsson's 1903 edition of the saga, and is only present in the apparatus in his 1929 edition.

The way in which the 'er æfua skyllde' phrase is treated by Finnur Jónsson in his two editions is not an isolated occurrence. The fact that Finnur edited the Eggertsbók text of *Gísli saga* twice provides a neat starting point for a consideration of the modern editorial treatment of Eggertsbók's textual idiosyncrasies. In the remainder of my presentation, I will examine the extent to which Finnur's treatment of the Eggertsbók text of *Gísli saga* differs in his two editions, and the implications that his editorial decisions have had on our perceptions of, attitudes towards, and expectations of the *Gísli saga* narrative and medieval saga texts more generally.

Table 1. Additions of single words to the Eggertsbók text of Gísli saga

Eggertsbók	FJ 1903	FJ 1929
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Pronouns		
54r þotte skeggja <i>sem hann</i> ylli er gat <i>eigi feingit</i> ráðit	5 þótti Skeggja sem hann ylli, er hann gat eigi fengit ráðit	3 Þotte Skeggja sem hann ylli, er hann gat eigi feingit ráðit
54v kona het þuridr	10 kona hans hét Þuríðr	5 kona hans het Þuridr
56v þat kann <i>eigi betr enn</i> þu	19 ‘Þat kann ek eigi betr en þú’	11 ‘Þat kann ek eigi betr enn þu’
58v <i>eigi kann</i> hel sko at binnda	32 ‘Eigi kann ek helskó at binda’	21 ‘eigi kann ek helsko at binnda’
61r <i>ok ætla ek [...]</i> at þurfir <i>eigi annann</i> uæg eptir at leita um uig þorgrims	47 ‘Ok ætla ek [...] at þu þurfir eigi annan veg eptir at leita um víg Þorgríms’	32 ‘ok ætla ek [...] at þu þurfir eigi annann veg eptir at leita um víg Þorgríms’
66r at mæla eptir þorkel mag	76 at mæla eptir Þorkel mág minn	57 at mæla eptir Þorkel mag minn
66v nu skiptir <i>mik</i> miklu huersu þu uillt <i>til snua</i>	78 ‘Nú skiptir mik miklu, hverju þú villt til þín snúa’	58 ‘nu skiptir mik myklu, hveriu þu villt til þín snúa’
67r Ok er hafde þui lokit	81 ok er hann hafði því lokit	60 Ok er hann hafde því lokit
69r ok minnz er uonin	96 Ok er minst er vánin	69: Ok er minzt er vonin
Nouns		
67v hefit henndr aa ok drepi	85 ‘Hafið hendr á hundinum ok drepi	63 ‘hafit henndr aa hundinum ok drepi
Names		
53v <i>madr</i> het biörn hinn	2 Maðr hét Björn enn blakki	1 Madr het Biörn hinn blakki
59v toku <i>menn til dryckiu um</i> kuelldit	38 Tóku menn til drykkju á Hóli um kveldit	25 Toku menn til dryckiu um kvelldit
63r <i>hann [...]</i> til modur gestz olleifs sonar	60 Hann ferr nú út [...] til móður Gestz Oddleifssonar	43 hann ferr nu ut [...] til Þorgerdar modur Gestz Olleifssonar
65v <i>madr er nefndr</i> hallbiörn	74 Maðr er nefndr Hallbjörn húfa	54 Madr er nefndr Hallbiörn hufa
Adverbs		
54v Ok brenna þorbiorn ok sonu <i>hans</i>	7 ok brenna inni Þorbjörn ok sonu hans	4 ok brenna inni Þorbiorn ok sonu hans
55r þa er uar komit sögunni	10 þá er hér var komit sögunni	5 þa er her var komit sögunni
56r þeir Gisli ok uesteinn uoro ute enn hundrad dægra	17 Þeir Gisli ok Vésteinn váru úti meir en hundrad dægra	9 Þeir Gisli ok Vesteinn voru ute meir enn hundrad dægra
56r ok uard til fiar	18 ok varð gott til fjár	10 ok vard gott til fiar
58v Ok Gisli uar aa leid kominn	32 Ok er Gisli var á leid kominn	20 Ok er Gisli var aa leid kominn
63r <i>hann gengr frá</i> leynum sinum ok kennir Gisla	59 hann gengr frá leyni sínu enu nórðra , ok kennir Gisla	42 hann gengr frá leyni sinu enu nórðra ok kennir Gisla
63v leggja <i>menn</i> nu rædu aa ingi- aldr	65 Leggja menn nú ræðu á, at Ingjaldr	46 Leggja menn nu ræðu aa, at Ingjaldr
66v at fara til sinns inniss	79 at fara ok til síns inniss	59 at fara til sinns inniss
69v komu uid noreg	99 kómu norðr við Nóreg	72 komu norðr vid Noreg
Negative particle		

67r þu skalt ok uid uera	83 þú skalt ok eigi við vera	61 Þu skalt ok eigi við vera
68v hefir nu ordit skamt funnda a milli	94 Hefir nú ekki orðit skamt funda á milli	67 Hefir nu ekki ordit skamt funnda a milli
Prepositions		
58r ok hende fiske staung	28 ok í hendi fiskistong	17 ok i hende fiskestaung
65v Gisli er ref halfan manud	73 Gísli er með Ref hálfan mánuð	54 Gisli er med Ref halfan manud
Verbs		
55r þau þorbjorg ok þora j haug laugd	10 þau Þorbjörg ok Þóra váru í haug lögð	5 þau Þorbiorn ok Þora voru i haug laugd
56r enn um uorit þeir mægar	16 En um vórit búa þeir mágur	9 Enn um vorit bua þeir mægar
57r Ok saknar eingis j ath nu buit verra enn adr	14 ok saknar engis í, at nú sé búit verra en áðr	14 ok saknar eingis i ath nu se buit verra enn adr
57r hann þo sem adr veizlum	24 hann helt þó sem áðr veizlum	14 hann helt þo sem adr veizlum
58r bidr hann af hafa slikt er hann	29 biðr hann af hafa slíkt, er hann vill	18 bidr hann af hafa slikt er hann vill
67r ok mun þier nu þickia ek heimillt at giora	84 ok mun þér nú þykkja ek heimilt eiga at gera	62 ok mun þer nu þickia ek heimillt eiga at giöra
67v þat dreynde mik enn Gisli at	86 'þat dreyndi mik enn,' sagði Gísli, 'at'	64 'þat dreynde mik enn', sagdi Gísli, 'at'
68v þo at til rædit gott	95 þó at tilræðit væri gott	68 þo at tilrædit væri gott
69v at eingi hafe hier frægri uarn ueitt af einum manni	98 at engi hafi hér frægri vörn veitt verit af einum manni	71 at eingi hafe hier frægri vaurn veitt verit af einum manni

Table 2. Deletions of individual words from the Eggertsbók text of Gísla saga

Eggertsbók	FJ 1903	FJ 1929
Pronouns		
53v sem er Fibuli heiter	1 er Fibuli heitir	1 er Fibuli heiter
57r ok bidr hann af sier reide	22 Auðr kom nú í rekkju hjá Gísla [...] ok biðr af sér reiði	13 Auðr kom nu i rekkju hia Gísla [...] ok bidr af ser reide
Nouns		
61v fara þeir sudr til þorsnes þings	49 fara þeir suðr til Þórsness	33 fara þeir sudr til Þorsnes
Names		
55r þorkell hinn audgi þordar son uikings sonar	11 Þorkell enn auðgi Þórðarson	5 Þorkell hinn audgi, Þordar son Vikingssonar
60v kalladr snorre gode	44 kallaðr Snorri	29 kalladr Snorre gode
Verbs		
61r laetit þui likann mann sem þorgrimr uar	47 látit þvilíkan mann, sem Þorgrimr	32 laetit þvilíkan mann sem Þorgrimr var
Adverbs		

55r soknar þing uar þaa	12 sóknarþing var	6 soknarþing var
59v ok uake aa medan ek geng j burt	39 ok vaki, meðan ek geng í brott	25 ok vake, aa medan ek geng i burt
60r huar at skorr Gisla liggja	42 hvar skór Gisla liggja	28 hvar skorr Gisla liggja
60v alldri feste snio utan ok sunnan aa haugi þorgrims	43 aldri festi snæ útan sunnan á haugi Þorgríms	29 alldri feste snio utan sunnan aa haugi Þorgríms
Adjectives		
54v þaa eptir feingu þeir Gisli brotit elldinn vegginn	7 þá eptir fengu þeir Gisli brotit vegginn	4 þaa eptir feingu þeir Gisli brotit vegginn

Table 3. Additions of phrases to the Eggertsbók text of Gísla saga

Eggertsbók	FJ 1903	FJ 1929
56v sa er eingi hlutr segir þorkell ok muntu þetta uiss verða þo at sidar se Ok gengr nu sinn ueg	21 ‘Sá er engi hlutr,’ segir Þorkell, ‘ok muntu þess viss verða, þó at síðar sé.’ Ok gengr nú sinn veg	12 ‘Saa er eingi hlutr’, segir Þorkell. ‘ Vel þykki mer þaa þegar, segir Gisli, þviat þat vilda ek sizt, ok okkr skildi aa. En þo vil ek giarna vita, hvat er veldr ogledi þinni ’. Þorkell svarar: ‘þess muntu viss verða, þo at sidar se’. Ok geingr nu sinn veg
57r het sueinn geirmundr enn gudridr mærin Ok uar hun med Gisla enn geirmundr med þorkeli	23 hét sveinninn Geirmundr, en Guðríðr mærin, þessi váru börn Ingjalds, frænda þeira ; ok var hón með Gísla, en Geirmundr með Þorkeli	14 het sveinn Geirmundr, enn Guðríðr mærin, þessi voru born Ingjalds frænda þeira , ok var hun med Gisla, enn Geirmundr med Þorkeli
57v hittir geirmundr hann kom þu ecke	27 hittir Geirmundr hann. Geirmundr mælti : ‘Kom þú ekki’	17 hittir Geirmundr hann. Geirmundr mælti ‘kom þu ecke
58r saa er þordr het Ok kalladr hinn huglause. þrællinn uar heima.	30 sá er Þórðr hét, ok kallaðr enn huglause; hann var mikill maðr vexti, nær því sem Gisli . Þrællinn var heima	19 saa er Þordr het ok kalladr hinn huglause. Hann var mikill maðr vexti, nær sem Gisli . Þrællinn var heima
58v ---	32 en á hitt horfir um draumana. Þat dreymði mik ena fyrri nátt	21 enn aa hith horfir um draumana.’ ‘Hvat dreymdi þik?’, segir Þorkell. ‘Þat dreymde mik hina fyrre nott
59v þar stodu xxx kua huorum megin hann knytir saman halana j nautunum ok lykr aprt fiosinu	39 þar stóðu þrír tigur kúa hvárum megin; hann knýtir saman halana í nautunum, þrimr tögum hvárum megin , ok lýkr aprt fjósinu	26 þar stodu xxx. kua hvorum megin; hann knytir saman halana í nautunum ok lykr aprt fiosinu
60r Ok burtu kipt spiotinu ok til graptar buit	41 ok brott kipt spjótinu ok gerði þat Þorkr, bróðir hans , ok til graptar búit	27–28 ok burtu kipt spiotinu ok til graptar buit
60r lx. manna. fara nu aa hol	41 sex tigur manna, en aðrir sex tigur fara nú á Hól	28 lx manna, en adrir lx fara nu aa Hol
60r þorkell kuad bædi mikil ok ill ok spyrr	42 Þorkell kvað bæði mikil ok ill, víg Þorgríms , ok spyrr	28 Þorkell kvað bæði mikil ok ill, víg Þorgríms , ok spyrr
60r ok fara alle saman aa sæbol til haugs giordar og leggja þorgrim j skip	42 ok fara allir saman á Sæból. En eptir þat búaz þeir til haugsgörðar, ok leggja Þorgrím í skip	28 ok fara aller saman aa Sæbol til haugsgiórdar, og leggja Þorgrim i skip
60v þo at menn uillde duga honum	43 þó at menn vildi duga hánum ok	29 þo at menn villde duga honum

oxe niu uetra gamall	hann megi sér hvergi ró eigi á landi ; oxí niú vetra gamall	ok hann megi ser hvergi ro eiga a landi . Oxe niu vetra gamall
60v <i>madr</i> het Þorgeir <i>ok</i> orre	45 Maðr hét Þorgeirr, ok var kallaðr orri	30 <i>Madr</i> het Þorgeir ok var kalladr orre
61r nu uil ek þegar aptr snúa <i>ok drepa Gísli</i> enn þó veit ek <i>eigi</i> sagde <i>hann</i> huad satt er j þessu er Þordis segir	47 'Nú vil ek þegar aptr snúa <i>ok drepa Gísli</i> , ok er nú ráð at dvala eigi við. Enn Þorkell segir, at hann mun eigi við þat samþykkjaz 'ok veit ek enn ekki,' sagði hann, 'hvat satt er í þessu er Þordís segir	32 'nu vil ek þegar aptr snúa <i>ok drepa Gísli</i> '. Þorkell segir, at hann mun eigi við þat samþykkjaz , 'ok veit ek enn eigi hvað satt er í þessu, er Þordís segir
61v <i>Gísli</i> leidir nu eykina	51 Þeir skipta nú klæðunum . Gísli leiðir nú eykina	35 Þeir skipta nu klædunum , Gísli leidir nu eykina
62r þeir brædr koma at skogunum enn <i>Gísli</i> er kominn j skoginn	51 þeir bræðr koma at skóginum, en Gísli er kominn í skóginn	36 þeir brædr koma at skognum Þoroddr ok Steinn , enn Gísli er kominn í skoginn
62r ---	54 Enn kvað hann (between vv 12 and 13)	38 ---
62v er aunnur uel uid mik enn aunnr segir mier þat nockut iafnan	56 'er önnur vel við mik ok ræðr jafnan heilt , en önnur segir mér þat nokkut jafnan	40 'er aunnur vel við mik, enn aunnr segir mer þat nöckut iafnan
64v mun <i>Gísli</i> þat uerit hafa ok roum eptir þeim sem akafazt þeir suöruðu	68 'mun Gísli þat verit hafa, ok róm eptir þeim sem ákafast ok bíta myndi nú beinfiskr, ef at bordi mætti dragaz. ' Þeir svöruðu	49 'mun Gísli þat verit hafa, ok róm eptir þeim sem akafazt ok bitinn mundi nu beinfiskr, ef at bordi mætti dragaz? ' Þeir svöruðu
65r hittir bonnda einn er refr het <i>ok uar allra manna slægaztr</i>	71 hittir bónda einn, er Refr hét, son Þorsteins rannstafs , ok var allra manna slægaztr	52 hittir bonnda einn, er Refr het, son Þorsteins rannstafs , ok var allra manna slægaztr
66r ok segia at þeim kom þetta ok kuoduzt eingi deile aa þeim uita	76 ok segja, at þeim kom þetta mjök at óvorum , ok kváðuzt eingi deili á þeim vita	56 ok segia, at þeim kom þetta miök at ovorum ok kvoduzt eingi deile aa þeim vita
69r <i>Madr</i> er nefndr sueinn er fystr redzt j moti <i>Gísli</i>	96 Maðr er nefndr Sveinn, er fyrstr réz upp í hamarinn í móti Gísli	69 <i>Madr</i> er nefndr Sveinn, er fystr redzt i mote Gísli
69v fara þau aull utan j huit aa	99 Fara þau öll útan í Hvíta með Sigurði hvíta	72 Fara þau aull utan i Hvíta med Sigurdi hvíta

Table 4: Deletion of phrases in the Eggertsbók text of Gísli saga

Eggertsbók	FJ 1903	FJ 1929
55r eitt huert haust edr uor	11 Eitthvert vár	5 Eitt hvert vor
56v hugat hefe ek mier rad segir asgerdr þat er hlyda mun. enn ecke se ek fyrir þina haunnd	20 'Hugat hefí ek mér ráð,' segir Ásgerðr, 'þat er hlýða mun'	11 'Hugat hefe ek mer rad', segir Asgerdr, 'þat er hlyda mun'
57r saman er brædra eign bezt at lita ok at sia	22 'Saman er bræðra eign bezt at líta	13 'saman er brædra eign bezt at lita
57r fært j hepte spannar langt. nu uerdr þat at huilazt. fra því er sagt at	24 fært í hepti spannar-langt. Frá því er sagt, at	15 fært i hepte spannar langt. Fra því er sagt, at
58r uar þaa nöckuru heimskare enn adr ef aa mætte gæða. enn kunni eingi tidinndi	28 var þá nokkuru heimskari en áðr, ef á mátti gæða , en kunni engi tíðendi	18 var þaa nöckuru heimskare enn adr, enn kunni eingi tidinndi
58r er uesteinn feck lagit þaa mælti hann þetta er hann feck lagit hneit þar	30 er Vésteinn fekk lagit, þá mælti hann þetta: 'Hneit þar'	19 er Vesteinn feck lagit, þaa mælti hann þetta: 'hneit þar'

54r þeir leika knatt leika a tiörn þeiri er sef tiörn	35 Þeir leika knattleika á seftjörninni	23 Þeir leika knattleika a seftiörninni
54r blöð stöck ur nausunum af geck ok kiotit af knianum þorgrimr stod seint upp	36 blóð stökk ór nösunum. Þorgrimr stóð seint upp	23 blöð stöck ur nausunum. Þorgrimr stod seint upp
60r kom þetta a þa ouara ok urdu þvi eigi tekin þau raad sem dygdi edr þaurf uar a	40 kom þetta á þá óvara, ok urðu þvi eigi tekin þau ráð sem dygði	27 kom þetta a þa ovara ok urdu þvi eigi tekin þau raad sem dygdi
60v <i>Gisli</i> kuad þa uisu er æfua skylle	44 Gísli kvað þá visu	30 Gísli kvad þa visu
61r <i>hon</i> geingr nöckurum sinnum annsælis um husin Ok uidrar j allar ættir Ok setr upp nasernar enn uid þessa hennar medferd þa tok uedurit at skipazt	46 Hón gengr nökkrum sinnum andsælis um húsin. Þá tók veðrit at skipaz	31 Hon geingr nöckurum sinnum annsælis um husin. Enn vid þessa hennar medferd, þa tok veðrit at skipazt
61r Enn er baurkr frette þesse fa kynstur þar ferr hann upp a anmarka stade	46 Enn Bqrkr ferr upp á Anmarkastaði	31 Enn Baurkr ferr a Anmarkastade
61r þordis surs dottir hefir leiddan Baurk a gautu kona hans en systir Gisla	47 Þórdís Sursdóttir hefir leiddan Bqrk á götu	32 Þordis Sursdóttir hefir leiddan Bork a gautu
61r þottumzt ek eigi þat uerdr fra henni þuiat ek þickiumzt þat lyst hafa nöckurum sinnum at mier hefir eigi uerit hennar ouirding betri þott enn sialfs mins. hefir ek stunnidum lagt lif mitt j haska fyrir hennar sakir enn hon hefir nu gefit mier dauda raad. enn þat uil ek nu uita brodir	49 'þóttumz ek eigi þess verðr frá henni; en þat vil ek nú vita, bróðir!	33 'þottumzt ek eigi þess verdr fra henne. Enn þat vil ek nu vita, brodir
61v þa halltu til skogarins enn þat uar miok iafn fært um uit ok hug recke þuiat huorke uar neitt til Gisli leidir nu eykina	51 þá haltu til skógarins.' Þeir skipta nú klæðunum. Gísli leidir nú eykina.	35 þa halltu til skogarins'. Enn þat var miok iafnfært um vit ok hugrecke, þvi at hvorke var neitt til. Þeir skipta nu klæðunum, Gísli leidir nu eykina.
64r ingialdr giorde sem <i>Gisli</i> raad lagde fanzt þat eitt a at hann uar hinn reidazte ok er þeir skilja	67 Ingjaldr gerði sem Gísli ráðlagði. Ok er þeir skilja	48 Ingialdr giorde sem Gísli radlagði; fanzt þat eitt a, at hann var hinn reidazte. Ok er þeir skilja
64v Ok mun hafa latit epter fíflinu þuiat hann er uid huortueggia brugdinn Ok er hin mesta hermi kraka ok er þat skaum iafn morgum monnum.	70 ok mun hafa látit eptir fíflinu, ok er þat skømm jafnmørgum monnum	51 ok mun hafa latit epter fíflinu, ok er þat skaumm iafnmørgum monnum
65v uard hann eigi gæfu madr. nu er fyst fra horfith Nu er þar til maals at taka	73 varð hann eigi gæfumaðr. Nú er þar til máls at taka	54 vard hann eigi gæfumadr. Nu er þar til malls at taka
69r eingi uar osarr saa er at honum sotte þuiat Gisli uar eigi missfeingr j hauggum. nu sækia þeir eyolfr	97 engi var ósarr, sá er at hánum sótti. Nú sækja þeir Eyjólf	70 eingi var osarr, saa er at honum sotte, þvia at Gisli var missfeingr i hauggum. Nu sækia þeir Eyolfr
70r lukum uær hier <i>gisla</i> saugu surr sonar Gud gefe all goda daga utan ennda. AMEN	100 Lúkum vér hér Gísla sögu Súrssonar	73 Luku vær hier Gísla saugu Surrsonar

Table 5. Emendations to individual words in the Eggertsbók text of *Gisla saga*

Eggertsbók	FJ 1903	FJ 1929
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Pronouns		
63v ok em eg nu kominn <i>hit</i> sidazta sinn aa yduarn fund	64 ok em ek nú kominn hit síðast sinn á þinn fund	45 ok em eg nu kominn hit sidazt sinn aa þinn fund
Nouns		
53v Þat er upp aa saugu þesse	1 Þat er upphaf á sögu þessi	1 Þat er upphaf aa saugu þesse
55r baurkr er eptir j þorsnese ok hia honum systir hans	12 Børkr er eptir í Þórsnesi, ok hjá hánum systursynir hans	6 Baurkr er eptir i Þorsnese ok hia honum systursynir hans
59v Ok slærr hann buf feitt mikit	37 ok slær hann kinnhest mikinn	24 ok slærr hann kinnhest
61r ok er dreginn belgr aa höfud honum	46 ok er dreginn kálfsbelgr á höfuð hánum	31 ok er dreginn kálfsbelgr aa höfud honum
61v <i>Gisli</i> tekr nu eykinn	50 <i>Gísli</i> tekr nú eyki tvá	35 <i>Gisli</i> tekr nu eyki tvo
62r þeir mundu fara eptir þrælnum ok uita ef nöckur hugr er j honum	51 þeir mundu fara eptir þrælnum ok vita, ef nöckur veidr er i hánum	35 þeir mundu fara aptir þrælnum ok vita, ef nöckur veidr er i honum
63r nu uil ek uita sagde <i>Gisli</i> ef þu uillt <i>mer</i> nöckurn fullting ueita	60 'ef þú vill mér nökkurn dugnað veita	42 'ef þu villt mer nöckurn fullting veita
67v ok er her fingr	85 ok er hér fingrgull	63 ok er her fingrgull
Names		
55r sitia þeir uid dryckiu syrdæler	12 sitja þeir við dryckju, Haukdælir	6 sitia þeir vid dryckiu Haukdæler
57v uesteinn ferr til gemlu fallz	27 Vésteinn ferr til Lambadals	16 Vesteinn ferr til Lambadals
57v sauda <i>huss</i>	27 Sandaóss	16 Sandaoss
59v af sefinu af seftiörn	27 af sefinu af Seftjörn	24 af sefinu af Seftiörn
61r rida þeir sina leid	49 ríða þeir Sandaleið	33 rida þeir Sanda leid
Verbs		
59v er þu færr mer fola	37 er þú fekt mér fola	24 er þu færr mer fola
68r draga kyrtlanir daugg slodena	92 drepa kyrtlarnir döggslóðina	67 draga kyrtlarnir dauggslodena
68v þeir eru meire enn riupkerar	93 þeir váru meiri en rjúpkerar	67 þeir eru meire enn riupkerar
Adverbs, prepositions		
54v koma sudr til flydruness	8 koma norðr til Flyðruness	4 koma nordr til Flydruness
56r adr burt siglt	18 áðr inn siglt	10 adr burt siglt
57r fyrir utan haukadals aa	24 fyrir innan Haukadalsá	14 fyrir innan Haukadalsaa
57v ridr hann nu uid hrimannde ok hefir sitt saudul reide	27 ríðr hann nú við hrynjandi ok hefir sitt sōðulreiði	16 ridr hann nu vid hryniande ok hefir sitt saudulreide
58r reid uid hrimanndi	28 reið við hrynjandi	17 reid vid hryniandi
59v er kemr þar	37 er hann kemr á Hól	24 er hann kemr aa Hol
60v aa skamm fotar myre fyrir uestan ana	45 á Skammfótarmýri fyrir austan ána	31 aa Skammfotarmyre fyrir vestan ana
61r þeir koma at sannda os	47 þeir koma yfir Sandaós	33 þeir koma yfir Sanndaos

62v stunnðum j fylsnum fyrir sunnan ana	55 stundum í fylgsnum fyrir norðan ána	39 stunnðum i fylsnum, fyrir norðan ana
63v ferr Gísli inn til hergils eyiar	64: Ferr Gísli nú til Hergilseyjar	45 Ferr Gísli inn til Hergilseyjar
65r tynir suerdinu þuiat hann uar suo modr	71 týnir sverðinu, er hann var svá móðr	52 tynir sverðinu, þvi at hann var svo modr
65r þa hleypr hann j skog þuiat þa uar uida skogum uagsit	71 þa hleypr hann í skóg, en þa var víða skógum vaxit	52 þa hleypr hann i skog, þviat þa var videa skogum vagsit
68v eyolfr þar kominn uid hinn xu menn	94 Eyjólfr þar kominn með enn fimtánda mann	67 Eyolfr þar kominn uid hinn xv. mann
68v eyolfr komzt ut annars stadar ok kom þar audr j moti honum	95 Eyjólfr komz upp annars stadar, ok kom þar Auðr í móti honum	68 Eyolfr komzt upp annars stadar, ok kom þar Auðr i mote honum

Adjectives

54v Aull laund voro þa onuminn	9 Qll lqnd váru þá ónumin	4 Aull laund vora þa numinn
59v–60r hann serr at ungs mannz haunnd kemr aa et þridia liosit	40 hann sér, at ungs manns hqnd kqmr á et innsta ljósit	26 hann serr, at ungs mannz haunnd kemr aa et insta liosit
68r sumar naatt sidazta	92 sumarnátt en ofsta	67 sumarnaat sidazta

Numerals

63v ferr nu suo fram iii uetr fra þui er hann hafde dreymt	65 ferr nú svá fram þrjá vetr, frá þvi er hann hafði dreymt	46 ferr nu svo fram ui. vetr, fra þvi er hann hafde dreymt
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Table 6. Emendations to phrases in the Eggertsbók text of Gísla saga

Eggertsbók	FJ 1903	FJ 1929
56v þorkell uar uanr at þacka brodur sinum uerkit	20 Þorkell þakkaði bróður sínum verkit	12 Þorkell var vanr at þacka brodur sinum verkit
61r kerling fær ecke sofnad um nottina suo uar henni bimbullt	46 Kerling fær ekki sofnat um nóttina; ok gengr út ok er henni þungt í skapi	31 kerling fær ecke sofnad um nottina ok gengr hon ymist ut eda inn ok er henni þungt i skapi
62r–v spyrr Gísli huers hann skal uon eiga hia þeim þeir segia nafnar badir muna skiota skirole yfir hann [...] at þeir lete eigi fee sitt fyrir þa sauk	54 spyrr Gísli, hvers hann skal ván eiga hjá hánnum. Þorkell segir, at skiota mun skjóli yfir hann [...] at hann léti eigi fé sitt fyrir þa sök	38 spyrr Gísli, hvers hann skal von eiga hia þeim. Þeir segiazt, nafnar badir, muna skiota skirole yfir hann [...] at þeir lete eigi fee sitt fyrir þa sauk
62v uera uel uid daufan ok halltan ok faataka ok farade	56 vera vel við haltan ok blindan ok mér minni menn	40 vera vel við halltan ok blindan, faataka ok faarada
63r Gísli uæri j geirþjofs fiorde Ok senndir baurkr mann at leita eptir Gísla	59 Gísli væri í Geirþjófsfirði, ok segir þat mǫnnum Eyjólfis, er á milli fara, at hann leiti eptir Gísla	41 Gísli væri i Geirþjofsfirde, ok segir þat mǫnnum Eyjólfis, er á milli fara, at hann leiti eptir Gísla
65v suo sem siorrinn felle aa land	75 svá at ekki felli sjór undir	55 svo at eigi felle sior undir
67v eigi mun mier þat at fiór leste uerda at audr blecke mik	84 eigi mun mér þat at fjórleste verða, at Auðr sé ráðbani minn	62 eigi mun mer þat at fiórleste verða, at Auðr blecke mik
68r–68v fuglar kæmi j husit er læmingar heita þeir eru meire enn riupkerar	92 fuglar kæmi í húsit ok hjogguz at i læmingi , þeir váru meiri en rjúpkerar	67 fuglar kæmi i husit og hiogguz at i læmingi , þeir eru meire enn riupkerar
68v sia madr leggr til Gísli med spiote	95 Eyjólfr leggr til Gísla með spjóti	69 Sia madr leggr til Gísla med spiote

69r j höfud þorde frænda eyjólfs ok
klyfr hann allt til belltis stadar
ennda fellur Gíslí æ hann ofan

97 í höfuð Þórði, frænda Eyjólfs,
ok fær hann þegar bana; enda
fellt Gíslí á hann ofan

70 í höfud Þorde, frænda Eyjólfs,
ok **klyfr hann allt til belltissadar**,
ennda fellur Gíslí æ hann ofan

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Gendered memory – Rune stones, early Christian grave monuments and the Sagas

Cecilia Ljung, Dept. of Archaeology and Classical Studies, Stockholm university, Sweden

The posthumous reputation was of vital importance to people in the Viking Age society, as emphasised by the famous stanza in *Hávamál* (verse 77). The reputation of dead men never dies. The social evaluation of the deeds and qualities of the deceased person mattered more than the inevitable death itself. The numerous rune stones are clear evidence of the commemoration of the dead in the late Viking Age (Jesch 2005). However, rune stones had several functions and the general interpretation has been to view them as memorial stones, documents of inheritance and property rights, Christian monuments and manifestations of political power and allegiances (von Friesen 1913; Sawyer 1988; 2000:16ff, 146ff; Palm 1992; Zachrisson 1998:126ff, 149ff). One important aspect of the commemorative feature is that runic inscriptions acted as obituaries dealing with the posthumous reputation of the dead (Thedéen in press). Early Christian grave monuments¹ have several characteristics in common with rune stones; therefore I will argue that they derive from the same cultural practice and should consequently be regarded as different expressions of the same memorial tradition. The aim of this paper is to explore gender differences in the practice of commemoration between rune stones and early Christian grave monuments. Characteristics of the runic evidence will be discussed in relation to the attitudes towards death, honour and memory in the sagas of Icelanders.

The analysis of gender and family relations of this study is based on the complete corpus of rune stones and early Christian grave monuments in Östergötland, in eastern Sweden. Östergötland is the Swedish province where most early Christian grave monuments have been found. Furthermore, following Uppland and Södermanland, it is the third most numerous region as far as rune stones is concerned.

Memorial traditions in transition

Despite the fact that it has long been acknowledged that there are both similarities and disparities between rune stones and early Christian grave monuments, they have in most cases been studied as two separate categories. The features that connect rune stones with early Christian grave monuments are the phrasing and the contents of the inscriptions as well as the ornamental design. The inscriptions follow the same memorial formula where the sponsor/s of the monument is/are named first, followed by the name/s of the deceased and formulations where the relationship between the people involved is defined. The people who commissioned the monuments as well as the relationship between the living and the dead were important to point out. Therefore rune stones both remembered the dead and glorified the living for remembering them (Jesch 1998:466; Sawyer 2000:19ff). The same is valid concerning the early Christian grave monument. In this way, the early Christian grave monuments differ from later medieval tombstones, which normally only mention the buried person. The ornamentations of

¹ Early Christian grave monuments are commonly referred to as Eskilstuna cists or Eskilstuna monuments, after a reconstruction made by Sune Lindqvist in the beginning of the 20th century (Lindqvist 1915). In this paper, the term early Christian grave monuments refers to all lid slabs, gable slabs and side slabs with ornamentation in Ringerike or in Urnes style and/or with runic inscriptions that follow the same formula as the texts on the late Viking Age rune stones. These slabs have been part of visible cists on the ground, as the reconstruction made by Lindqvist, or have been part of simpler constructions such as single lying slabs with or without gables (cf. Neill & Lundberg 1994:148, Fig. 2).

the early Christian grave monuments, as well as the late rune stones, typically consist of zoomorphic representations although other designs exist.

Variations can be observed in the location of the monuments, in the use of raw material as well as in the carving techniques. Rune stones have been erected in places in the landscape such as roadsides, bridges, burial grounds, farm boundaries and meeting-places, whereas early Christian grave monuments functioned as both memorials and tombstones at Christian cemeteries. In that regard rune stones were more closely related to the world of the living (cf. Jesch 1998:466). The early Christian grave monuments of Östergötland were normally made of limestone, in contrast to the granite or gneiss of the rune stones. The ornamentation and the motives of the grave monuments were often cut in relief, setting them apart from the rune stones. These distinctions are however in no way clear cut and several exceptions exist. There seems to be a correlation between Christian burials, the function as sepulchral monuments and the use of sandstone or limestone. In Uppland sandstone rune stones are more frequently found in connection with Christian cemeteries than rune stones made of crystalline rock. It has therefore been suggested that sandstone rune stones were churchyard monuments and should be considered as equivalents to the early Christian grave monuments in the provinces south of Lake Mälaren (Hagenfeldt & Palm 1996).

Rather than being regarded as essential diversities and similarities between two distinct categories of monuments I argue that the phenomena should be looked upon as expressions of change and continuity within the same memorial tradition. By examining the interplay between text, context and the material expressions of the monuments we may pinpoint when and where alterations in the memorial tradition took place. Furthermore, if the tradition is understood as fundamentally hybrid, and not as separate categories, we are better equipped to approach questions regarding changes in cosmology and the perceptions of death, gender and memory in relation to the transformation of early Christianity in Scandinavia.

The temporal context of the rune stones and the early Christian grave monuments is of importance when discussing alterations in the practice of commemoration. In order to create a chronological framework for Östergötland I have undertaken an analysis of the ornamental design of the monuments (Ljung in press a & b). In this work Anne-Sofie Gräslund's chronological framework of rune stone ornamentation has been an important point of departure (Gräslund 1991; 1992). In short, the results of the analysis show that the tradition of erecting rune stones in Östergötland ceased around the mid 11th century. The distribution of stylistic features indicates that the emphasis of the rune stone production can be traced to the first decades of the 11th century. Early Christian grave monuments have traditionally been dated to the 11th century (Lindqvist 1915:100; Curman 1932:151; Wideen 1955:179; Neill & Lundberg 1994; Lundberg 1997:31; Wienberg 1997:198f; Gräslund 2002:153; c.p. Svärdström 1958–70:LV). The analysis of the ornamentation of the early Christian grave monuments in Östergötland suggests somewhat earlier dates, and a wider chronological diversity. Some monuments belong to the first part of the 11th century. The similarities in the ornamental design between rune stones and these early Christian grave monuments indicate a chronological overlap and a period of coexistence. The tradition of erecting early Christian grave monuments came to an end around the turn of the 12th century. This coincides with the building of the first stone churches in the area.

Gender and family relations on rune stones and early Christian grave monuments

Differences in the ratio between women and men, as well as diversities in the family relations of the persons mentioned in the runic inscriptions can be observed when comparing rune stones and early Christian grave monuments in Östergötland. The proportion of female spon-

sors is almost constant, around 14,5 % on both rune stones and on early Christian grave monuments. The differences are striking, however, when it comes to the commemorated persons; 97 % of the rune stones were erected in memory of men alone. To be commemorated on a rune stone was almost exclusively reserved for men. When we look at the early Christian grave monuments this proportion is changed. According to the preserved inscriptions on the lid slabs ca 31, 5 % of the named and buried individuals were women.

The social relations between the sponsors and the commemorated persons include a wider range of relations on rune stones than on early Christian grave monuments. Rune stones in Östergötland were most commonly erected by sons in memory of their fathers. Brothers commemorating brothers as well as fathers remembering sons are also frequent. When women commissioned rune stones they acted as wives and mothers. Other female relations are scarce. However, the runic inscriptions also mention more distant relatives such as nephews, uncles, sons-in-law (*magher*) and friends/relatives (*frændi*), besides members of the close family.² In contrast, the inscriptions on the early Christian grave monuments only tell of relations within the nuclear family. The increased amount of commemorated women has impact on the social relations of the inscriptions. Sons and fathers are still common, but spouses have a more prominent role. No husband has commissioned a rune stone in memory of his wife. This is in contrast quite common on early Christian grave monuments. Contrary to the rune stones men also commissioned grave monuments to their wives. Consequently, the result of the analysis shows that rune stones almost exclusively seem to have signified a male memory whereas the early Christian grave monuments and remembrance in relation to the burial more often encompassed women. But it only involved a smaller group of people, the closest of kin, while the erecting of rune stones also concerned more distant relations.

Östergötland has often been described as an intermediate zone between two cultural spheres, the south/west (Denmark/Norway) and the east (the region around Lake Mälaren in Sweden) (Christiansson 1959:169ff; Palm 1992:24; Sawyer 2000:41). The sponsorship pattern of the runic inscriptions of the province has accordingly been interpreted as a mixed tradition between features of the south-west and the east (Sawyer 1988; 2000). These conclusions have been based on the inscriptions of both rune stones and early Christian grave monuments together. However if rune stones and grave monuments are analysed in relation to each other rather than to other areas, the social relations of the inscriptions of the province can be given a different interpretation. In south-west Scandinavia women are rare and the proportion of distant relations between the sponsors and the commemorated is high. In the east (particularly in Uppland) women occur more often, especially as sponsors and the persons involved are often close kin (Gräslund 1995:460f; Sawyer 1988:12ff; 2000:41ff). Notably the features predominant in the south-west largely coincide with the sponsorship pattern of the rune stones whereas the characteristics of the eastern region correspond with the early Christian grave monuments. The emphasis in the rune stone production in Östergötland is somewhat earlier than the construction of most of the early Christian grave monuments. The majority of the Upplandic rune stones dates to the second half of the 11th century (Gräslund 1995:460, fig 1; Sawyer 2000:6, 69), and to a large extent they are contemporary with the early Christian grave monuments in Östergötland. I suggest that what has earlier been interpreted as mixed influences in the sponsorship pattern, diffused from two separate areas, in fact are chronological differences and alterations in one single memorial tradition.

It is interesting to note that the sponsorship pattern of the early Christian grave monuments in Östergötland share similar features with the late rune stones in eastern Sweden (mainly Uppland). Hence similar changes in the social relations of the runic inscriptions can be ob-

² *Magher* refers to relatives through marriage whereas *frændi* both denote friend or relative in general (Hellquist 1980:243).

served on both rune stones and on early Christian grave monuments. These changes in the memorial tradition seem to occur simultaneously, but they are given different material expressions in the two regions. In Uppland the rune stone production continued while early Christian grave monuments were erected in Östergötland. The increasing participation of women in the late rune stone production has been taken as an indication of changed ownership patterns due to Christian influences (Sawyer 2000:69f), or has been seen as evidence for the active involvement and enlarged autonomy of women in the Christianisation process (Gräslund 1995:472; 2001:66ff). A larger number of women do not necessarily indicate actual changes in the power relations between males and females. More likely it reflects gender defined alterations in the practices of remembrance, possibly occurring when the burial and the memorial tradition became interlinked within the Christian cemetery.

Obituaries in stone, poetry and narrative

Rune stones and early Christian grave monuments are by no means the only preserved evidence of remembrance of the dead in the late Viking Age and the early Middle Ages. Judith Jesch argues that the oral commemoration of the skaldic verses functioned much in the same way as the commemorative rune stones (Jesch 2005). Rune stones were oriented towards the future which is indicated by the writing, the use of hard rock and also a small number of inscriptions referring to the longevity of the monument (Jesch 1998; 2005:95). The stanzas in *dróttkvætt* were, in the same way as the runic inscriptions, designed to preserve an utterance to the future, albeit an oral one (Jesch 2005:96). According to Jesch there are cognitive similarities between runic inscriptions and skaldic verses. They are different manifestations of the same cultural practice, that of remembering the dead (Jesch 2005:101ff). The different practices of commemoration had a diverse social setting and geographical distribution. Skaldic verse is concentrated to western Scandinavia and is almost exclusively about men of high rank, whereas women are notably absent. Runic inscriptions are overwhelmingly found in eastern Scandinavia and seem to have encompassed people of somewhat lower rank as well as women (Jesch 2005:97). However, the regional and temporal diversities in the rune stone tradition need to be taken into account. As we have seen, rune stones in Östergötland almost solely denoted a male practice of remembrance whereas commemorated women are more frequent on the early Christian grave monuments.

Joseph Harris sees parallels between rune stones and *erfíkvæði* (Harris 2006:270). The term *erfíkvæði* occurs only once in the sources, in the single richest remnant of northern pre-Christian elegy, Egil's memorial poem *Sonatorrek* for his dead sons. It is however treated as an example of a type of poem (Harris 2006:267). In *Sonatorrek* elegy is connected with *erfi*, the funeral feast and transfer of inheritance, for example described in *Landnámabók* and twice in *Laxdæla saga*. According to Harris *erfíkvæði* was a functional genre rooted in the legal and religious events connected with death and burial within a family context (Harris 2006:268ff). Interesting is that the combination of legal and memorial functions also is present in the runic inscriptions. Women are cross-culturally connected with lamentation, though they are absent in the grief and memorialization of the formal *erfíkvæði*. Gyrid of the Bällsta rune stones (U 225 and U 226) is one possible exception (Harris 2006:270; c.p. Sawyer 2000:130ff). A few runic inscriptions also tell about the mourning of surviving relatives, most often men, in relation to death causes that are considered grievous (Thedéen in press).

The concept of honour is fundamental to the sagas, through the narrative people are evaluated and judged. The aim and meaning of human action is what is told about them, the posthumous reputation is thus established by the saga. In that sense the narratives of the sagas of Icelanders functioned in the same way as the panegyric reputations of the skaldic poetry (Meulengracht Sørensen 1992:14). The sagas of Icelanders tell about the period c. 930 to c.

1030, although they were written much later. The sagas hence treat the idea of the past (Meulengracht Sørensen 1992:26, 52; Jónas Kristjánsson 1997:203ff). After a period of severe source criticisms the sagas have, during the last decades, yet again been brought to life as a source to the cultural norms and social attitudes of medieval society (e.g. Meulengracht Sørensen 1992:293ff; Wallete 2004). Rune stones and early Christian grave monuments are contemporary sources to the commemoration in the late Viking and early medieval society. Therefore it is of interest to discuss the monuments in relation to the mentality of the sagas.

In his essay about death utterances in the sagas of Icelanders Johan Svedjedal states that the words said in the moment of death reflect the personal and social ideal about what was conceived as desirable in life (Svedjedal 1979). A common theme in the death utterances is that the person about to die appears to be unaffected by their forthcoming end. What matters is to die with dignity (Svedjedal 1979). Most death lines in the sagas are uttered by men and the moment of death illustrates the enactment of male gender (Svedjedal 1979; Arwill-Nordbladh 1998:148). By analysing different death causes cited in the runic inscriptions Susanne Thedéen reaches a similar conclusion. Various masculinities were constructed and created through the posthumous reputation and commemoration of the rune stones (Thedéen in press). However, female death utterances also occur in the sagas, which shows that honourable deaths were not reserved for men only (Svedjedal 1979:140, footnote 6; Arwill-Nordbladh 1998:148). One example is the death of Auðr in *Laxdæla saga*. Auðr is silent about her approaching death; she divides the inheritance and gives a feast, in all she acts with dignity. The desirable death for women in the saga is described in a similar way as the honourable death of men (Svedjedal 1979:143; Arwill-Nordbladh 1998:149). It is interesting to note that Auðr all through the story is described with the same positive qualities as the male heroes of the sagas. The story need not be interpreted as Auðr entering into a male gender. Rather, situations where women act as males or are depicted in a masculine way show that gender roles were flexible (Arwill-Nordbladh 1998:149, 170f). Each sex in the sagas is assigned with a set of norms, and the social reputation of both men and women are dependent on how well they fulfil these. The male gender role was more restricted than the female one, the concept of *nið* being one example of this. Whereas it was humiliating for men to behave in a female way, women in the sagas gained prestige by acting according to male norms (Meulengracht Sørensen 1994:203ff; 212ff). Even if the social norms were given gender specific form, they were based on the same ideal of honour, prestige and reputation, that encompassed both men and women (Arwill-Nordbladh 1998:170; Meulengracht Sørensen 1994:214).

Gender and the construction of memory in a transitional period

The importance of the posthumous reputation is a present theme in runic inscriptions as well as in Skaldic poetry and in the sagas of Icelanders. The overwhelming majority of the memorials belong to men but women are not totally absent as exemplified by the few rune stones in Östergötland erected in memory of women. In analogy with the sagas this may be seen as an indication of the existence of dynamic gender roles in the practice of remembrance; women could be commemorated in a masculine way. The fact that women seldom are commemorated in the inscriptions of the rune stones, but quite commonly appear as sponsors may be explained by different practices of remembrance being connected to women and men respectively. Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh has discussed gender specific ways of commemoration during the Viking Age in relation to the famous rune stone from Rök (Ög 136) and the rich female grave in Aska in Östergötland. She argues that the formalised narrative of the Rök stone originates in a masculine way of constructing memory while female practices of remembrance were expressed in the burial ritual (Arwill-Nordbladh 2008). This line of argu-

ment is interesting in relation to the issue of how the increased proportion of commemorated women on the early Christian grave monuments in Östergötland should be understood. In the Christian cemeteries memorial and burial became interlinked which led to gender specific alterations in the memorial tradition.

The pre-Christian religion lacked a belief of eternal life. The fate of the dead was not the greatest concern, what was crucial was the social evaluation of deceased (Nedkvitne 1997:34ff). The runic inscriptions, as well as poetry and the sagas of Icelanders, illustrate this mentality. The deceased in the Viking Age continued to be a present part of the living community (Nedkvitne 1997:19ff). The close relation between the living and the dead relatives is emphasised by burial grounds being located next to farms as well as by rune stones in the surrounding landscape (Zachrisson 1994). An increased interest in the afterlife can be observed in the written sources from the late 10th century and forward (Nedkvitne 1997:41). The many prayers in the inscriptions on both rune stones and early Christian grave monuments are clear evidence for the concern of the salvation of the soul. In a sense rune stones and early Christian grave monuments are expressions of two combined mentalities. The posthumous reputation exist side by side with the Christian notion of salvation and eternal life.

Conversion and the establishment of churches and Christian cemeteries brought about dramatic changes in the landscape as it was transformed and redefined to a Christian cosmology. New sacral focal points were defined by the foundation of Christian cemeteries. They became a new arena for the practices of remembrance. Important variations can be observed between the different sites of early Christian grave monuments in Östergötland. A few cemeteries can be dated as far back as to the beginning of the 11th century. The ornamentation of the early Christian grave monuments of these early cemeteries indicates that they were erected alongside the rune stones in the surrounding landscape. During a period of time these similar, but to some extent different, practices of remembrance existed side by side (Ljung in press a & b). The changing of the memorial tradition was made visible in the early Christian cemeteries as the tomb and the memorial became united in one place. In this light early Christian grave monuments can be viewed both as novelties and signs of continuity. By repeating the memorial formulations and the ornamental design of the rune stones, they referred back to the erected stones in the landscape and thereby to older traditions and previous generations, at the same time as they were expressions of something entirely new. Rune stones in the landscape had public and documentary functions beside those of commemoration. In contrast early Christian grave monuments were not linked to the world of the living. The changed setting from the landscape to the Christian cemetery was also marked by a change in materials, from the hard gneiss or granite of the rune stones to the limestone of the grave monuments. The fact that the inscriptions of the grave monuments in Östergötland only refer to members of the nuclear family, whereas a wider range of relatives are represented on the rune stones, indicates that the public aspect of remembrance became less accentuated in the churchyard context. It seem as if the commemoration of the dead foremost concerned the closest of kin and included both men and women. The transformation of the memorial tradition in the Christian cemetery consequently led to changes concerning both gender roles and family relations in the practice of commemoration.

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Topografi i eddadiktningen

Nanna Løkka, Institutt for lingvistiske og nordiske studier, Norway

I dette bidraget skal oppmerksomheten rettes mot de framstillinger av guders og jotners bosteder som foreligger i gudediktene av *Den eldre Edda*.¹ Gårder, haller og andre tilholdssteder utgjør en vesentlig del av det mytiske landskapet slik dette tegnes i eddadiktningen, og både guder og jotner settes i forbindelse med bestemte bosteder. Framstillingene av disse bostedene har relevans for forståelsen av ættene i seg og forholdet mellom dem, men kan også settes i sammenheng med forskningens framstillinger av førkristen kosmologi. Førkristen kosmologi blir i forskningen tradisjonelt uttrykt gjennom en modell bestående av Åsgård – Midgård – Utgård. Disse romslige domenene blir verdiladet siden Åsgård og Utgård antas å stå i et kvalitativt motsetningsforhold (Schjødt 1990; Steinsland 2005). I senere tid har flere forskere nyansert bildet av Utgård som et utelukkende negativt domene (Mozt 1981; Mundal 1990; Steinsland 1991; 2005), likevel synes fortsatt Åsgård å bli identifisert med orden, kultur og positivitet, mens Utgård sidestilles med kaos, natur og destruktivitet. En analyse av ættenes boliger synes å være et egnet utgangspunkt for en diskusjon av de semantiske verdier som tillegges de kosmiske domenene Åsgård og Utgård.

På denne bakgrunn legges det vekt på å i den følgende undersøkelsen fremsette en tolking av bostedenes kvalitative verdier. Oppmerksomheten skal rettes mot hvilke elementer som inngår, og derav hvilke kvaliteter som vektlegges, i beskrivelsene av henholdsvis guders og jotners bosteder, der målet er å avdekke hvorvidt der foreligger likheter og forskjeller i beskrivelsene av disse. Det er i fremste rekke kildenedslag der bestemte egenskaper, kjennetegn eller funksjoner ved boligen inngår som vil være av interesse.²

Forestillingene som avdekkes om boligene antas å til en viss grad korrespondere med forestillinger om det overordnede rommet der disse befinner seg. Det antas at beskrivelsene av boligene peker mot datidens forståelse av *rommet*, slik betraktes boligene som pregnante symbol som står i direkte sammenheng med kulturens kosmologiske prinsipper. Avslutningsvis vil derfor analysen i korthet bli relatert til forskningens oppfatning av domene Åsgård og Utgård, og de semantiske verdiene som knyttes til disse. Foregripende kan det røpes at der jotnene ofte betraktes som representanter for naturkrefter og *kaos* i forskningslitteraturen, fremstilles både guder og jotner som aristokratiske høvdinger bosatt i haller i eddadiktningen. Det stilles derfor spørsmål ved om den aksenten som forskningen har lagt på jotunheimene som et utemmet, kaotisk og antiteknologisk område, har vært for snever. Ut fra resultatene av denne undersøkelsen synes det ikke å være grunn til å hevde at jotunheimene symboliserte verken natur eller kaos, i betydning anti-orden, i den førkristne mytologi, slik det tradisjonelt hevdes.

Som mytologisk motiv har guders og jotners tilholdssteder vært lite vektlagt i forskningen.³ Listen over gudeboliger i *Grimnismál* har vært behandlet i flere artikler, men da

¹ Det forutsettes at eddadiktningen på en eller annen måte springer ut av en førkristen verdensoppfatning, og derfor kan brukes som kilde til førkristen mytologi. At oppfatningen om at diktene går direkte tilbake til en eldre muntlig tradisjon nå er utfordret gjennom påvisning av kristne idéer i diktene, gjør ikke kildene uegnet til studier i førkristen mytologi, men fordrer større metodisk bevissthet. Det konstateres at eddadiktene er en utfordrende kildekategori, men å fordype seg ytterligere i disse problemstillingene er det ikke anledning til her. Den norrøne teksten er gjengitt etter Neckel & Kuhn og den norske oversettelsen er hentet fra Holm-Olsen.

² Det innebærer at i den grad det forekommer navn på en bolig uten tilhørende opplysninger, vil disse bli utelatt.

³ Flere av gudeboligene er oppført som oppslagsord i ulike leksika, og i enkelte av håndbøkene kan gudeboligene være viet et enkelt avsnitt. I slike sammenhenger presenteres imidlertid stedene kun som et stedsnavn knyttet til en gud. I noen sammenhenger parafraseres også kilden, men ingen analyse av boligene som symboler eller meningsbærende størrelser i et større mytologisk landskap tilbys. Valhall er i så måte et unntak. Dette stedet har

med utgangspunkt i filologiske problemstillinger angående redaksjonelle forhold ved diktet, med andre ord ikke problemstillinger som vedrører selve idékomplekset knyttet til maktenes tilholdssted. Om jotunboligene konstateres det at disse praktisk talt er oversett i faglitteraturen.⁴ Å analysere beskrivelsene av jotunboligene må derfor sies å være et helt nytt grep.

Spor etter forestillinger omkring guders eller jotners tilholdssteder er nedfelt i samtlige gudedikt. Beskrivelser av de mytologiske gudeboligene er først og fremst overlevert i *Grímnismál*, men gudeboliger finnes også nevnt i *Völuspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Lokasenna*, *Þrymskviða* og *Hárbarðsljóð*. Jotunboliger omtales i *Hávamál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Skírnismál*, *Hymiskviða*, *Lokasenna*, *Þrymskviða* og *Baldrs draumar*. Første punkt er imidlertid å undersøke hva kildene røper av forestillinger omkring gudeboligene.

Den fremste kilden til forestillinger om gudeboliger i norrøn mytologi er altså *Grímnismál*. At gudene ble framstilt med tilhørende gårder er et inntrykk som også skapes gjennom andre kilder, men disse utgjør et fåtall, og dessverre tilkommer det få opplysninger i disse kildenedslagene som gir oss ytterligere innsikt i kjennetegn og egenskaper ved topografien innenfor Åsgård.⁵

I *Þrymskviða* nevnes to gudeboliger, Frøyas og Njords. Disse omtales på følgende måte: *Þrk 3 Gengo þeir fagra Freyio túna*, De gikk til Frøyas fagre gårdstun. Frøyas bosted nevnes også i str 13 av samme dikt, der bostedet omtales som *ása salr*, men verken gård eller sal navngis. Stedet kalles imidlertid *Fólkvangr* i *Grm 14*. I *Þrymskviða* er Frøyas gårdstun åsted for dialogutvekslingen i strofene 3–4 og 12–13, uten at disse samtalene kan avsløre noe om stedets betydning. I *Þrk 22* knyttes Njord til gårdsnavnet *Nóatún*. Frøya omtales der som *Niarðar dóttur, ór Nóatúnom*, datter til Njord, fra Noatun. Tilsvarende er Noatun navnet på Njords gård både i *Grm 16* og i *Vþm 38*. Frigg settes i forbindelse med salen Fensaler i *Vsp 33*. Der sies det: *enn Frigg um grét í Fénsöлом vá Valhallar*, men Frigg, hun gråt i Fensaler over Valhalls nød. At gudene knyttes til gårder kommer også fram av *Lks 43* og *Hrbl 6*, der henholdsvis Frøy og Tor knyttes til gårder.

Samtlige kildenedslag som her er nevnt danner en svært begrenset inngang til forestillinger omkring gudenes bosteder, men er med på å underbygge inntrykket av at der foreligger et mytologisk motiv knyttet til gudene som gårdeiere. Forholdet mellom gudene og gårdene deres er utdypet i *Grímnismál*, og de overnevnte kilder viser dermed først og fremst nettopp at motivet forekommer også utenfor *Grm*.

Grímnismál står dermed i en særstilling som kilde til mytologiske forestillinger om gudenes verden, siden den mytiske topografien gjøres til et overordnet tema i diktet. Beskrivelsene av gudeboligene utgjør strofene 4–17, og danner en såkalt *pulur*, en liste. Gjennom de 13 strofene nevnes 13 boliger ved navn, der hver bolig knyttes til en bestemt gud. Rekken av gudeboliger er avbrutt av strofene 9 og 10. Disse fremstår som en digresjon over Valhall som nevnes i str. 8. De tretten strofene danner dermed en tematisk enhet, som innenfor diktets kontekst fungerer som en innledning til det mytiske landskapet som leseren hensettes til.

Det framkommer likevel få opplysninger om den enkelte gudebolig som kan inngå i en tolkning av stedenes betydning. En hensiktsmessig innfallsvinkel mener vi derfor er å undersøke hvilke kjennetegn eller elementer som inngår i beskrivelsene av boligene samlet sett. Det registreres at særlig to elementer benyttes i beskrivelsene av boligene, og dermed

vært underlagt omfattende religionsvitenskapelige analyser, men undersøkelser har først og fremst vært gjort ut fra Valhalls funksjon som dødsrike.

⁴ Et unntak i denne sammenheng er Hel og hennes hall. Tilsvarende Valhall har Hel, i betydning dødsrike, vært innlemmet i forskningsanalyser om de førkristne dødsforestillinger.

⁵ Igjen stiller saken seg noe annerledes hva gjelder Valhall, som nevnes i flere kilder. Valhall tilhører imidlertid et omfattende forestillingskompleks, hvilke det i denne sammenheng ikke er anledning til å gå inn på.

danner et mønster. Sju av tretten boliger settes i sammenheng med den mytiske tiden og fire av tretten boliger karakteriseres ved elementene gull og sølv. Forholdet mellom boligene og tiden vil jeg ikke gå nærmere inn på i denne sammenheng, men relasjonen mellom gudeboligene og edle metaller skal utforskes ytterligere.

Fire av gudeboligene i *Grímnismál* satt i forbindelse med gull og sølv når de skildres. Om *Válascíalf* sies det i strofe 6 at *er blið regin silfri þöcþo Sali*, gode æser har tekt hver sal med sølv. Om *Söcqvabeccr* heter det i strofe 7 *þau Óðinn ok Sága drecca um alla daga, glöð, ór gullnom kerom*, Odin og Saga drikker alle dager glade av gullbegre der. Merk at det i dette tilfellet ikke er boligen i seg selv som er dekt av gull, men at koplingen til gull likevel er tilstede ved at der drikkes av gullbeger. *Glaðsheimr* beskrives i strofe 8 som stedet *þars en gullbiarta Valhöll víð of þrumir*, der den gullbjarte vide Valhall kneiser. *Glitnir* presenteres slik i str 15: *hann er gulli studdr oc silfri þacþr íþ sama*, den har gullstolper, og taket er tekt med sølv.

Edle metaller fungerte som en viktig statusmarkør i vikingtidens samfunn. Ikke bare hadde metallene en verdi i seg selv, men også symbolverdien var kompleks; edle metaller symboliserte velstand, ære og makt langt ut over den materielle markedsverdien (f.eks. Zachrisson 1998: 29–35, Steinsland & Meulengracht Sørensen 1999: 45). Hvordan gullet tydelig var knyttet til aristokratiet fremkommer av *Rígsþula*. Når ulike stender settes i sammenheng med bestemte aktiviteter og verdier benyttes gull og sølv i beskrivelsene av de øverste klassene, sølv brukes i beskrivelsen av ”mor” (str. 32) og gull i beskrivelsen av jarl (str. 38). Det formodes derfor at gull og sølv inngår i det poetiske språket for å signalisere makt, rikdom og status.

Bortsett fra hestenevnene Gulltopp og Sølvtopp, som gudene rir på til tingplassen i str. 30, inngår ikke gull eller sølv i flere sammenhenger i *Grm*. Blikket rettes derfor mot de øvrige gudediktene. Det viser seg imidlertid at koplingen mellom gudenes verden og edle metaller ikke kan sies å utgjøre et markant mønster. I strofene 7 og 8 av *Völuspá* understrekes hvordan gudene i opphavstider hadde gull i mengder. Gullet er i denne sammenheng ikke satt i sammenheng med gudeboligene eller et annet konkret sted. Gullets tilstedeværelse i denne strofen skal heller ses i sammenheng med tiden enn med stedet, og gullets plass i strofen tolkes vanligvis som et symbol på en idealfortid, en gullalder (*SnE Gylf* 14; Steinsland & Meulengracht Sørensen 1999: 44–45). Likevel er der en viss forbindelse mellom bygninger og gull også i denne kilden, siden bygging av horg og hov og smiing av gull omtales i samme strofe. Gullets plass i verden understrekes også i fremtidsvisjonen i *Völuspá*. I str. 61, som tydelig alluderer til str. 8, beskrives hvordan man i den nye verden skal finne tilbake til gullbrikkene (som nevnes i str. 8), og gullet inngår dermed i visjonen av både fortid og fremtid. I str. 64 knyttes gullet til et konkret sted i denne nye verden, det sies: *Sal sér hon standa/ sólo fegra/ gulli þacþan/ á Gimlé; þar scolo dyggvar/ dróttir byggia/ oc um aldrdaga/ yndis nióta*, Sal ser hun skinne/ solfager står den/ med tak av gull/ på Gimle; der skal svikløse/ slekter leve/ og i evighet/ eie lykke. Beskrivelsen av denne salen viser klare likhetstrekk med salene i *Grm*, men også i denne strofen skal gullet trolig tolkes i sammenheng med den kosmiske tiden. Innenfor *Vsp*'s kontekst synes gullet først og fremst å være et litterært virkemiddel som benyttes for å understreke idealtilstanden ved fortid og fremtid. Etter min oppfatning trenger ikke gullets rolle i beskrivelsen av de ulike tidsepoker i *Vsp*, å en gang lede tilbake til et førkristent mytologisk motiv. Det synes snarere å være snakk om at gullet konnoterer visse verdier, og dermed fungerer som et effektivt virkemiddel i det poetiske språket når kvalitative egenskaper ved fortid og fremtid skal understrekes i diktet.

Ytterligere én kopling mellom guder og gull er nedfelt i gudediktene. I str 2 av *Hyndluljóð* sies det at Odin lønner sine hjelpere med gull. Flere eksempler på at gull eller sølv inngår i beskrivelser av gudenes verden finnes ikke. Dermed er det kun i *Grm* at gudeboligene settes i sammenheng med gull og sølv. Når gullet inngår i karakteristikken av gudeboligene i *Grm*,

signaliserer det at Åsgård forbindes med makt og status, likevel kan ikke sies å være et dominerende mønster i gudediktene, at gull og sølv inngår i beskrivelsen av verken gudene eller gudeboligene.

Av høyeste interesse er det derfor å registrere at der forekommer en systematisk sammenkopling mellom jotunboligene og gullet. Med unntak av *Vþm* inngår gull i skildringene av samtlige jotungårder som beskrives i eddadiktningen. Det understrekes at det ikke er boligene i seg selv som er dekt med gull eller sølv, men i presentasjonene av de ulike stedene i jotunheimen opptrer gjenstander i gull. Om Suttungs sal sies det i *Hvm* 105: *Gunnlöð mér um gaf/ gullnom stóli á/ drycc ins dýra miaðar*, Gunnlod gav meg der/ på gullprydet stol/ en drikk av dyrebar mjød. I *Skm* 22 avviser Gerd Skirnes frieri på denne måten: *Baug ec þiccac,/ þótt brendr sé/ með ungom Óðins syni;/ era mér gullz vant/ í görðom Gymis,/ at deila fé föður*, Ringen tar jeg ikke/ om enn den ble brent/ med Odins unge sønn;/ gull har jeg nok av/ i Gyms garder/ jeg rår for min fars rikdom. Når Odin og Tyr ankommer jotnens hall i *Hym* 8 blir de møtt av to kvinner: *Mögr fann ömmo/ mioc leiða sér/ hafði höfða/ hundruð nío. Enn önnor gecc/ algullin, fram/ brúnhvit, bera/ biórveig syni*, Der kom bestemor/ bisk og fæl/ ni hundre hoder/ hadde gamla;/ men fram på golvet/ gullprydet, bjart/ gikk mor, et beger/ bød hun sønnen. Æges hall beskrives i prologen av *Lks*: *Þar var lýsigull haft fyrir eldliós*, Skinnende gull ble brukt der i steder for eld til å lyse opp med. Loke ankommer jotunheimen på jakt etter Tors hammer i *Þkv* 6, og synet som møter han beskrives på følgende måte: *Drymr sat á haugi/ þursa dróttin/ greyiom sínom/ gullbönd snøri*, Trym satt på haugen/ tussekongen/ snodde band av gull/ til bikkjene sine. Videre sier Trym før bryllupet, *Þkv* 23: *Ganga hér at garði/ gullhyrnðar kýr/ øxn alsvertir/ iotni at gamni;/ fiold á ec meidma/ fiold á ec menia/ einnar mér Freyio/ ávant þiccir*, Kyr med gullhorn/ går her ved gjerdet/ og kolsvarte okser/ til jotners glede; gods har jeg nok av/ gull har jeg nok av/ det er bare Frøya/ jeg ennå mangler. Hel beskrives i *Bld* 6: *Segðu mér ór helio/ – ec man ór heimi –: hveim ero beccir/ baugom sánir/ flet fagrliga/ flóð gulli?*, Si meg nytt fra Hel/ fra heimen vet jeg; for hvem er benker/ med brynjer dekt/ setene fagert/ smykket med gull? Til slutt nevnes *Vsp* 37: *Stóð fyr norðan/ á Niðavöllum/ salr ór gulli/ Sindra ættar*, Nordpå stod den/ på Ne-vollen/ en sal av gull/ for Sindres ætt. Sindres ætt er trolig en jotunætt. (Steinsland & Meulengracht Sørensen 1999:59)

Foreløpig konstateres det at gullet inntar en fremtredende plass i beskrivelsene av jotunheimen. Gull opptrer så regelmessig i beskrivelsene av jotunboligene at det kan betraktes som et fast element i motivet. Når det i eddadiktningen foreligger en så tydelig kopling mellom jotunheimen og gullet, mener vi det må tillegges betydning. Gullet betraktes vanligvis som et statussymbol som konnoterer rikdom og makt. Når gullet nærmest inngår som et fast element i beskrivelsene av jotunheimen, innebærer det at karakteristikkene av Utgård som kosmologisk rom bør nyanseres, og videre at balansen mellom de kosmologiske domenene i mytologien blir justert. Før vi utdyper dette resonnementet, skal de øvrige beskrivelsene av jotunboligene undersøkes. Jotunboligene synes nemlig å foreligge med ytterligere karakteristikkene som peker i retning av høystatus og aristokrati.

I eddadiktningen forekommer det samlet sett en rekke beskrivelser av jotnens boliger og tilholdssteder. Jotunboliger blir nevnt eller beskrevet i *Hávamál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Skírnismál*, *Hymiskviða*, *Lokasenna*, *Þrymskviða*, *Baldrs draumar* og *Hyndluljóð*, med andre ord i nesten samtlige gudedikt. Flere av de aktuelle strofene ble kommentert i avsnittet over, men gullets tydelige tilstedeværelse i jotunheimen vil nå bli satt i sammenheng med øvrige karakteristikkene som foreligger over jotunboligene.

I *Hávamál* nevnes Suttungs sal. Hos Suttung befinner seg dikterdrikken Odrøre, som Odin etter en rekke vidervedigheter kan bringe til æsene. Av str. 106 fremkommer det at drikken var gjemt inne i berget: *Rata munn/ létomc rúms um fá/ oc um griot gnaga; yfir oc undir/ stóðomc iotna vegir/ svá hættu ec höfði til*, Rates munn/ lot jeg rydde meg veg/ bite gjennom berget; over og under/ gikk jotners veier/ slik våget jeg liv og lemmer. Hvorvidt også

jotunhallen var situert inne i berget framkommer ikke av diktet, men det synes ikke å være grunn til å trekke en slik konklusjon. I beskrivelsen av Suttungs sal inngår, som vist over, vakre Gunnlod på gullstol, og diktermjøden, en drikk som er av stor viktighet for æsene generelt og Odin spesielt, og som gir assosiasjoner til gjestebud og drikkelag der skaldene sa fram sine kvad.

I *Vafþrúðnismál* besøker Odin jotnen Vaftrudne for en kunnskapsduell. Det kommer fram av str. 5 og 19 at Vaftrudnes bolig er en hall. Følgende sceneanvisning foreligger i strofe 5: *Fór þá Óðinn/ at freista orðspeki/ þess ins alsvinna iotuns; at höllo hann kom/ oc átti Íms faðir/ inn gecc Yggr þegar*, Fór så Odin/ til ordstriden med den allkloke jotnen; kom til en hall/ som Ims far eide/ straks gikk Ygg inn der. Diktet avslører ellers lite om Vaftrudnes tilholdssted, foruten at boligen er en hall.

I *Grímnismál* tematiseres gudenes verden og ingen jotunboliger nevnes, men i *Skírnismál* finnes flere relevante passasjer. Store deler av handlingen i diktet finner sted på Gymses gård, en gård situert i jotunheimene. Allerede i prologen av diktet beskrives gården: *Hann sá í Iotunheima, oc sá þar mey fagra, þá er hol gecc frá scála föður síns til scemmo*, Han så inn i Jotunheimene, og der så han en fager møy, som gikk fra farens skåle og bort til buret. Passasjen røper at stedet huser den vakre jotundatteren Gerd og at det er flere hus på gården. At Gymses sted betegnes som en gård kommer også fram av str. 6, 14 og 22 der betegnelsen *Gymis garðr* benyttes. Et mer utfyllende inntrykk av gården gis i en senere passasje av innskutt prosa der det fortelles om Skirnes ankomst til jotunheimene: *Scírnir reið í Iotunheima til Gymis garða. Þar vóro hundar ólmir, oc bundnir fyrir sciðgarðz hliði, þess er um sal Gerðar var. Hann reið at, þar er fêhirðir sat á haugi*, Skirne red inn i Jotunheimene, og kom til Gymses gard. Der var noen olme hunder bundet ved grinda i den skigarden som var omkring Gjerds sal. Han red dit hvor en gjeter satt på en haug. De olme hundene kan signalisere uvennlighet, men indikerer samtidig et aristokratisk levesett. At et område er bevoktet signaliserer en tilstedeværelse av rikdom og verdier, i dette tilfelle er det Gerd, den vakre datteren som bevoktes. Tilstedeværelsen av gjeteren i str. 11–12 og trellekvinne i str. 15 peker i retning av en høvdinggård og Gerds invitt i strofe 16 understreker inntrykket av at vi befinner oss i en høvdinghall. Gerd sier: *Inn biððu hann ganga/ í occarn sal/ oc drecca inn mæra mioð*, Si han skal komme/ til salen vår/ og drikke dyrebar mjød; Tilsvarende konnotasjoner skapes gjennom strofe 37: *Heill verðu nú heldr, sveinn/ oc tac við hrímkálki/ fullom forns miarðar!* Vær heller vår gjest da/ her er rimkalken/ fylt med forn mjød. Også avvisningen i strofe 22 viser til en velstående høvdinggård: *era mér gullz vant/ í görðom Gymis/ at deila fé föður*, Gull har jeg nok av/ i Gymses garder/ jeg rår for min fars rikdom. Beskrivelsene av Gymses gård i *Skírnismál* gjør det tydelig at jotnene kan besitte boliger av fornemste slag. Symbolspråket i beskrivelsen av Gymses gård peker klart i retningen av vikingtidens høvdinggård. De mange byggene, gjeteren, trellekvinne, hundene, gullet og mjødet som serveres i hallen peker åpenbart i retning av et aristokratisk levesett. Når gården i tillegg er åsted for et frieri som kan ha hatt sterke herskerideologiske konnotasjoner er symbolikken ikke til å ta feil av (Steinsland 1991). Gymses gård utviser kvaliteter tilhørende overklassen, og står i tydelig motsetning til forskningens karakteristikker av jotunheimen som et usivilisert, utemmet og demonisk område.

I *Hymiskviða* besøker Tor og Tyr jotnen Hyme, hvis også holder til i en hall. Det kommer fram av str. 7, *hurfo at höllo/ er Hymir átti*, de drog til hallen/ som Hyme eide. I str. 8 blir gudene tatt i mot av to kvinneskikkelser i hallen. I denne beskrivelsen foreligger en tydelig motsetning mellom en monsteraktig bestemor med ni hundre hoder: *Mögr fann ömmo/ mioc leiða sér/ hafði hófða/ hundruð nío*, der kom bestemor/ bisk og fæl/ ni hundre hoder/ hadde gamla, og en staselig høvdingkone *Enn önnor gecc/ algullin, fram/ brúnhvít, bera/ biórveig syni*, men fram på golvet/ gullprydet, hjart/ gikk mor, et beger/ tilbød hun sønnen. Det stelles dernest til et gjestebud for gudene i Hymes hall. Til tross for Hymes uvennlige innstilling gjør

han likevel ære på gjestene, han sier i strofe 14: *Þar vóro þjórar/ þrír of tecnir/ bað senn iotunn/ sióða ganga*, Snart ble tre store/ stuter hentet/ ”de skal kokes i kveld,”/ sa jotnen. Hymes hall skildres gjennom en rekke personer og gjenstander. Stedet bebos, foruten Hyme, av hans kone, en bestemor og en frille. Først og fremst kjennetegnes stedet ved å skjule den vesentlige ølkjelen som gudene trenger, men også andre verdifulle saker er å finne hos Hyme, blant annet sju andre kjeler og et ”uknuselig” drikkebeget. I tillegg har Hyme en rekke okser på gården. Én av oksene omtales særlig, den er helt svart, hvilket indikerer at det var en offerokse.

Det begynner å framtre et mønster i disse beskrivelsene: jotnenes boliger er aristokratiske høvdinghaller. Inntrykk som blir ytterligere forsterket i *Lokasenna*. Der finner handlingen sted i hallen til jotnen Æge. Et inntrykk av hallen får vi først og fremst gjennom prologen: *Ægir átti tvá þiónustomenn, Fimafengr oc Eldir. Þar var lýsigull haft fyrir eldzliós. Siálft barsc þar öl. Þar var gríðastaðr mikill*, Æge hadde to tjenere, Fimafeng og Elde. Skinnende gull ble brukt der i stedet for ild til å lyse opp med, og ølet bar seg sjøl omkring. Stedet var strengt fredhellig. I Æges hall finnes mat og øl i mengder, ikke minst benyttes den åpenbart betydningsfulle kjelen som æsene har reist til verdens ende for å hente. I hallen benyttes tjenere og gården er fredhelliget under gjestebudet, slik høvdinggårdene skildres i sagaene.

Også beskrivelsen av Tryms gård i *Þrymskviða* svarer til en høvdinggård. I *Þrk 6* ankommer Loke jotunheimen hvor han oppsøker jotnen Trym: *Þrymr sat á haugi/ þursa dróttin/ greyiom sínom/ gullbönd snøri/ oc mörom sínom/ mön iafnaði*, Trym satt på haugen/ tussekongen/ snodde band av gull/ til bikkjene sine/ og stusset manen/ på merrene sine. De aktiviteter som utøves på dette stedet sender ut et tydelig signal: vi befinner oss blant overklassen. Bikkjene får gullsnorer og hestenes man blir stusset. Inntrykket av Tryms bolig som en høvdinggård understrekes gjennom hele diktet, blant annet ved at Trym omtales konsekvent som *þursa dróttinn* (str. 6, 11, 22, 25, 30, 31). Også str. 23 *Ganga hér at garði/ gullhyrñðar kyr/ øxn alsvartir/ iötni at gamni*, Kyr med gullhorn/ går her ved gjerdet/ og kolsvarte okser/ til jotners glede. Str 24 *Var þar at qveldi/ um komið snimma/ oc fyr iotna/ öl fram borit*, kveld ble det tidlig/ tussmørket kom/ og øl ble skjenket/ i jotungarden. De følgende strofer skildrer selve gildet der Tor er nær ved å avsløre seg ved å vise sin sanne natur med hensyn til inntak av mat og drikke og sitt kvasse blick. Implisitt i dette dramatiske øyeblikk er gildets overflod med et tydelig ritualisert preg. Gjennom beskrivelsene av Trym og de aktiviteter som foregår ved hans gård er det åpenbart at han tilhører samme kulturelle fellesskap som æsene. Trym kan de kulturelle kodene og vet hvordan den ritualiserte seremonien, som et bryllup var, skulle foregå.

Beskrivelsen av Hels hall kan også inngå i denne gjennomgangen. Hel regnes vanligvis som en jotunkvinne. *Bld 6 og 7: hveim ero beccir/ baugom sánir/ flet fagrliga/ flóð gulli*, for hvem er benker/ med brynjer dekt/ setene fagert/ smykket med gull? *Hér stendr Baldri/ of brugginn mioðr/ scírar veigar/ liggr scoldr yfir*, Mjøden står brygget/ for Balder her/ den skire drikken/ med skjold lagt over. Hels hall er åpenbart en festsal der benker, brynjer, gull, mjød og skjold inngår i karakteristikken.

Hyndluljóð angir derimot en ganske annen jotunbolig. Str. 1: *Hyndla systir, er í helli býr*, Søster Hyndla, som i helleren bor. *Hdl* er dermed det eneste av eddadiktene som angir jotunkvinnens bolig som en naturformasjon.

Det har som nevnt vært viet lite oppmerksomhet mot jotnenes boliger i forskningen, likevel synes det å være en dominerende forståelse at jotnene holdt til i berg og ur. I skaldediktningen foreligger det en tydelig kopling mellom jotnene og fjell, berg, stein og lignende (Meissner 1921), og i fornaldersagaer har jotnene ofte rollen som representanter for naturen og det usiviliserte (Motz 1987, Schultz 2004). Deler av navnematerialet i eddadiktningen kan også

tolkes i den retning (Mundal 1990), men i gudediktens motivkrets er jotnernes relasjon til naturen nærmest fraværende.⁶

Sammenfattende kan vi si at undersøkelsen har avdekket flere interessante forhold omkring den mytiske topografien. Gudeboligene har en passiv rolle i diktningen, i motsetning til jotunboligene som inntar en sentral rolle i narrativene. Jotunboligene har dermed en tydeligere funksjon i mytologien enn det gudeboligene har. Jotunboligene utviser videre kvaliteter som man i forskningen i liten grad lagt vekt på. Jotunboligene framstilles ved hjelp av elementer eller symboler som peker i retning av høvdinggårder, aristokrati og makt. Det foreligger dermed ingen kvalitative forskjeller i framstillingene av guders og jotners boliger.

I forlengelsen av analysen av boligene i eddadiktningen virker det hensiktsmessig å rette oppmerksomheten mot bruken av den semantiske kategoriene *natur* og *kaos* om vanligvis benyttes om Utgård når den førkristne kosmologien skal beskrives. Når boligene betraktes som korresponderende med forestillingene om det store rommet, vil analysen kunne inngå i diskusjonen om førkristen kosmologi. I tidligere forskningsframstillinger ble jotnene og Utgård identifisert med 'det onde'. Denne oppfatningen har delvis blitt erstattet med en identifisering av Utgård som utemmet natur (Motz f. Eks. 1981 og 1987), eller som et område der kaotiske og nedbrytende krefter råder (Schjødt 1990; Clunies Ross 1998). Når den semantiske kategorien 'natur' benyttes, står denne vanligvis som en motsetning til 'kultur'. Natur skal dermed representere anti-kultur. Denne undersøkelsen har vist at 'natur' ikke egner seg til å forklare jotnernes rolle i mytologien. Gro Steinsland (2005) argumenterer for at Utgård i noen grad bør tenkes å samsvare med datidens bruk av utmarka, men også en slik tolkning får problemer i møte med beskrivelsene som foreligger av jotnens boliger. De synes ikke å representere noen form for utmarksbeboelse. I eddadiktningen inngår guder og jotner i samhandling som tilsier at begge ættene representerer kultur, og særlig i *Lokasenna* og *Brymskviða* blir det tematisert hvordan de to ættene opererer innenfor samme kultursfære. Jotnene behersker de kulturelle kodene og agerer i tråd med kulturens sosiale koder. Begrepet 'kaos' har en mer komplisert valør, og kan ikke lite lett avvises som egnet analytisk kategori, men dersom begrepet benyttes i betydning ikke-orden, viser denne analysen at også termen kaos kan være for unyansert. Det har i flere sammenhenger blitt påpekt at den kosmiske relasjonen mellom Åsgård og Utgård ikke må forveksles med den kristne motsetningen mellom det gode og det onde. I dag synes forskningen i stor grad å ha falt ned på at den førkristne kosmologien heller handler om en motsetning mellom kosmos alt. orden og kaos. Resultatene fra denne undersøkelsen viser at heller ikke disse kategoriene er fullt ut adekvate.

Om jotunheimenes rolle i mytologien står en rekke spørsmål ubesvart, og med denne analysen tilbys ingen endelige svar på hvilken symbolikk den mytiske topografien rommer, eller hvilke analytiske kategorier som bør utgjøre basen i en analytisk modell av den førkristne kosmologien. Det som imidlertid synes åpenbart er at jotnernes domene danner et mytologisk motiv med en svært kompleks symbolsk struktur, og som nettopp derfor vil, på et ideologisk plan, ha kunnet fungere innenfor en rekke av de sosiale strukturene vi finner i vikingtidens samfunn.

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The Gutnic *runkalender* and the ancient system of time calculus

Maria Cristina Lombardi, Dept. Studi Letterari e Linguistici dell'Europa, Italy

This paper analyzes some problems connected with time calculus and medieval calendars, in particular those related to the Gutnic *runkalender* of the 14th century, preserved in codex NKA 203 8°, copied by Ole Worm in the first quarter of the 17th century.

The manuscript does not seem to have received all the attention it deserves. After the 17th century edition in *Fasti Danici* by Ole Worm, the first and only modern edition by Lithberg and Wessén goes back to 1934 (Lithberg and Wessén 1934).

The text, as the first known specimen of this genre, shows a mixture of ancient and new festivities. In fact it mirrors the successful overcoming of ecclesiastical and liturgical dates on the old system of traditional feasts and fairs.

In particular, I wish to point out the connection between the old market of Uppsala, mentioned by Adam of Bremen, and the female festivities linked to the first period of the year.

The Gutnic runic calendar is a complex text presenting linguistic and compositional problems, as it contains different types of signs and symbols: numbers, images, letters. Moreover, it is connected to complicated computational methods which are mostly bound up to the liturgical calendars introduced into Sweden after the conversion to Christianity.

Its only manuscript lies at the Royal Library in Copenhagen and was copied by Ole Worm from an original dated 1328, burned in the Copenhagen fire of 1728. Nothing is known for certain about its provenance. However, since the original was in Gutnic, it is likely to have been produced in Gotland. Some runic letters had so much suffered from fading and rubbing that it was impossible to read them clearly. Worm tried to carefully imitate the original runes forms, although he was not able to identify the Nordic dialect in which it was written. At first he thought it was a Danish dialect, but then he suspected his hypothesis to be wrong, because of elements which did not seem compatible with a Danish provenance, such as the elimination of the Danish holy king Knut in correspondence with the 6th of July. Unlike other Christian calendars circulating in Scandinavia, in folio 5, next to July the 6th, instead of Saint Knut, we find *siau bryra dahr* “Seven Holy Brothers”, where we can see the peculiar Gutnic passage from long $\emptyset >$ to long y (here accompanied by the fall of the voiced dental spirant δ , between /y/ and /r). This omission probably depends on its Gotlandic origin and on the negative attitude towards the Danish, diffused in Gotland because of the frequent Danish invasions. On the other hand, many Gotlandic runic inscriptions show Danish influence – we possess evidence based on linguistic forms or names, etc. (Lagerlöf and Svahnström 1994, p. 62) – in some areas, such as those around the churches of Lye or Sanda. This could explain the travel of the text from Gotland to Denmark.

Codex NKA 203 8° consists of 15 folios, largely of computation texts: a calendar, calculating annual dates of liturgical feasts, an Easter table and some leaves with instructions and images based on digital computation applied to chronology, a very simplified version of the techniques illustrated in Bedas *De temporum ratione* (Edson 1997).

The use-value was certainly the first aim of the compiler, whose main intention seems to have been that of creating a current aid for calculating the date of Easter and other festivities.

The presence of German elements – such as the word *mipviku* in the dative form (*i mipviku dahi*) to designate Wednesday (cfr. Old Swedish *odensdag*) or *sjau slaperar* “seven sleepers” (cfr. Old Swedish *sovare*) – is not unexpected in Gotland, since German merchants were very powerful in Visby during the Middle Age and dominated the ports of its Northern coast.

Knowledge of this kind of writings had spread all over Europe and, after the conversion to Christianity, had reached Scandinavia. Depending on the low cultural level of priests, the original texts were often changed into briefer and simpler forms, like the calculus instructions contained in codex NKA 203 8°.

Our text is a bilingual Latin and Gutnic work, written in the so-called medieval runic alphabet which was created in High Middle Age with new rune patterns in order to overcome the obvious weakness of the 16-letter *futhark*. The calendar was transliterated from a Latin original and Ole Worm may have met some transcriptional difficulties in identifying some characters in the text.

In this particular variant of runic script from continental Scandinavia, used in Gotland only at the beginning of the 14th century (von Friesen 1933, p. 231.),¹ the distinction between voiced and voiceless stops had been recreated by the addition of new symbols, such as some punctated runes to designate a larger range of sound changes, like mutated vowels.

Runic scripts which appear in manuscripts seldom occur in inscriptions. On the contrary, in our case the script of the Gutnic calendar corresponds to contemporary late runic inscriptions (in Gotlandic churches and churchyards, i.e. in Mästerby, Hemse, Södra Vinge, Stenkumla, as well as in continental Scandinavia; Svärdröm 1971, pp. 131–132).

Between the 12th and the 14th centuries the area around Visby was active in trade relationships with the main ports of the Baltic Sea. It was dominated by Hanseatic German merchants, speaking and writing Low German. They wrote their own navigation laws and trade rules, of which ‘*Wisby stadga*’ is an eloquent example. On the other hand the central and southern parts of Gotland constituted a scarcely populated territory with an economy based on agriculture and sheep breeding. There *bönderna* were particularly skillful in calculating time for different crops related to moon-phases, an ability Olaus Magnus recognizes to Swedish farmers in general, as part of a tradition going back to their pagan past.

These areas, although peripheral, were connected to the coast for the purpose of trade by a roadway crossing the island. Thus, I would suggest that one of the churches lying in such peripheral but not completely isolated areas, e.g. Mästerby, Hemse, or Sanda, might be the possible place of origin of our text.² My hypothesis takes into consideration some late runic inscriptions discovered in their churchyards. They share, in fact, two features with our runic calendar: runic series, showing strong similarities with those adopted in our calendar (containing punctated runes and lacking the typical Gotlandic **s**-rune), and a chronological system for dating events (Gustavson 1940, p. 7).³

For example, on a grave in the church of Sanda, we find the following selfdating inscription (Säve 1859, p. 78):

*butaiþr i belingabo lit þina stain kera olaf sin i[...]ari, þa uar ha:hal sunutahr og lahr i brimstafr i si(aundu)[...] rapu i tafluni biþin fyri olafs sial i belingabo kuþ kefi siali þin[...] miþ alu kr[...]snum sialum.*⁴

¹ Late Gotlandic inscriptions show two types of s-rune: besides the common one, another –s was invented and used on the isle. It was made of three lines and was spread all over Gotland. It does not seem to have represented any phonemic distinction. The lack of the peculiar Gotland s-rune in NKA 203 8° indicates that the original was written down at the beginning of the 13th century, when a continental runic script substituted the local variant.

² Wessén 1979, p. 109, points out that on Gotland *bönderna* could read and write in runic alphabet, while clergymen and monks read and wrote in Latin.

³ Late runic inscriptions, of 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, show practical use of the runic script. For example, runes are used for dating different events, such as the building of a bridge or a church, or the making of a painting and so on, in or outside churches. Our calendar is an eloquent example of this trend.

⁴ “Butaiþr from Berlingabo had this stone made for Olaf, his..., then (that year) the rune hagall, h, was the Sunday letter (G) and lagr, l (namely 9) was the golden number in the seventh row of Easter table. Pray etc. the year

Exactly the same selfdating method is also adopted by the Gutnic runkalendar (Lithberg and Wessén, p. 21):

*att. þusand. ar. ok. þryhundrap. ara. ok. tiuhu. ar. ok. ata. ar. uaru. lipin. þa. en. þitta.
rim. uar. skrifap. þa. uar. þ. ok. u. sunnudahr. ok. 18. i. siaundu. rapu. i. taflunni. prim.*⁵

Although partly a translation from a Latin exemplar of perpetual calendar,⁶ this chronological work, including Easter tables and notices of historical and biblical events, combines secular and ecclesiastical materials with native elements.

It was probably the purpose of providing a practical aid for both priests and laymen that led the compiler to include a large range of computational material in its pages, by adopting a strongly condensing style. Even numerical symbolism, where the allegorical game seems most abstruse, like in folio 12, is here simplified.

*þitta. ier. fingranna. uerð°.
þumbling. kustar. fem. ok. tiuhu. nesta. fingr. þumblingi. kustar. þrettan. langustang. att. ok.
þriahatihi. nesta. fingr. litla. fingri. kustar. niutan. litla. fingr. kustar. siau°
sla. þet. saman. meþ. primatalinu.*⁷

The mental gymnastics required in applying such counting rules was seen as a form of religious scholarship by clergy (Meyevaent, 1976 p. 46). But ecclesiastical methods were considerably far from overcoming traditional views.

In Scandinavia the remnants of old systems of time calculus, rooted in pre-Christian times, were still alive especially in isolated areas. As Wessén maintains in *Våra folksmål* (Wessén, 1935 pp. 12–13), peripheral regions are generally more conservative than those located near central market towns, as far as language is concerned. Moreover, dialects frequently preserve a number of terms related to native methods of time calculus.

In *Gutalagen* (as well as in *Västgötalagen*) the lunar month is called *ný ok niþar* (“new and waning moon”). This seems to be connected with what the Swedish mythographer and runologist Olof Rudbeck says about *bönderna*, who calculated moon phases by the ancient ‘*spann* method’: they opened a hand and held it towards the moon. One *spann* is an angle of about 12 grades and corresponds to the daily growth of the moon. It is possible that after the conversion to Christianity and the subsequent diffusion of Easter tables, through which new-moon and full-moon could be calculated, a useful exchange of knowledge between farmers and clergymen took place on this subject.

Therefore a text like the Gutnic calendar could provide an effective tool to date not only Christian solemnities, but also old traditional feasts, based on moon phases, helping even to correct imprecise calculations made by common people, whose skills were rooted in agricultural occupations going back to heathen times.

Although vaguely hinting at a mysterious knowledge, the calendar seems to lead to practical immediate computations and, supposedly, was also used by farmers who collaborated with priests in the running of parish life. These relationships between the two social classes in

is 1324.” The translation of this Gutnic inscription into English and that of the following footnote are both mine (MCL).

⁵ “1328 years had passed. When this calendar was written, the Sunday letters were þ and u and the golden number was 18, in the seventh row of the table.”

⁶ About perpetual calendars, see Cappelli 2002, pp. 3–31.

⁷ “This is fingers value: the thumb costs 25, the finger next to the thumb costs 13. The long finger costs 31. The finger next to the small finger costs 19. The small finger costs 7. Put together and you will have the golden number” (The translation into English is mine. MCL).

Sweden were described by Olaus Magnus in his *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* and later underlined by Linné in his *Iter Gotlandicum*.⁸

Similarities between Christian chronology and popular computational systems (connected to ancient myths) were presumably based on their relationships to natural phenomena.⁹ As we learn from *Landnámabók* and sagas regarding Iceland, the new religion preserved the authority vested by the pagan deities in some fields. This could be explained by the presence of a strong class of *bönder* in both Iceland and Gotland, who exerted all their influence in order to preserve their cultural traditions. In our manuscript, an example of this fact is the inclusion of dates and elements belonging to an ancient Scandinavian division of the year into two seasons (cfr. Icelandic *misseri*) with their beginning dates¹⁰ and the chronological method based on week counting. This witnesses that the transmission of old traditional knowledge was bound up with information about Christian liturgical solemnities.

Ex. the word *sumar* occurs next the 14th of April, according to the old Scandinavian tradition, as well as next to the 27th of May, St. Beda, in this way mirroring also the new trends.

Under this regard we have to observe the difference between the active role of women in pagan sacrifices, in which farmers had been engaged for centuries, and the new faith which put an end to the active participation of women in religious celebrations. Pagan rites for female deities performed by women in order to receive good crops are mentioned in different Nordic and Germanic sources. For example, in Hauksbók's version of Aelfric's *De auguriis* women are mentioned taking food out to various natural features of the landscape, dedicating it to the spirits of the land.

These spirits, as many Icelandic medieval texts report, were called *landvættir* and lived in the land, protecting its wellbeing. Sometimes they are described as female spirits and coincide with *dísir* (Clunies Ross 1994, p. 127), old divinities to whom a famous sacrifice called *dísablót* was offered all over Scandinavia.

According to some scholars, the term *dísir* (plural of *dís*) was originally used to denote a distinct group of feminine divinities tied to fertility, who exercised their control also over the fates of men (Mundal 1974, pp. 83–86). It derives from the Old Indian *dhvanatas*, personifications of maternal energy.¹¹ In Norway they appear in familiar contexts or individual cults, not in public ceremonies. In South-Eastern Norway a great *dísablót* was held in local farmyards, whereas in Sweden they were offered a very important public sacrifice.

Although they appear as a group-name, as Folke Ström points out, nominal compounds containing this term refer always to a singular *dís*, which may indicate their main representative member, the goddess Freyja, called *Vanadís* “the Dís of Vanes”, the ruler of love and fertility (Ström 1967, p. 143). *Dísir* might consequently have been minor fertility spirits ruling different parts of the nature, as the above named passage in Aelfric's *De auguriis* as well as some nominal compounds in which they appear seem to indicate.

They were connected with home, family, fertility, as the Eddic poem *Sigrdrífumál* indicates, by mentioning their function in helping *puerperae* during child-births (Eddukvæði 1968, p. 344):

⁸ von Linné, [1745] 1954, p. 110: “*ty adelen har intet här anlagt några gods, och bönderna tjäna med mycken tacksamhet sina själasörjare, varande dem behjälpliga uti allt deras gårdsbruk [...]*”.

⁹ In the Old Norse translation of Aelfric's homily *De Auguriis*, contained in Hauksbók, the Anglo-Saxon monk says that the Middle age rituals were intended to clarify the intentions of supernatural forces who were supposed to direct one's personal life; he makes a distinction between witchcraft and *wissung*, divine guidance.

¹⁰ The poetic *Edda* shows an interesting example of this old tradition in *Guðrúnarkviða I*, where it is said that Guðrún lived in Danemark ‘for seven times six months’.

¹¹ We know very little about *dísir*. Traces of their worship are found in Nordic myths, in sagas, in poetry, in some kennings and in personal feminine names where they usually occupy the second place, as in Halldís, Herdís, Hjórdís, Thordís.

*Bjargrúnar skaltu kunna,
ef þú bjarga vilt
og leysa kind frá konum;
á lófa þær skal rista
og um liðu spennu
og biðja þá dísir duga.*

In many ancient religions women were related to fertility and agriculture, as it is shown by Ginzburg with many examples from all Europe, like the *Matres/Matrones* of the low Rhine region or the Celtic Epona (Ginzburg 1989, p. 320).

The above quoted stanza from *Sigrdrífumál* suggests the idea of Dísir as deities supervising and favouring the natural lifecycle. These aspects were preserved by the new Christian faith and mostly transferred to the Holy Virgin.

As it is observable in calendars, this led to fixing dates and festivities matching pre-Christian feasts, often connected to fertility rites, with new liturgical solemnities.

It is worth observing that, in both Western and Eastern Nordic chronological traditions, we have texts stating that the beginning dates of Winter or Summer were devoted to *dísir*, with the celebration of *disablót*.

However in the Old Norse tradition the *disablót* is connected to Winter nights, at the beginning of Winter, while in Sweden the *disablót* was celebrated between January and March, and it was therefore related to the beginning of Summer. In fact, besides being – unlike in Norway – a public sacrifice, it denoted also a fundamental juridical general assembly (of *alla Svíar*), indicating these divinities even as protectors of legal meetings. Therefore it took the name of *Disting*.¹² Its multi-functional role is shown by many passages in medieval sources, which tell about the *disaþing*, or *disting*, as a religious celebration as well as a legal assembly and a market.

According to Olaus Magnus (Olaus Magnus 1982. § 34), the *disting* derived from the *disablót* and was a mobile festivity. It started the agricultural works of the year by tracing the first symbolic plough-lines. Like Easter, it was regulated on moon phases. It was fixed every year according to the so called *distings rule*, depending on the first full-moon (*när det trettondagsnyet går i fyllet*) following the thirteenth day after Christmas (the 6th of January).

It varied in a nineteen years cycle between the 21st of January and the 19th of February, since the moon-cycle is made by 19 years.

The *disablót*, “the great sacrifice for the dís”, was not only dedicated to a female goddess, but was also held in the month of Góí (De Vries 1962, p. 182),¹³ more or less corresponding to the period between February and March, usually devoted to women, as it represented a sort of symbolic gestation time for the Earth, just before Spring.

Góí appears among the ancient Nordic names of the months, written in almanacks until 1901. They may refer to climate, to crops or to mythological traditions: we find *Torre* (known in many variants, as *Tors*, *Torr*) and *Góí* for naming the first two months.

The myth of Góí as a young maiden is well known from many sagas (for ex. it is narrated at the beginning of the *Orkneyinga saga*) and tells the story of Góí, daughter of Þorri, king of Kvenland (The Land of Women) – who, in *Hversu Noregs byggdisk*, is the son of Snær, son of Frosti (a sort of genealogy of atmospheric elements). Góí, then, would descend from snow and frost and be the sister of Norr and Gorr. Her role as a sister is very much stressed in her story. Since she disappears, her brothers are sent in search of her, thus exploring remote

¹²It is mentioned, for example, in Adam from Bremens *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae pontificum*, in sagas such as *Ynglingasaga*, Ch. 29, in *Olafssaga Helga* in *Heimskringla*, Ch. 77, where it is said to last one week.

¹³ Góí derives from an *ie.* root and it is connected with the Latin *hiems* “winter”.

Scandinavian regions. Finally they discover that she has been abducted by king Hrólfr of Bjarg, the son of a giant. Sisterhood is an important aspect, often stressed when dealing with mythological beings and the collective name *Dísir* is supposed to mean “sisters” in many sources (Mundal 1974, pp. 79–83). Also Snorri considers *dís* as a *heiti* for ‘sister’ (*Snorra Edda* 190–8) (1300–1350): *heitir ok systir, dís, joðdís*.

My aim is to show the passage into later Christian texts and ceremonies of the female element characterizing pagan rites connected to fertility, recognizing its “prolonged echoes” (as Margaret Clunies Ross would put it). It is well known that, with the conversion to Christianity, Uppsala market has always been held on the 2nd of February, on the *kyndilmässodag*, *Candelora dies*, “the feast of candles”, or the day of purification of Holy Mary, on which, according to *Upplandslagen*, also Uppsala thing was held.

The Gutnic runic calendar shows something interesting in this regard.

Fol. 3 contains the month of February. Like the other pages of the calendar, under the name of the month written at the top, the page is divided into three columns. On the left is the runic letter corresponding to number 2, the second of February, followed by the compound *kvindilmessudah*. Next to it, in the third column, a sign representing a hand holding a flower appears. Certainly it can be interpreted as a symbol of fertility, a snowdrop, which flowers in February to announce Spring time. This shows clear connections to the ancient character of the feast (female fertility and gestation), which could have caused a superimposition in the first element of the compound *Kvindil-* as we find it here – between two words: *kyndil* “candle” *kvindy/kvendi* “woman”.

Dictionaries usually report *kyndill* as a loan-word from Latin *candela* and *kyndilmessa* “missa candelorum, candelmaessa, Candelora” (De Vries 1962, p. 340).

kvendi neutrum “woman” or *kvenna* f. “woman” *kuindil* (ibid., p. 337).

Moreover in Gutnic the oscillation between *-e* and *-i* is frequent and, as Wessén indicates, this dialect shows a narrower pronunciation of vowels: *mela* instead of *mäla*, *lit* instead of *lät*, *ir* instead of *är*, as we can observe also in the Gutnic runcalendar in which *e > i* (Lithberg and Wessén 1934).

Actually the Candelora, feast of Holy Mary purification, seems to have its roots in Roman times. February was the month of purification for Romans too: a sacrifice in honour of Juno opened the month of February. *Februa* were the tools of purification: woollen clothes, used to asperse the sacrificed victims’ blood, were held, washed and shown so that one could see them even from long distance.

Therefore this complex mixture of old and new might have led to a superimposition of the two words, *kyndil* and *kvind*, both mirroring aspects well rooted in ceremonies performed in this time of the year.

In *Friðbjófs saga*, a *dísarsalr*, “hall of the *dís*” (in the singular form), is mentioned. It is located in a sanctuary near the temple of the god Baldr, and in a sense it is symbolically opposed to it. Ingibjörg and other women live there while Ingibjörg’s brothers, the two kings Helgi and Hálfðan, are away. Although any kind of sexual intercourse is prohibited in this sacral area, Friðbjófr, and Ingibjörg, imitated by their companions, do not care at all about the menace of Baldr’s anger. While they drink toasts (Larsson, 1901 p. 11) and have sex in the *dísarsalr*, they seem to be under protection of the female deity, the *dís*, probably Freyja (the *Vanadís*), the goddess of love and fertility. This atmosphere seems to allude to some ancient orgiastic rituals connected to *dísir* and to *dísablót*.

In *Friðbjófs saga*, the presence of Baldr plays a kind of dialectic role in relationship with the *dís*.¹⁴ Since the temple of Baldr stands opposite the *Dísarsal*, we could interpret some

¹⁴ The myth of Baldr is one of the most complex and discussed among scholars (connections between Baldr and Christianity are well known). According to Gustav Neckel, Baldr would be linked to an Oriental god of fruitful-

elements as pointing to aspects of ancient cults and ceremonies bound to the main agricultural cropshifts, involving attraction and rejection between female and male deities.

Moreover an allusion to the purification aspect, present in the above mentioned feast of Juno, in Rome, may be detected in some skaldic verses as well as in the prose passage of *Friðþjófs saga* (p. 17) in which the stanza is imbedded:

Wel hafe þier oss veitt og fagurlega, hefur Baldur bondi ecki vid oss yfst, enn nær þier vitid konga heim komna þá breydid blæiur ydrar áá dysar salinn, þui hann er hæstur hier áá gardinum, munum vær siá þetta af bæ vorum, kongz dotter sagdi ecki hafe þier komid, sydann for vinum ad fagna þá Friðþjófur heim og næsta morgun eptr gieck hann ut stemma, og sagdi so er hann kom inn og kuad visu:

*þad mun eg seigia,
seggium vorum,
ad gjorla mun farid,
gaman ferdum,
skulu ei skatnar,
til skips fara,
þui nu eru blæur,
áá blik komnar.*

geingu þeir þá vt og sau ad allur dysarsal urinn var þaktur bleyktum liereptum.

Ingibjörg and the other women have hung white clothes in the *dísarsalr*, the highest building of the sanctuary, to be seen from long distance. This particular position of *dísarsalr* can be read as a metaphorical higher position of the *dís* over the other gods (Baldr included), while the allusion to the bleaching process reminds us of *februa*, the white clothes symbolizing purification, used by the Romans in honour of Juno.

Let's now return to Gotland and to the Gutnic runic calendar.

We have already emphasized the island's role as a melting pot of different political, religious and cultural trends, involving influences from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland and other Baltic lands. At the same time its conservative character, especially evident in internal, partially isolated areas, can explain the remnants of ancient ritual traditions.

Guta Saga, whose earliest manuscript goes back to the 14th century, shows strong concern with pagan deities and rituals, which possibly still represented a frame of reference underlying the 14th century's Gotlandic society.

A possible confirmation to our assumptions comes from one of the rare Gutnic documents, *Stadga för Sankta Karins gille*, from the parish of Björke, in Gotland, 1443 ("St. Karin's Gille"), where we find a passage concerning the feast of St. Karin. This text, edited in *Rudera Gotlandica* (Spegel 1901, p. 16), contains a piece of evidence of the transfer into Christianity of gender separation in drinking toasts for religious purposes. A wedding ceremony is described, where some toasts are drunk in honour of God by men, and some other toasts are drunk in honour of Holy Mary and St. Catherine by women. We do not find anywhere else such a concrete proof of the survival of this old pagan tradition (*Småstycken på fornsvenska* 1868, p. 149):

Och tre minneskålar skola skänkas: bröderna Vår Herresminne och systrarna Var Frus minne och Sankta Katerinas minne. Sedan tre minnen äro skänkta, då återstår åldermannens kannan.

Då de äro druckna, då hava alla hemlov hem till sig. Och källaren ska stängas och ej mera öl skänkas, om icke alla vilja det.

A separation between genders in the field of culture transmission is discernible also in the already mentioned Ch. 34, dedicated to runic calendars by Olaus Magnus. He maintains that Swedish farmers had known how to calculate exactly concurrentes (golden numbers) and Sunday letters, moon phases and religious festivities for hundreds of years, exchanging information with priests. But what is most interesting is the passage – illustrated by an eloquent image – where Olaus adds that women passed on their knowledge to their daughters and men did the same with their sons (Enoksen 1998, p. 160).

This appears of great significance because it points to a separation between a male and a female knowledge in matters of chronology, possibly alluding to calculating time cycles regarding different life spheres, peculiarly meaningful for men or for women.

As already mentioned, in the Gutnic runic calendar we find remnants of the Old Scandinavian division of the year into two seasons (the Icelandic *misseri*, present in many sagas): Summer and Winter, with their beginning dates: the 14th of October, St. Calixtus, and the 14th of April, St. Tiburtius. If we compare our text with other later Scandinavian exemplars of the same genre, we can often observe a shift in beginning dates – for the Winter season between the 13th and the 14th of October, or even the 15th, and for Summer between the 14th and the 15th of April. This seems to go back to old traditions where the beginning nights of Winter and Summer were more than one, as many Scandinavian sources seem to indicate.

Moreover Summer- and Winter-nights were important legal terms as *Landskpaslagar* witness, e.g. *Västmannalagen*, *Södermannalagen*, etc. These important dates were frequently moved and changed into Christian festivities, as in the case of *Skånelag*, where the 25th of March *Vår fru dagen* has probably replaced *laga fardag* (moving day), *froeda*, probably the 14th of April, the traditional beginning Summer-day (Nilsson 1934, p. 110. Lithberg 1934, p. 91).

Another Nordic tradition is worth of mention. Since it was difficult to compute high numbers, a popular system of time calculating, based on week counting, was spread all over Scandinavia. People used it to refer to a certain date by counting the number of weeks necessary to reach it or those which had passed after an important festivity. What is most interesting, it started from the Holy Virgin's day, the 25th of March, stretching up to midsummer. It was supposed to regulate the main agricultural occupations of Springtime (Nilsson 1934, p. 102),¹⁵ as the first plough-lines symbolically traced on the first Summer-day in many Swedish regions seem to indicate.

Fixing as a starting date for week-counting the 25th of March was certainly due to the strong attraction of Holy Mary's festivity compared with the minor role played by St. Tiburtius – protector of the season's beginning day – but also to the female spirit characterizing this period of the year, following an old traditional pattern.

The Easter table, in NK208, contains golden numbers and Sunday letters which could be easily applied to the *disting* cycle as well.¹⁶

The major impulse to create this kind of instruments seems to have been the close relationships between members of clergy and secular society.

It is an attitude comparable to that of Icelanders, whose strong attachment towards their old culture is well known. If in Iceland it is probable that educated laymen compiled texts, we

¹⁵ For example, beans must be sown in the 13th week, corn in the 7th, etc. The beginning dates of the two seasons coincide in Sweden, Norway, Iceland, while the week computation does not.

¹⁶ In our calendar between the 31st of January and the 28th of February, and between the 21st of March and the 18th of April there is a column devoted to Golden Numbers. They helped priests to establish exactly fullmoons and newmoons every month. Consequently they permitted to decide the date of Easter.

may argue that in Gotland the Gutnic runic calendar was possibly the work of a local priest, belonging to an important family of local farmers (Clunies Ross, 1994, p.104).

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Óðinn's Role as a Guarantor of Law and Order in Norse Texts

Lorenzo Lozzi Gallo, *Dipartimento di studi anglo-germanici e dell'Europa Orientale*
(Lorenzo Lozzi Gallo, University of Bari)

1. Law and order in Scandinavian heathen society

Within the framework proposed by Clunies Ross (1994), it has become easier to challenge the traditional view (a legacy from the European Middle Ages, current, for instance, in Anglo-Saxon accounts) of Scandinavian societies, regarded as little more than lawless hordes, fostering a religion based on chaos, a prejudice due to a reciprocal lack of ethnic and social understanding between European Christian societies and Scandinavian heathen tribes.¹

Clunies Ross, in fact, has shown that the gods actually embody the maintenance of a rigid social order, though differing from that of Medieval Christian societies in several respects, as an examination of the evidence shows.

One of the main problems in the study of Scandinavian heathenism is the fact that sources come mostly from thirteenth-century Iceland, and since Germanic heathenism has neither Sacred Books nor a clergy devoted to orthodoxy, it would be unreasonable to expect uniformity and consistency throughout its history. Iceland evolved differently from mainland Scandinavia, particularly as regards its social order (on this subject, see Byock 1982:26–27, focusing on an element of order maintenance, the feud). And yet, Icelandic society appears sufficiently conservative to have preserved a fairly accurate picture of Scandinavian heathenism, however uncomplete. Eddic lays can be expected to preserve contrasting remains of continental heathenism, integrated into the later Icelandic version of it (not entirely homogeneous itself), and the questioning if not dismissive outlook of Christian scribes, recording stories of the distant past, surely with no intention of presenting them as ethically valid.

When the Eddic lays were finally written down, the approach to heathenism seems to have been some form of euhemerism: more sympathetic in Snorri (Faulkes 1983), much less benign in Saxo and mainland Scandinavia. Christians would regard gods as deified human beings, blaming them for their mythical actions, as if the latter were historical deeds that should be accounted for.

2. Óðinn in oath-swearing

It seems rather fitting that the role of supreme guarantor for the social order, and especially oaths, should be entrusted to the god that was called the *alfaðir*, possessing pre-eminence in a patriarchal society where “father” and “ruler” are closely associated concepts.

It is interesting to note that in oath formulas in sagas, Óðinn is not mentioned, while in Eddic lays, his heiti *Sigtýr* occurs once. In epic lays, there is evidence of Óðinn being called upon in oaths, such as in the ancient *Atlakviða* 30, where an oath is recalled that had been sworn *at Sigtýs bergi* (on Óðinn's hill, or rather mound) and *at hringi Ullar* (on Ullr's ring).² Even though the context is obscure, we have no evidence of the name *Sigtýr* for anyone else but Óðinn (Dronke 1969:64). In any case, the alternative deity called upon in oaths, Ullr, occurs in the following line and therefore could in no way be in question here. According to Dronke (1969:65), here Ullr is to be regarded as Óðinn's complementary opposite: since Óðinn is the “breaker of throth”, Ullr must be the “upholder of good faith”, based on Dumézil's interpretation of the two gods (1939:37–39), reinforced in de Vries (1957, 2:104).

¹ A survey is found in Page (1987), a thorough investigation in Abels (2008).

² Ed. Neckel-Kuhn (1962:245); Dronke (1964:9).

Again, in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, 31, 1–8, an oath is sworn on *Unnr*'s stone, which could be identical to *Sigtýr*'s mound. In von See (2004:750), only the interpretation “Stein der Flut” is proposed, but in fact the interpretation of *Unnr* as an Odinic heiti is already found in Sijmons-Gering (1931:211) and is convincing, both for its etymology (from the verb *vinna*, as in the phrase *at vinna eið*, as in Cleasby & Vigfusson 1957:117) and for its use in Snorri's *Gylfaginning* 20 (Faulkes 2005:21), quoting *Grímnismál* 46.

Even though here the stone is described as “cold and humid” (*úrsvafr*, an adjective the author of the lay was apparently very fond of, as he uses it three times), admittedly a more fitting description for the sea-goddess Uðr than for Óðinn, this could be imputed to confusion on the part of the author of this later lay (this seems implicitly suggested in Faulkes 1998:514, who lists the *Helgakviða* occurrence together with the Odinic heiti, rather than with the sea-goddess). In fact, this adjective, though rare elsewhere in Norse literature, is a distinctive feature of this author, who was so fond of it as to use it four times. Thus, one may tentatively assume that the poet was re-using an older phrase regarding *Unnr*'s stone, misinterpreting the divine name; secondly, one could even assume that Óðinn could also be invoked on stones in the sea (and maybe also on the relatively small island of Samsø).

It is well known that oaths on rings consecrated to deities are common in saga literature, such as *Landnámabók* (*Hauksbók*) 268 (Ed. Jacob Benediktsson 1968:313), *Þórðar saga hreðu* (Vatnshyrna fragment) 1 (Ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson 1959:231–232) and *Þorsteins þáttr uxafóts* 1 (Ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:342), where an oath is sworn on a ring (*baugr*), calling upon Njörðr, Freyr and a mysterious *allmáttugr ass*, probably the Christian god,³ or Ullr (Pálsson 1956).⁴ The two solutions need not be alternative: Ullr's name “The Glorious One” seems particularly well-suited to the Christian God, as well as to Óðinn of course, who might have replaced him in popular cults according to a convincing reconstruction (North 1997:242–246), before eventually losing his status to the real *Alfaðir*, namely the Christian God. Such oaths are also mentioned (without the actual oath formulas) in other texts, such as the *Eyrbyggja saga* 4 (Ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:8) and *Víga-glúms saga* 25 (Jónas Kristjánsson 1956:86).

Olsen (1965) dismisses the saga evidence as biased by the Christian viewpoint. Eddic lays should be considered more relevant than sagas in reconstructing heathen lore. They provide generous evidence for Óðinn's dark features, hardly fitting for a god of law, and stand in sharp contrast with the Christian *Weltanschauung*, where the Lord administers justice on earth as well as in heaven, often (in popular opinion, if not in theology) rewarding and punishing on ethical grounds.

How can Óðinn have maintained order, when he himself was such a nasty fellow? Turville-Petre would thus regard Óðinn as a god of “lawlessness” (Turville Petre 1972). In order to examine this question further, it might be useful to take a closer look at the evidence provided by Eddic poetry.

3. Unethical: *Hárbarðslióð* and *Lokasenna*

Óðinn, in any case, shows the distinctive features of a trickster. In fact, the Norse trickster is conventionally Loki, a god unfamiliar to other Germanic cultures. And yet, *Lokasenna* 9 (ed. Neckel-Kuhn 1962:98) preserves a tradition where Óðinn and Loki were bound by blood-brotherhood. They could even be regarded as different *personae* of the same deity, since they display disquieting common features.

It is still uncertain whether *Hárbarðr* in *Hárbarðslióð* is actually Óðinn (see See 1997:155). Even though the hero may not be the *Alfaðir* himself (based solely on *Grímnismál* 47, where

³ See the commentary in Jacob Benediktsson (1968:313–315, note 6).

⁴ Even Þórr has been suggested, though less convincingly (Turville Petre 1972).

Hárbarðr is mentioned as a heiti for Óðinn), he displays his treacherous sexual conduct with giantesses (McKinnell 2005:149–152).

Several ancient commentaries would identify him with Loki. I would deem this possible, since Loki and Óðinn already seem to be the same god in *Lokasenna* 9 (the two lays are also unique in preserving the story concerning Sif’s adultery; on their parallels, see See 1997:166–167),⁵ but Loki is the evil aspect of the god, and *Hárbarðr* prevents Þórr from crossing water (an act that Clunies Ross has persuasively associated with the re-establishment of order and defeat of unbridled female sexuality and chaos in general).

Þórr explicitly points out that *Hárbarðr* is acting against order, when he calls him *argr* (*Hárbarðslióð* 27 and 51, Neckel-Kuhn 1962:83, 86). *Hárbarðr* replies (stanza 28) that there are no lawsuits (von See 1997:215 has “Streitsachen”) between them, implicitly agreeing to be called an *argr*.

In the *Lokasenna*, through the character of Loki, various shameful myths are exposed. The copyist of the *Lokasenna*, considered a late poem (McKinnell 1994:55) must have been a Christian, and could have regarded with favour (if not purposefully adapted) a lay where the faults of the gods were exposed as if they were human beings. Loki focuses his accusations against Óðinn on two different disruptions of order: firstly, lack of equity in administering victory, and secondly, incorrect gender behaviour (*ergi*).

The first charge against Óðinn is that he does not concede victory as a reward for bravery, and in fact victory has often been accorded to the unworthy (*Lokasenna* 22).

After Óðinn replies, suggesting that Loki is in no position to blame him, since he is an *argr* for acting like a female being,⁶ Loki accuses Óðinn of practising *seið*, involving an identical accusation of *ergi*. Even if the emendation of *síga* to *síða* in *Lokasenna* 24 (for criticism, von See 1997:430–431) were not accepted, surely a form of magic involving *ergi* is involved, recalling the description of *seið* in *Ynglinga saga* 7 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1979:19).⁷

Even though this accusation is a *fullréttisorð*, as in *Grágás*, ed. Finsen (1852, 2:181–183) and the victim is entitled to obtain full compensation or kill in revenge, Óðinn does not react physically. This is probably due to his blood-brotherhood with Loki (the only evidence of which occurs precisely in *Lokasenna* 9), which means that they are two aspects of the same *persona*. Loki, on the other hand, has no reason to retaliate against a similar accusation, later raised against him by *Njörðr*, since he is already an outcast from divine society. Consequently, he has no honour left to defend.

The accusations against Óðinn are validated by Frigg’s subsequent intervention, where Loki is not blamed for lying.⁸ The sense of Frigg’s words in *Lokasenna*, 25 is unambiguous: what Loki and Óðinn did in the past is the subject of tales that must not be mentioned to human beings.

If originating in the heathen world, both these accusations must have been ironic: Óðinn is allowed, actually even expected, to surpass all boundaries and break all rules, even the infamous barrier of *ergi*, as his only goal is to collect knowledge from every possible source. Honour comes second to victory, and victory must be acquired by any means. In the heathen world, victory is hardly regarded as compensation for correct behaviour or punishment for morally wrong conduct. It is simply a matter of force and cunning.

⁵ Snorri’s *Gylfaginning* 31 (Faulkes 2005:26) states that Ullr was Sif’s son by another man, perhaps bearing a faint trace of the same myth.

⁶ On these shameful accusations, typical of *níð*, see Almquist (1965:92–95) and Sørensen (1983).

⁷ Samsø was also portrayed in *Hervarar saga* 3 (Tolkien 1960:5, 12–13) as a place of berserkir and encounters with the dead: that is, typical Odinic activities.

⁸ The only character in *Lokasenna* that seems to reproach Loki for lying, though admittedly quite unconvincingly, might be Bragi (stanza 14), though the wording is unclear.

It is an ordered world, even though it is a very different order from the Christian one, because the underlying ethic is different. *Lokasenna* thus appears to sum up the contrast between Christian and heathen ethics.

4. Ethical: *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*

As a model of heathen Scandinavian ethics, we could take *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, which provide “a philosophical understanding of the Norse gods” (Larrington 2002:75).

In the former lay, Óðinn engages in a wisdom contest with the giant Vafþrúðnir, putting his head at stake (McKinnell 1994:87–106): though we may not regard Óðinn’s action as a direct violation, he still appears in disguise, under one of his many names: in modern contemporary legislation, an agreement signed in disguise would clearly be considered invalid.

In Norse society, however, such cunning is perfectly admissible, because the giant, as a member of a different race, shares no sense of honour with Óðinn. This is also apparent in the myth of Óðinn’s treachery against the giant Suttung and his daughter Gunnlōð, alluded to in *Hávamál*, 110 (Neckel-Kuhn 1962:34), where a *baugeiðr* is explicitly said to have been broken by Óðinn.

Another example can be cited in the tale of the Giant builder, where it is pointed out that gods broke their oaths in calling for Þórr’s intervention against the giant, recounted in *Völuspá* 25–26 (Neckel-Kuhn 1962:6) and, with different wording, in Snorri’s *Gylfaginning* (Faulkes 2005:35–36).

In *Grímnismál*, Óðinn appears as a god of order, following an ethical code different from the Christian one: he suggests fratricide and punishes his protégé not because of this murder, but because the latter has been tricked into torturing Óðinn, thus breaking the norms of hospitality and offending the god, though unwillingly.

As already demonstrated (Haugen 1983),⁹ the core of *Grímnismál* consists of a (ritual?) initiation of the future king Agnarr, by means of information on the order of the world, the order that Geirrøðr has somehow disrupted.

Óðinn does not care about murder, because he is only aware of Geirrøðr’s interests. Murdering Agnarr is therefore not a problem, but that his protégé may be considered a *matníðingr* is one indeed, as the latter’s shame would reflect on him. When Geirrøðr dares to torture him, even though he is in disguise, this offence cannot remain unpunished. Agnarr (be it Geirrøðr’s nephew, as in the prose, or Geirrøðr’s brother) is an available candidate, as he performs an act of hospitality and restores the family as well as the guest’s honour.

5.1. The list of divine mansions

A particularly challenging part of *Grímnismál* is the list of divine mansions, which has surely undergone some reworking. The list includes thirteen divine residences: Þórr’s Þrúðheimr, then Ullr’s Ýdalir, Freyr’s Álfheimr, Vali’s Valaskjálf, Saga’s Sökkvabekkr, Gláðsheimr (described as Óðinn’s Hall), Skaði’s Þrymheimr, Baldr’s Breiðablik, Heimdall’s Himinbjörg, Freyja’s Fólkvangr (or -vangar), Forseti’s Glitnir, Njörðr’s Nóatún, Viðarr’s (Land-)viði. We might safely assume that there should have originally been twelve of them, as Snorri constantly strives to fit the gods into this number, while the number thirteen is hardly ever found in mythology. Snorri seems to have noticed this incongruence as well, as he carefully leaves out the numerals when quoting stanzas 12, 14, 13 and 15 in his *Gylfaginning*, respectively 22, 27, 27 and 32 (Faulkes 2005:23, 25, 26, 26).

⁹ See all three works listed as Fleck 1971 for further considerations (basically stating the point that ritual does not necessarily involve shamanism, correcting the view expressed in Schröder 1958).

It is less likely that Snorri was quoting an older form of the lay (as suggested in de Vries 1952), as it would have been fairly easy for the scribe to add the numbers correctly if he had not had them in his model.¹⁰

Moreover, there is an important sign of discomfort regarding the number thirteen by the author of the lay as we know it, because only the mansions from four to twelve are numbered, and they are assigned numbers from three to eleven; the last one is not numbered, perhaps because it would have been the twelfth, but then the sum of the first ones would have made the wrong total. The easiest solution would perhaps be to consider Viðarr a later addition, but this is so odd that it was quickly dropped: the citation of Viðarr as the last of the Æsir is functional to his role at the *ragna rok*.

On the other hand, I would suggest that Þórr was not initially included, or at least not as the first of the gods, and therefore he was added, in a position fitting his higher status in late heathenism, to an ancient *pula*, possibly of continental origin, where pre-eminence was assigned to Ullr and where Þórr was possibly ignored (his only other appearance in the lay being *Grímnismál* 29: crossing a river, a typical act of order).

5.2. Ullr, the cauldron and the ship

Stanzas 42–44 of *Grímnismál* have been interpreted as a blatant disruption in meaning, since they occur between stanza 41, which finishes a cosmological tale, and stanza 45, where Grímnir begins his *pula* of Odinic heiti. In my opinion, however, stanzas 42–44 clearly seem to be alluding to Óðinn

It is undeniable that Ullr appears in a prominent position later in the lay (*Grímnismál* 42, 1), and the context suggests that he must be equated with Óðinn, paralleling *Ullar hylli* in the former to *Óðins hylli* in *Grímnismál* 51, 6. In the meantime, the lay repeats that Óðinn is the first of the Æsirs (*Grímnismál* 44, 4). In de Vries (1952), it is suggested that Ullr is the other aspect of Freyr, but since Óðinn and Ullr are already regarded as two sides of the same god, it simply recalls the close original bond between Óðinn, Freyr and a third deity, a triad that probably evolved (or even originated) from Christian influences.

If Ullr were to be identified with Óðinn in *Grímnismál*, this would imply that the final author of the lay tried to recreate the triad of late heathenism with Þórr – Óðinn – Freyr, exactly in the same order as that found in Adam of Bremen’s description of the Uppsala temple in his Hamburg church history, 4.26–27 (Schmeidler 1917:257–259), using material where Ullr/Óðinn was pre-eminent. The identification of Óðinn with Ullr, involving the assumption of the other’s name, is known in Saxo’s *Gesta danorum*, 3.4.10–12 (Olrík – Ræder 1931:72–73).

I believe that stanza 4, mentioning Þórr, thus added to a lay where pre-eminence was originally attributed to Ullr/Óðinn, emphasising the role of this god as a defender of the heathen social order.

Therefore, stanza 42 of *Grímnismál* might be interpreted as:

“It will lift the favour of Ullr / and of all gods / the cauldron that first touches the fire, / because worlds become / open around the sons of the Æsir, / when they lift off the cauldron”.

Stanza 43 is entirely concerned with Freyr’s ship *Skíðblaðnir*. Now, if stanza 42 is interpreted as an allusion to the forging of the ship, everything becomes consistent.

It may seem rather strange to forge a ship, but we might recall that in the myth, those same dwarves are invited to forge human hair and a living boar. And how much realism can be expected regarding a ship that can be folded like a handkerchief?

¹⁰ Even de Vries, however, seems to imply that the numbers must have been in the original and that the final composer must have been responsible for the addition of the second list.

Moreover, since the other treasures were made of gold, it makes good sense to think that this could apply to the ship as well. The poet might have suggested an analogy between the golden liquid brewed in the cauldron from which Agnarr had drawn a drink for the guest, and the melted gold that was to be shaped into wondrous gifts for the gods.

The myth of the gifts and the subsequent contest is alluded to in *Gylfaginning* 36 (where the ship's magical properties are described) and fully recounted in *Skáldskaparmál* 35 (Faulkes 1997:41–42). Even in this myth, the triad is acknowledged. There is a gift for each of the three major deities: Óðinn comes first as *alfaðir*, receiving the spear Grungir and the ring Draupnir; then Þórr, as the strongest of the gods, receives Sif's hair and Mjöllnir. Finally, Freyr receives the above-mentioned ship and the boar Gullinbursti.

A comparison between Snorri and the Poetic Edda shows that some gifts were interchangeable in heathen tradition: Óðinn is said to be the owner of the ship in *Ynglinga saga* 7 (ed. Bjarni Aðalbarnarson 1979:18); Freyr's servant Skírnir could offer Draupnir to Gerðr in *Skírnismál* 21.¹¹

Þórr's gifts were not confused, however: perhaps because he could in no way be identified with the others.

Grímnismál 43 therefore seems to provide renewed evidence that Freyr's ship must in fact be regarded as Óðinn's ship as well. However, if we recall that a lost myth about Ullr (alluded to in both Saxo and Snorri) involved a magical (bone- or shield-)ship,¹² then we might suppose that the poet was implicitly comparing Freyr's (Óðinn's) Skíðblaðnir to Ullr's bone-ship. Perhaps this is the very same ship, as Ullr (later Þórr), Óðinn and Freyr were part of this trinity.

It therefore seems understandable that in stanza 44, Skíðblaðnir is mentioned together with Óðinn and other things enjoying pre-eminence, thus introducing the last part of the lay, the list of Odinic heiti.

5.3. The evolution of *Grímnismál*

In this reconstruction, the lay would appear to have been much more consistent: Ullr would have originally occupied the first place, in conformity with Ullr's predominant role in eastern Scandinavia, which could have left traces in Saxo (where Ullr temporarily takes Óðinn's place, but is exiled to Sweden when Óðinn is taken back by his people; later, Ullr is killed by the Danes) and in place names (where Ullr occurs mostly in peninsular Scandinavia).¹³

Grímnir would thus have placed Ullr first and neglected Þórr. This absence, however, was not acceptable in later heathenism, especially in Iceland, where Þórr enjoyed such a wide-spread cult (as stated in Turville Petre 1972).

It is interesting that Óðinn would place Ullr first precisely in a lay that was so much about law and order, thus evaluating the god of order more highly than himself. We might therefore suppose that Ullr and Óðinn could be identical in the current lay. Óðinn's Gláðsheimr might have been a later addition, perhaps taking the place originally held by Þórr's Þrúðsheimr.

It is quite certain that when the lay was reworked, Ullr was no longer a celebrated deity: Snorri places Ullr in a subordinate position, as Sif's son by a different man than Þórr in *Gylfaginning* 31, ed. Faulkes (2005:26).

I would also add a final question, though much more tentative than the rest: Óðinn had many heiti, and among them Unnr (his name as the god of oaths), which appears in *Grímnis-*

¹¹ Though it remains unnamed, the ring in *Skírnismál* 21 is identified as the one that was burnt together with Baldr, and was called Draupnir in *Gylfaginning* 49 (ed. Faulkes 2005:47), where it is also stated that Baldr had sent it back to his father from Hel. Further discussion in See 1997:101 (where any additional connection between Freyr and the ring is dismissed as unproved).

¹² Further discussion in Faulkes (1998:167–168).

¹³ A survey on Ullr is to be found in de Vries (1970, 2:153–163).

mál 46, while Ullr was a rather obscure deity, known from very few sources: could confusion between Ullr and Unnr/Óðinn have been possible in later heathenism?

6. Conclusions

We might draw the conclusion that in Eddic lays, Óðinn is portrayed as a god maintaining order according to a heathen sense of justice which is absolutely not blind and impartial, but consciously adapted to different criteria.

Justice follows precise criteria: 1) fidelity to one's god, from a monolatric viewpoint (and to one's lord on earth), comes first, then to one's family, then to one's tribe; 2) offences can be directed at the body or even at honour; defamation is an equally serious crime and must be prosecuted forcefully; 3) in a society based on honour, shameful behaviour (e.g. being stingy with food) is a crime against one's god, family and tribe, as it diminishes the honour of the community, and must be punished; 4) guilt is only acknowledged within Norse society at large: any other crime (such as breaking an oath or truce) against people outside this community neither diminishes the perpetrator's honour nor requires punishment; 5) it makes no difference whether guilt is intentional or not; crimes must be punished in any case (e.g. Höðr for killing Baldr, according to *Völuspá* 32–33, and Geirrøðr for torturing Óðinn, both being mere instruments in someone else's hands); 6) amends depend on the social status of both the perpetrator and victim (the *wergeld* is the physical representation of this).

Grágás gives us an impression of how profound the connection between social order and religion could be in the *forn siðr*, at least as profound as it was in Christian times. It might suffice to cite a technical term such as *heilagr*, whose meaning is in fact “protected by divine (and human) law” and as such “entitled to compensation for offence”, described in *Grágás* 53 (Finsen 1852, 1:89–92); the *skógarmaðr* was denied the right to compensation (and hence to physical integrity), as well as property (including inheritance, thus damaging the whole clan) and even the right to a Christian burial. A breach against community order is not merely a crime. It becomes a sin as well.

Óðinn, as the *alfaðir*, i.e. the top of the hierarchy of heathen cosmology, is in no way expected to set an example: he is above the law, but he is actually called to enforce the law, in order to maintain world order. Clunies Ross (1994) has pointed out that this is definitely a characteristic of the *Æsir*. I would add that the lord of the *Æsir* was naturally expected to protect a community identified by *siðr* (which may be equated with a general concept of “culture”: i.e. primarily religion, but also customs, and thus the entire order of Norse society).

The main penalty dealt by such a united community is outlawry, i.e. being expelled by the community itself, being left alone in the hostile Scandinavian natural environment, deprived of what defines the position of an individual in Norse society: personal property and family ties.

Óðinn appears to be a god of revenge rather than justice in the modern European sense. The victory he administers is never due to an evaluation of righteousness, but simply to partiality, favouring his protégés (but again, easily withdrawing his protection and then demanding self-sacrifice). Even his involvement in oaths has little to do with order: it is indeed just a curse (even though a curse that will only take effect in certain conditions), and Óðinn is invoked both due to his connection with the underworld and hostile magic, and because of his connection with honour as well.

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Royal Descent from Odin

Emily Lyle, Dept. of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Descent from Odin (Woden) – or from Seaxnet – or from Freyr – or from another? At any rate descent from a male god who was part of a complex of gods and goddesses broadly definable as a pantheon known throughout the world of speakers of Germanic languages. Claims to such descent mattered to kings and to the people they ruled and there have been many studies of the topic. Long lines of descent, the longer the better, were articulated and were held to give legitimacy to a ruler. Early evidence comes from England where most of the royal lines were traced back to Woden. An exception is the East Saxons who traced their royal line back to Seaxnet, and it has been theorised that all the Saxons in England might have done the same (Dumville 1977:78).

A lineage that contains a divine name or names may take its origin from a pagan god but we also find pagan god-names featuring at a much later point in an overall lineage that goes back to Noah or to Adam, “the son of God”, enabling kings to draw power from both their (euhemerised) pagan heritage and also their Christian one (Faulkes 1978–9:92–106; Davis 1996:51–63).

Studies related to the topic of Germanic royal descent may be said to have had two main emphases. These are, firstly, explorations of the political use of the royal lineage with a divine progenitor in particular geographical places and historical times, and, secondly, broad enquiries into the divine nature of kingship.

I am offering a new approach here which sees the human king as a member of a lineage that was already established within the pantheon, or, putting the matter more precisely, as a member of one of the two lineages that are embedded in the pantheon, and that in fact, I would argue, are responsible for the pantheon taking the shape that it does. Claimed descent from Odin connects the claimant in a specific way to a total divine succession complex.

Re-defining the Pantheon as Royal Family

Study of descent from a god takes us right to the heart of the nature of the human-divine relationship, and I suggest that we can make it a starting-point to open up a fresh interpretation of the pantheon. This would have been quite impossible before critical approaches to such things as Snorri’s overall view of the pagan universe came to the fore. We now have the capacity to pick apart the various strands that have come down in the patchy record available to us in literary sources, place names and archaeological finds, so that careful detailed statements can be made about many small aspects of the pagan heritage. In my view, we need to call on the resources of all the branches of the Indo-European cultural complex, where similar critical approaches have been brought to bear in recent times, in order to reach a full understanding of the specific developments within each culture area through relating them to a posited prehistoric schema that could account for them all.

The gods have perhaps been thought of primarily as being responsible for a particular area of human interest (e.g. war, fertility), with their family linkage being secondary. When we put the idea of descent in the centre, the family linkage becomes paramount. When the family linkage is that of a royal family we have to concern ourselves with succession as well as with kinship, and I suggest that the pantheon embodies both. Kinship is obviously very old, but questions may be raised about how old laws of succession could be. I argue that, in the tribal kind of society that can be posited for the common Indo-European period, there was already a

complex social order centred on kingship (Lyle 2006). We know now that some societies without writing managed to evolve elaborate structures and there seems every reason to think that the common Indo-European society, which has left us a rich heritage of ritual, was among their number.

Descent takes place over time, measured in generations, and, when we look at the Old Norse foundation myths, we find them strongly structured in terms of time with a quite marked distinction between “old gods” and “young gods”. Overall, it is probably most useful to define the complete creation sequence as a stage of emergence followed by a stage of mating and marriage. The stories concerning the first stage seem to mask the initiating role of a primal goddess that can be discerned in other Indo-European contexts.

In emergence, we have a medley of creation elements, such as a male being licked out of the ice by a cow, and a man and woman growing under a male giant’s left arm. As an end result of the emergence, we have the members of a male triad with Odin as the focus, his companions being called either Ve and Vili or Hoenir and Lodur. They engage in the process of primeval creation, cutting up the giant and giving life to humans. Crucially, they also engage in mating with a goddess.

I have argued that the mating of three males with a female is the precursor of the wonderful birth which brings about the culminating stage of creation with the birth of a set of young gods, centred on the king (Lyle 2007). It is extremely interesting to speculate about what might have happened historically in the Old Norse context, for we have two differences from the norm which can be seen as two sides of the same coin. The stories give the kingship to an old god, Odin, so that there is no room in them for a young king. Similarly, the story of the mating of three males with a female fails to have the expected outcome of the birth of the young king (and his siblings). Ve and Vili simply lie with Frigg in Odin’s absence. There is intercourse but no resulting conception (Bek-Pedersen 2006:331–2).

A recent study of the Old Norse goddess figures has concluded that there are two main goddesses, a “mother” one that can be called Frigg and another that can be called Freyja (Ingunn 2007). The scarcity of goddesses is bound up with the notion of value. In this stage of creation, all three of the old gods desire to mate with the only goddess. Since there is a single old (or mother) goddess she can be called by all the names attached to this figure, including Earth, and we can see in the birth of Thor from Jorth a surviving branch of “the birth of the young king” story, although it has been shorn of its connection with kingship. It will be seen from this that, in a comparative perspective, I favour the equation Thor = Indra and Zeus, in their roles of kings and wielders of the thunderbolt. Of course, Thor is not a king in the stories, but we are reaching behind them and perhaps coming up with something that was present in cult.

The cosmological theme of the mating of three males with a female was recently analysed through the analogical structure methodology, so as to put it on an objective footing (Lyle 2007). The Old Norse story was not used in the study although it is mentioned there as a parallel case. A main point to note is that one of the males claims ownership of the female and is a “husband” figure, and this figure is clearly identifiable in the Old Norse context as Odin. Although the triad does sometimes appear in the guise of three brothers on the same generation level, the more informative form of the story employs two generation levels with one male older than the other two, and here the power-holding husband figure is one of the younger ones and can be seen as having ousted the older male. We can expect that the names Ve and Vili are to be identified with those of major gods on a par with Odin, and can now take a look at the possibilities available.

Since the Old Norse stories are wide-ranging and inventive, a guarantee of the fully realised presence of a god among the people has to be sought from cult. Stefan Brink finds only five of the male gods of the stories strongly represented in place names in Scandinavia: Freyr,

Odin, Thor, Njord and Tyr (Brink 2007:108), and these five carry the succession in the schema I shall be presenting here. Place-name evidence also supplies another name, Ullr (or Ullinn), that is not prominent in the stories, and my understanding is that this god does not feature in the proposed succession sequence. Of the five gods who do feature in it, Freyr (said to be son of Njord) and Thor (said to be son of Odin) belong to the youngest generation represented. Of the others, I take Tyr to be the displaced god of the triad who belongs to the generation before that of Njord and Odin.

Succession within the Pantheon, and Beyond

As I realised some time ago when seeking a solution to the puzzle of the descent of the Irish Lugaid of the Red Stripes from three “fathers”, the triad of old gods with different characteristics implies the existence of two patrilineages, one of which contains the grandfather and father of the king and the other of which contains another male of the father’s generation who could potentially (in a close-knit system) be the king’s uncle (Lyle 2007).

The old-god triad will now be presented in terms of descent and succession with Tyr as first king and Odin as second king and Njord as not a king. When there are two lineages (as is suggested here) that non-king blank is needed to carry the line forward. One line of descent is Tyr, Njord, Thor (in the role of young king and Tyr’s grandson). The other line of descent is simply Odin among the old gods but the line of succession is from Odin to Thor as young king. In terms of generations, with one king per generation, the pattern runs as shown in Table 1. It is to be noted that Thor, who is said to be Odin’s son in the stories, is actually not a son here but a successor of Odin; this is a powerful connection of a different kind which would have been lost when Thor, as it were, failed to succeed to the kingship.

Table 1. The posited kings in the pantheon

Royal lineage 1	Royal lineage 2
Tyr (king)	
Njord	Odin (king)
Thor (king)	

Similarly, Freyr is said in the stories to be the son of Njord but the link here again is one of succession, not to the kingship this time but to the role of Njord. Freyr belongs to the “non-kings” line, each member of which has a king as a father and a king as a son. In this schema he is the son of Odin. Freyja has a role in the succession as the sister of Freyr, who becomes the wife of the young king and the mother of his children, and Frigg is one of the names for the old goddess from whom the succession stems.

The total divine scheme (Table 2) is one of four generations which may have reflected a human four-generation block, though it would probably be vain to seek it in the Old Norse historical record. The concept of a limited lineage is not an alien one, however. Joan Turville-Petre (1978–9:62) draws attention to a “conventional set of seven generations” that would be “based on a kindred-group extending to fifth cousins” and notes that “a ‘lineage’ of this extent was recognized among Germanic peoples”.

Table 2. Royal succession among the gods

old goddess	patriline 1	patriline 2	young goddess
Frigg	1 TYR		
	Njord	2 ODIN	
	3 THOR	Freyr	Freyja

We have run out of major gods in the succession (although there are lesser divine descendants in the stories who should be considered for the light they might throw on royal descent) and we come to that transition to the human when a first king is said to be a descendant of a god. According to this pattern, the first human king has rich connections. He is the son of Freyr and the grandson of Odin. He belongs to the patriline of Odin, who is at the head of his male lineage. He is the successor of Thor who is the successor of Odin who is the successor of Tyr and so he is the fourth king in a series reaching back to the beginnings of creation. With a kingship like this, as has been recognised, it is essential to distinguish the regnal list from the lineage, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Regnal list and two royal lineages

Regnal List	Lineage 1	Lineage 2
1 Tyr	Tyr	
2 Odin	Njord	Odin
3 Thor	Thor	Freyr
4 1st human king	human son of Thor	1st human king
5 2nd human king	2nd human king	

We can take it as probable that, over the course of history, the connection with a total balanced system that gave power alternately to one or other of two lineages would have been eroded, and that each lineage would have come to be treated as a separate regnal series, one of them claiming its origin from Tyr and the other from Odin.

The Tyr/Njord and Odin/Freyr Lineages

In England, as already noted, there were two gods at the head of royal lineages, Woden on the Anglian side and Seaxnet on the Saxon side, and it is possible to suggest that Seaxnet is identifiable as Tyr. A baptismal vow in the Old Saxon dialect occurring in a manuscript of the 9th century runs: “I renounce all the words and works of the devil, Thunaer, Woden and Saxnot, and all those demons who are their companions,” and E. O. G. Turville-Petre comments on it as follows (1964:100).

Saxnot remains a riddle. Since he is named together with Thunaer and Woden, he must have been an important god. He must also have been known in England for the genealogies of the East Saxon kings are traced to a Seaxnet. Seaxnet does not appear in the other royal genealogies, which shows that the kings of Essex were believed to descend from a divine ancestor who was not the parent of other dynasties. Saxnot has often been identified with Týr, but chiefly because he is named together with two other great Germanic gods. Probably he was conceived originally as the eponymous god of the Saxons, whether his name meant “companion of the sword” or “friend of the Saxons”.

It is not possible at present to be certain of the Seaxnet-Tyr identification that has been suggested, but in any case the information available shows that the Germanic peoples who migrated into England had two different gods that could eventually be placed at the start of dynasties, and it is certainly possible to entertain the idea that the lineages stemming from them relate to the two lineages distinguished here as those of Tyr/Njord and Odin/Freyr.

A very interesting point that comes out of Brink’s recent study of theophoric place names in Scandinavia is that Tyr names are almost entirely confined to Denmark, so that Brink sums up (2007:125, cf. 120–1): “In Denmark the cult of Týr seems to have been particularly strong with many place names bearing his name.” The present study of lineages offers the further suggestion that the presence of a cult of Tyr in Denmark could have been bound up with the occurrence there of a royal lineage stemming from that god. It should be mentioned that an

entire group could share in an identification with a god envisaged as its ancestor as well as the ancestor of the king (cf. Davis 1996:60–1).

Odin is widely represented as royal ancestor (Faulkes 1978–9:93–100) and there is especially abundant evidence for kings claiming descent from Freyr in Uppsala and its vicinity (Sundqvist 2000:129–59). Freyr himself being treated as a king, as can happen, is unexpected in terms of a 2-lineage system (and would have to be accounted for by positing a shift to a single-lineage pattern), but a human king being considered a descendant of Freyr is in keeping with the model, which places Freyr firmly in the group of gods concerned with succession.

Union with the Land and with the Sovereignty

So far the stress has been on the males in the system, but succession required females and two different roles were played by the goddesses shown in Table 2 and very possibly by women who represented them. Female matrilineal lines indicated only by Frigg and Freyja interact with the patrilineal lines headed by Tyr and Odin.

As Craig Davis notes (1996:61), “it is important to remember that the pedigrees’ assertion of direct patrilineal succession from an ancient *Stammvater* is a convenient political fiction” and that there were a number of candidates competing for the throne. A man was eligible for the kingship through belonging to the appropriate group (which, in the case of a two-lineage system, would include belonging to the lineage which was due to succeed in his generation). Descent did not ensure the succession of a particular man. The chosen candidate actually became king through his inauguration (which, in the present model, included his marriage to a goddess / human queen). In terms of the Old Norse mythic schema, the young queen is Freyja, who could be said to have many lovers since all kings lay with her.

The king enters into a union with a woman of the line of queens and attains the sovereignty in this way, but it appears that the ideal king is eligible for the kingship because not he himself but his father has entered into a union with the land. This seems to be the important role of the “non-king” in the sequence, as became especially clear to me when considering Gro Steinsland’s discussion of *Skírnismál*. Our views diverge in some ways, but we are in full agreement on the importance of this myth for understanding royal descent. Steinsland says (2008:228):

By analysing the myth of *Skírnismál* in relation to other sources [...] one may see the outlines of a mythical pattern that concerns the ideology of kingship. Other sources tell that a son, the prototypical ruler, is the result of the erotic alliance between the mythical parents. Snorri Sturluson tells in *Ynglinga saga* (ch. 10) that the first of the kings of the *Ynglingar*, Fjölfnir, is the son of Freyr and Gerðr. Thus Snorri seems to have knowledge of the function of the *hieros gamos* myth as a genealogical myth connected to the ruling families.

Olof Sundqvist (2000:152) remarks that “[p]erhaps it was Snorri’s own conclusion that Fjölfnir was the son of Gerd and Freyr”, and, in that case, Snorri can possibly be credited with having felt out the sense of the myth even though there may not have been contemporary knowledge of it. We have another case here (like that of the three males above) where intercourse can be expected to have an outcome in a birth. Steinsland stresses the otherness of the giantess whom the god Freyr desires and marries, and I suggest that this otherness is present within the total system of the pantheon in the form of the old/cosmic gods in contrast to the young gods and may have been transferred to the giant world from there. In connection with the case of the gift of sovereignty noted above, Freyja is a young goddess and so she or her human equivalent is an appropriate match for the young king, but the reciprocal match made by the young “non-king” is with one of the old gods – the primal goddess sometimes identified as Earth – who may be a forbidding partner, although, being a goddess, she can be ever young. I

suggest that in *Skírnismál* she is portrayed as a giantess and that in the Irish parallels, to which Steinsland points, she is portrayed as a hag. There is, at any rate, something monstrous about her.

The Irish accounts have been rather confusing since they conflate two ideas which consideration of *Skírnismál* helps us to keep apart. When Niall of the Nine Hostages embraces the hag, she gives him sovereignty and prophesies that his descendants will be kings (Rees and Rees 1961:73–4). Nothing is made of the embrace other than that Niall (like other characters similarly placed in medieval narratives) is granting the woman’s wish and satisfying her desire. In mythic terms, however, Niall must embrace her so that, transformed to a young woman, she may bear him progeny. Again in terms of the mythic pattern, it is his son who can become king since the boy has been born from the land, a theme that appears to be remembered in the birth of Thor from Earth.

Thor and Human King as Successors of Odin

The place of Thor seems unique and I think it may eventually prove possible to make a case for the view that any human king in the pagan era took on the role of Thor to some degree and was considered his representative. This would accord with the fact that Thor is not given a prominent role as ancestor of a king. When seen as “young king”, he succeeds both Tyr and Odin, and the immediately preceding king would have especial prominence so that perhaps any human king would be seen as next in line in the regnal list following Odin and would be able to claim “descent from Odin” in a very immediate way. The long line of human royal ancestors would then be a secondary development, distancing the king from the gods at the same time as it tied him to them.

Conclusion

Taking as my starting point the royal practice of claiming descent from Odin, I found that this could not very well be treated alone since (in my view) it was embedded in a system where Odin headed one of two lineages from which kings could draw their legitimacy. If we take the first two names in each lineage as identifiers, they can be called Lineage 1: Tyr/Njord and Lineage 2: Odin/Freyr. At the culmination of the series of kings in the pantheon comes Thor who may perhaps be considered the template for human kings.

The pantheon that has been modelled, although expressed here in Old Norse terms, is offered as an Indo-European one, but a number of the proposed features are strongly present in the Old Norse context: a well-defined group of major gods; a stress on kingship; a marked distinction between old and young gods; a triad consisting of the three “king” gods and a different triad consisting of the three old gods; and an opposition between gods of the above, who (in the present view) can succeed to the kingship, and those of the below, who cannot. The begetting of a king on a representative of the old goddess can be made out in *Skírnismál* and the rivalry for the young goddess as queen (Lyle 2008), which is not discussed here, can probably be traced in accounts of the rivalry over Nanna.

Changes in the structures of kinship and succession have necessarily led to a lack of correspondence between real-life experience and the mythic literature and this has made for difficulties of interpretation. It can be noted too that the very richness of Old Norse story tradition has also served to obscure a key pattern within the pantheon which I have attempted to bring out in this paper.

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Die Sagas und die isländische Laiengeschichtsschreibung

Magnús Hauksson, Nordisches Institut, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Germany

In einem Vortrag auf der Saga Conference 2009 lenkte Lise Hvarregaard (2006, 407–416) die Aufmerksamkeit auf die literarische Verbindung zwischen der isländischen Gegenwartsliteratur und der mittelalterlichen isländischen Sagaliteratur. Sie behandelte in diesem Zusammenhang fast ausschließlich zeitgenössische Autoren, am ausführlichsten Einar Már Guðmundsson. Diese Verbindung zwischen der neueren und der älteren isländischen Literatur wurde bereits anderweitig untersucht, z.B. in der Besprechung Þorleifur Haukssons über den Einfluss der Sagaliteratur auf Sprache und Stil der meisten isländischen historischen Romane über das Mittelalter (Þorleifur Hauksson 1997, 147–159), allerdings mit dem Ergebnis, dass dieser zumeist lediglich begrenzt ist. In diesem Vortrag soll der Fokus auf der Laiengeschichtsschreibung (Magnús Hauksson 2006; 2007b) und ihren möglichen literarischen Verbindungen mit der Sagaliteratur liegen. Hier und da wurde auf diese mögliche Verbindung bereits kurz hingewiesen (Þorleifur Hauksson und Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 555–559; Gísli Skúlason 1981; Magnús Hauksson 2006, 316–317).

Der Laienhistoriker Gísli Konráðsson (1787–1877) verfasste im Lauf seines Lebens verschiedene Texte. Zwei wichtige Gattungen in seinem Werk stellen *Sagnaþættir* (historische Kurzerzählungen) und Bezirkschroniken (*Héraðsárþættir*) dar. Das literarische Werk Gísli Konráðssons, das von gewaltigem Umfang und bislang erst teilweise im Druck erschienen ist, ist von großer Bedeutung, was die Entwicklung der Laiengeschichtsschreibung in Island betrifft. Der Bestand seiner Handschriften in der Handschriftenabteilung der Landsbókasafn Íslands-Háskólabókasafns ist der größte, den es dort von einer einzelnen Person gibt (Ögmundur Helgason 1997, 19), und es darf als sicher gelten, dass zahlreiche Laienhistoriker, die in der Zeit nach Gísli Konráðsson arbeiteten, mit seinem Werk bekannt waren, es nutzten und von ihm geprägt wurden.

Interessant ist im Zusammenhang mit der Frage eines möglichen Einflusses der Sagaliteratur auf Gísli Konráðsson, dass er Texte verfasste, die deutlich die Form der *Íslendingasögur* zeigen. Einer von diesen, die *Hellismanna saga*, in der Gísli von wenigen Passagen der *Landnámabók* und von Volkserzählungen über die Hellismenn ausgeht, wurde u.a. in der Ausgabe der *Íslendingasögur* von Guðni Jónsson veröffentlicht (*Hellismanna saga* 1946, 399–475; Guðni Jónsson 1946, ix). Das bedeutet, dass dieser Text Gísli im Rahmen dieser Reihe als *Íslendingasaga* aufgefasst wurde. Gísli ahmte also, mit anderen Worten, die Form der Sagas nach (in der Handschrift, die aus Gísli Konráðssons eigener Feder stammt, wird die genannte Erzählung *Hellismanna saga aukin getgátum til gamans* (ÍB 548 8vo) genannt, wobei der Titel darauf verweist, dass Gísli dieses literarische Werk als Produkt einer spielerischen Betätigung betrachtete). Es liegt deshalb nahe zu untersuchen, ob sich Anzeichen für den Einfluss solcher Texte auch an anderer Stelle in seinem literarischen Werk zeigen.

Das erzählerische Werk Gísli über das 17., 18. und 19. Jh. kann in Bezirkschroniken, *Sagnaþættir* und Volkssagen unterteilt werden. Unklar ist oft der Unterschied zwischen *Sagnaþættir* und Volkssagen, und offensichtlich hat Gísli selbst nicht deutlich zwischen diesen beiden unterschieden (Gísli Konráðsson 1882; 1898; 1915; 1946; 1979; 1980). Bei einem großen Teil der Erzählungen Gísli handelt es sich in den Hauptzügen um realistische Erzählungen über Ereignisse und Personen des 17., 18. und 19. Jh.s. Diejenigen Texte, die er als „þættir“ betitelt, sind jedoch oft so voller Anklänge an Erzählungen aus dem Volksglauben und Anekdoten über übernatürliche Erfahrungen, dass zumindest diese Passagen in den Augen heutiger Leser zu den Volkssagen gezählt werden müssten. In den publizierten Bezirkschroniken kommen solche Passagen selten vor (Gísli Konráðsson 1941; 1947; 1998). Darüber hinaus unterscheiden sich die Bezirkschroniken von den *Sagnaþættir* darin, dass sie in groben

Zügen die Form stoffreicher Annalen haben, mit Nachrichten und Erzählungen aus dem Bezirk. Die *Sagnaþættir* und Volkssagen drehen sich demgegenüber am häufigsten um das Schicksal einer Hauptperson und sind meistens eine Sammlung von Anekdoten. Eine deutliche Eigenschaft des Werks Gíslis ist das Vorkommen ausführlicher Angaben zu den Personen. Seine Texte berühren oft die Intimsphäre der Personen, um die es geht. Dabei darf nicht vergessen werden, dass die Texte nicht publiziert wurden, solange Gísli lebte, und dass er selbst möglicherweise nicht an eine allgemeine Verbreitung der Texte dachte, in der Form, in der er sie hinterließ. Allerdings ist bekannt, dass er anderen seine Handschriften zur Benutzung überlassen hat. Neben mündlichen Quellen und eigenen Erfahrungen und Erinnerungen verwendet Gísli bis zu einem gewissen Grad schriftliche Quellen, wie ältere Annalen, *Alþingisbækur* (Protokolle aus den Versammlungen des Alþingi) und Gerichtsakten.

Was am Anfang einer Bekanntschaft mit Gíslis Texten ins Auge fällt und möglicherweise den Verdacht erweckt, dass ein gewisser Einfluss der Sagaliteratur auf Gíslis Werk vorliegen könnte, sind die Titel seiner *Sagnaþættir*, *Þáttur af N.N.*, *Þáttur frá N.N.*, aber auch *Þáttur Jóns sterka á Hryggjum Þorsteinssonar*, *Fljótverja þáttur* usw. Beginnt man dann die Texte zu lesen, stößt man gleich am Anfang beinahe aller *Sagnaþættir* Gíslis, und recht häufig auch in den Bezirkschroniken, auf eine ziemlich detaillierte Vorstellung der Personen, samt umfangreicher genealogischer Angaben und gerne auch ausführlicher Beschreibungen, die meistens, was den Stil anbelangt, sehr an die Personenbeschreibungen in den Sagas erinnern. So wird beispielsweise Eggert Ólafsson aus Hergilsey auf folgende Weise beschrieben: „Hann var knár á jöfnum aldri, lágur heldur vexti en þreklegur, einkum er hann þroskaðist betur.“ (Gísli Konráðsson 1980, 39) Vier Geschwister von dem Hof Gil in Fljót stellt Gísli mit folgender Beschreibung vor: „Þeir bræður voru allra manna sterkastir þar um sveitir, en kallaðir ójafnaðarmenn og harðskiptir. Systir þeirra var og allharðlynd. Mjög voru þeir bræður fé-gjarnir.“ (Gísli Konráðsson 1946, 61) Der dritte Punkt, der den Verdacht einer literarischen Verbindung mit der mittelalterlichen Literatur nahelegt, ist das häufige Vorkommen von Erzählungen über Träume, Vorzeichen und Prophezeiungen. Diese Phänomene dienen in den Texten Gíslis ähnlichen Zwecken wie in den Sagas: Sie wecken Erwartungen darüber, was geschehen wird, und haben einen gewissen Anteil daran, den Text als Ganzes zusammen zu halten.

Was die Auswahl der Inhalte betrifft, gleichen sich Bezirkschroniken und Annalen insofern, als sie beide Einträge zu folgenden Themen enthalten: Unfälle, Naturkatastrophen, Wetterverhältnisse und Todesfälle bedeutender Persönlichkeiten. Darüber hinaus werden Nachrichten und Erzählungen über die bemerkenswertesten Vorkommnisse im Bezirk festgehalten. In den Bezirkschroniken und *Sagnaþættir* wird die Aufmerksamkeit auf verschiedene Strafsachen und Streitigkeiten zwischen Einzelnen vor Gerichten und an anderer Stelle gelenkt. Dem einen oder anderen mag vielleicht in den Sinn kommen, dass hier in der Stoffwahl ein Einfluss der *Íslendingasögur* oder – vielleicht noch eher – der *Sturlunga saga* vorliegt. Dabei ist jedoch Vorsicht geboten, denn man sollte im Auge behalten, dass die besprochen Werke in hohem Maß auf ein begrenztes Gebiet bezogen sind und lediglich das bewahren, was dort als erzählenswert betrachtet wurde, aber in einem weiteren Kontext vielleicht keine Beachtung finden würde. Streitigkeiten und Konflikte sind nun einmal interessanter als die meisten anderen Ereignisse, und es ist deshalb nicht verwunderlich, dass diese aufgezeichnet wurden. Es sollte auch nicht übersehen werden, dass die Themenwahl zu einem gewissen Grad durch das Interesse der Autoren bestimmt war. Jón Espólín, (1769–1836), der Vorgänger Gíslis in der Geschichtsschreibung, war Jurist und Bezirksvorsteher (*sýslumaður*), Gísli selbst hatte – nach den Angaben in seiner Autobiographie – geplant, nach Kopenhagen zu gehen um Jura zu studieren, wozu es dann aber nicht kam (Gísli Konráðsson 1911–14, 61–63). Man kann deshalb annehmen, dass sich beide gerade auch für Gerichtsprozesse und Streitigkeiten interessierten.

Die Bezirkschroniken Gíslis gehen offensichtlich auf die Aufzeichnung von Annalen früherer Zeiten zurück. Sie sind dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass die Berichte für jedes Jahr in voneinander abgegrenzten Einträgen oder Artikeln angegeben sind, Erzählungen über voneinander völlig unabhängige Ereignisse stehen, ohne jeden ursächlichen Zusammenhang, Seite an Seite. Einzelne Erzählungen können bedeutend stoffreicher und wesentlich detaillierter sein, als man es aus den mittelalterlichen Annalen kennt. Solche detailreichen Erzählungen lassen sich allerdings in vielen Annalen aus späterer Zeit finden. In diesen längeren erzählerischen Passagen in Gíslis Bezirkschroniken unterscheidet sich die Erzählweise nicht wesentlich von der Erzählweise der *Sagnaþættir*. Da der Aufbau der Bezirkschroniken einem chronologischen Prinzip folgt, werden einzelne Angelegenheiten zwar gründlich behandelt, aber oft zerstückelt in Einträgen über mehr als ein Jahr, wenn Ereignisse, die mit derselben Angelegenheit zu tun haben, sich über einen längeren Zeitraum hinziehen. An einigen Stellen verwendet Gísli längere Kapitel darauf, über die Leute im Bezirk und ihre Abstammung zu berichten.

Gísli gibt den Einschüben in Anekdotenform häufig breiten Raum in seinen Bezirkschroniken, nicht zuletzt in der *Húnavetninga saga*, und durchbricht damit streng genommen den Aufbau der Form, die Jón Espólin geprägt hat und die sich an der wohldurchdachten Gliederung der inhaltlichen Abschnitte in den Einträgen für die einzelnen Jahre zeigt, wie sich an der *Saga frá Skagfirðingum* erkennen lässt (Jón Espólin og Einar Bjarnason 1976–79; Jón Torfason 1998, 10).

Gísli verfolgt in den Bezirkschroniken faktisch zwei Konzepte in der Strukturierung. Einerseits ist die Chronologie der wesentliche Leitfaden, andererseits sind es die Anekdotensammlungen und die mehr oder weniger zusammenhängenden Erzählungen über Persönlichkeiten und Serien von Ereignissen. Dabei ist zu bemerken, dass es selbständige Texte (*Sagnaþættir*) gibt, die im Wortlaut beinahe vollständig mit den Bezirkschroniken übereinstimmen. Diese hat Gísli in mehreren Fällen aus den Bezirkschroniken herausgenommen und in selbständigen *Sagnaþættir* zusammengefasst. Die meisten Originalwerke Gíslis stammen aus den Jahren nach 1850, d.h. aus den Jahren, als er in Flatey wohnte und sich ausschließlich einer schriftstellerischen Tätigkeit widmen konnte. Die *Húnavetninga saga*, die den Zeitraum von 1685–1850 behandelt, ist jedoch entstanden bevor Gísli nach Flatey zog (Sighvatur Grímsson 1911–14, 305; Jón Torfason 1998, 8–9). Aus diesem Werk nahm Gísli Abschnitte heraus und machte daraus selbständige *Sagnaþættir* (Gísli Konráðsson 1892; 1898; 1980, 336–350).

Der Aufbau der *Sagnaþættir* ist in den meisten Fällen dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass es sich um Sammlungen von allerlei Wissenswertem, Berichten über Vorkommnisse und Anekdoten über bestimmte Personen handelt. Der Zusammenhang zwischen einzelnen Erzählungen ist daher oft nur lose. Es gibt allerdings auch *Sagnaþættir*, die einen deutlich zusammenhängenderen Erzählverlauf zeigen, jedoch auch oft zahlreiche Exkurse enthalten. Die Hauptmotivation dafür, die *Sagnaþættir* zu schreiben, dürfte gewesen sein, das Wissen über bestimmte Ereignisse und Personen zu erhalten. Über die Hauptmerkmale des Aufbaus lässt sich sagen, dass Gíslis *Sagnaþættir* mit biographischem Inhalt am allerhäufigsten damit beginnen, dass die Familie der Hauptperson, ebenso wie sie selbst, vorgestellt wird, und Anekdoten über Vorfahren erzählt werden, wenn es solche gibt. Die Hauptteile des Textes bilden Erzählungen über Ereignisse aus dem Leben der Hauptperson von unterschiedlicher Ausführlichkeit, nach und nach kommen Exkurse über Personen und Ereignisse hinzu, die mit der Haupthandlung nur lose in Verbindung stehen. Der *Sagnaþættur* endet damit, dass vom Lebensende der Hauptperson erzählt wird und gegebenenfalls von ihren Nachkommen. Auf die richtige zeitliche Reihenfolge wird Wert gelegt, wie die folgende Bemerkung Gíslis zeigt: „Munnmælasögur eru svo margar frá [Latínu-]Bjarna að eigi er kostur á að skipa þeim niður í rétta röð eftir áratali, verður því eftir því að fara er ætla má að næst láti.“ (Gísli Konráðsson 1980, 287)

Der Aufbau von *Gíslis Sagnaþættir* unterscheidet sich von dem der meisten *Íslendingaþættir* darin, dass er nicht so konzentriert ist. Er erinnert eher an die Struktur der längeren, komplexer aufgebauten und aus mehreren Teilen bestehenden Sagas. Der Aufbau der Bezirkschroniken könnte zum Teil die *Sturlunga saga* als Vorbild haben. In diesen Werken wird zwar recht konsequent versucht, die chronologische Ordnung des Stoffes zu gewährleisten, die Struktur wirkt aber dennoch ziemlich chaotisch, weil viele Handlungsstränge zur gleichen Zeit spielen. Die große Anzahl an genannten Personen vergrößert die Unübersichtlichkeit zusätzlich.

In Gíslis Werken sind einerseits vor allem Erzählungen von Ereignissen prägend, die entweder überblicksartig sind und einen weiten Zeithorizont haben oder eher aus Einzelszenen bestehen. Andererseits finden sich auch häufig umfangreiche Angaben, die alle möglichen Kenntnisse über Einzelpersonen und ihre Beziehungen darlegen. Darstellungen und Analysen kommen dagegen in Gíslis Werken kaum vor. Gíslis Überblicke über die wichtigsten Persönlichkeiten eines Bezirks zu einer bestimmten Zeit nähern sich am ehesten einer generellen Darstellung der Gesellschaft. Er bemüht sich jedoch kaum, die sozialen Umstände darzustellen; zur Erklärung einzelner Sachverhalte werden persönliche Faktoren herangezogen. Die Erzählungen Gíslis bleiben stets auf einer personenbezogenen Ebene. Ähnlich verhält es sich mit den topographischen Verhältnissen. Gísli beschreibt diese lediglich in seltenen Fällen und auf sehr knappe Weise, um den Rahmen der behandelten Ereignisse klarer zu machen. Ein Leser kann aus Gíslis Texten viel über das tägliche Leben in früheren Zeiten lernen, da von den Handlungen der Personen viel über das Alltagsleben abgeleitet werden kann, auch wenn dieses nicht direkt im Fokus der Texte steht. Diesbezüglich können Ähnlichkeiten mit den Sagas festgestellt werden, die abgesehen von Personenbeschreibungen eher arm an darstellenden, wie auch analysierenden Passagen sind. Allerdings sind Verfasserkommentare in Gíslis Texten häufiger als in den Sagas und diese nähern sich manchmal einer Analyse, z.B. der Zuverlässigkeit einer Quelle, wie in folgendem Beispiel: „Nálega óteljandi eru munnmælasagnir frá Bjarna og sumar sem mikil rök sýnast fyrir sér hafa og skulu þær einar taldar er merkir og skilríkir menn hafa frá sagt.“ (Gísli Konráðsson 1980, 288).

Gísli erzählt in der dritten Person. Er ist ein Erzähler, der außerhalb des Geschehens bleibt, und berichtet von Personen und Ereignissen, wie die Gewährsmänner sie schildern oder wie er selbst sie in Erinnerung behalten hat. In den *Sagnaþættir* ist Gísli selbst nicht an der Handlung beteiligt. Einige Kapitel in den Bezirkschroniken berichten über Ereignisse, bei denen Gísli selbst anwesend war, also aus eigener Anschauung erzählen kann. In diesen Fällen behält Gísli seine Erzählweise bei und spricht von sich selbst wie von anderen in der dritten Person (dies trifft auch auf die Autobiographie Gíslis Konráðssons (1911–1914) zu). Von den Gedanken der Personen wird nicht direkt berichtet, doch finden sich häufig Hinweise darauf. Oft wird auch versucht, Gefühle und Gedanken zu erraten, wobei es sich lediglich um eine Wiedergabe der allgemeinen Meinung handelt. In dieser kommt der Versuch zum Ausdruck, Handlungen einer Person oder ein Geschehen zu erklären. Diese Erklärung kann Teil einer bewahrten Erzählung sein, wie sie Gísli zu Ohren kam, oder seine eigene Interpretation enthalten. In einzelnen Fällen kann der Gewährsmann Gísli auch seine eigenen Überlegungen erzählt haben.

Der Stil in den Erzählungen Gíslis Konráðssons ist insgesamt volkstümlich, wie der klassische Sagastil. Der Wortschatz ist alltäglich und sachbezogen. Die Sätze können bei Gísli recht lang ausfallen und Nebensätze und Appositionen enthalten. Dies ist vor allem der Fall, wenn er Leute vorstellt und deren Herkunft beschreibt, oder auch, wenn er komplizierte Sachverhalte erklärt. Erzählt er einzelne Begebenheiten, ist sein Stil hingegen meist knapp, die Sätze sind eher einfach und kurz. In einzelnen Fällen erinnert die Wortfolge an den Sagastil, doch trifft dies nicht nur auf Texte Gíslis Konráðssons, sondern auch auf viele andere jüngere Texte zu.

Hann [Eyjólfur] hóf Pétur upp harðlega, ok lagði ásamt á hann leggjabragð óþyrmilegt, svo fótr Péturs hrökk úr ökkliði, en klofnaði leggjarhöfuðið. Fékk Pétur fall mikið, ok æpti við hátt; Eyjólfur kvað illa orðið, að hann meiddist, ok bað menn duga honum; kvað grimman hund opt fá rífið skinn, ok svo færi Pétri; Pétur kvað hann mæla fals eitt ok skapraunarorð; en Guðrún, kona Péturs, hljóp af baki, ok barði með keyri um höfuð Eyjólfur, ok ílyrti hann; (Gísli Konráðson 1898, 63–64).

Zu finden sind etwa nachgestellte Adjektive, finite Verben am Satzanfang und nachgestellte Hilfsverben. Selten gebraucht Gísli Fremdwörter. Komplizierte Stilmittel und bildhafte Sprache verwendet er in begrenztem Umfang. Der Wortschatz ist größer und abwechslungsreicher als in den Sagas. Formelhafte Ausdrucksweise kommt vor, wie z. B. wenn auf Quellen hingewiesen wird, Gedichte eingeleitet oder Personen eingeführt oder beschrieben werden: Maður hét NN, NN hét maður, það er sagt frá NN [...], en það er að segja af NN [...], þá er sagt aðn [...], nú víkur sögunni til [...], var þá kveðið [...]. In geringerem Maße als in den Sagas kommt die direkte Rede zum Einsatz, viel eher werden Gespräche in indirekter Rede wiedergegeben.

Wie bereits angemerkt, kommen Kommentare häufiger vor als in den Sagas. Der Autor/Erzähler versteckt sich nicht in gleichem Maße hinter der allgemeinen Meinung, hinter „Volkes Stimme“, die doch oft zitiert wird, sondern bringt seine Ansichten unverhüllt zum Ausdruck. Als Beispiel dafür lässt sich folgendes Zitat anführen, in dem die Aussagekraft und Rolle der Genealogie für die Bewertung der Protagonisten erläutert wird:

Það má sérlegt þykja að Ólafur Snóksdalín hinn ættfróði hefur ei getið ættar Eggerts, síðast í Hergilsey, er allmerkur hefur þótt og mikill ættbálkur er frá kominn, þá er Ólafur ritaði þó upp ættir hér í eyjum og síðar er hann var fiskitökumaður í Bjarneyjum – og eigi minna að ekkert vita afkomendur Eggerts enir elztu framar en Snóksdalín þótt auðsætt sé, að þótt Eggert væri fátækra alþýðumanna næst sér mundi þó mega ætt hans rekja sem flestar aðrar til nafnkenndra á miðöldum og lengra ef nokkur grein væri á gjörr. Og verður það eitt að telja er fæst, þó lítið sé og sumt hégiljufullt frá sagt. En það sýnir trú og aldarsíð sem mér vitrari menn dæmi gjör um en ég og mínir líkar, ef geta til hlítar. (Gísli Konráðson 1980, 35).

Dieses Zitat, das von einem recht schwierigen Satzaufbau gekennzeichnet ist, zeugt davon, welche große Rolle die Genealogie in der Vorstellung und Beschreibung der auftretenden Personen spielt. Hier wird deutlich, dass für Gísli das geringe Wissen über Eggerts Abstammung nicht in Übereinstimmung mit der Bedeutung steht, die diesem nach Meinung seiner Zeitgenossen zukam, und dass er es als durchaus vorteilhaft empfunden hätte, die Lücken in Eggerts Ahnenreihe zu schließen und ihn auf namentlich bekannte Leute zurückführen zu können.

Wie in den *Íslendingasögur* und der *Sturlunga saga* sind Darstellungen der Natur in den *Sagnaþættir* und Bezirkschroniken Gíslis äußerst selten. Sie kommen vor allem dann vor, wenn Menschen irgendwelchen Schwierigkeiten und Strapazen ausgesetzt sind, z.B. auf Reisen, und das Wetter die Ursache dafür ist. Außerdem wird die Wetterlage ganzer Jahre in besonderen Einträgen in den Bezirkschroniken beschrieben, wie es in den Annalen Tradition ist. In anderen Zusammenhängen spielt die Natur keine große Rolle, und Naturphänomene werden nicht, z.B. in einer symbolischen Funktion oder in Metaphern, in seinen Prosatexten verwendet.

Die historischen Werke Gíslis enthalten eine große Anzahl von Strophen und Gedichten. In den meisten Fällen handelt es sich um Vierzeiler. Die Stellung der Gedichte und Strophen in den historischen Werken Gíslis ist in mancher Hinsicht ähnlich wie in den *Íslendingasögur*, d. h. sie sind oft ein integrierter Teil der Erzählung/Handlung, Strophen können sogar in gewissen Fällen eine Handlung auslösen. Gísli verwendet außerdem die Dichtung ausgiebig, um das zu bestätigen oder unterstützen, was in der Prosa steht. Das erinnert eher daran, wie die

Dichtung in den *Konungasögur* verwendet wird. Seltsamerweise integrierte Gísli auch Strophen und Gedichte, die er selbst verfasst hatte, in seine Texte und verwendete diese als eine Art Quelle.

Nach dieser Zusammenfassung darf die Frage gestellt werden, ob Gísli beim Verfassen seiner Werke von den Sagas direkt beeinflusst war oder ob seine Texte möglicherweise eher davon geprägt sind, dass er Material in einem sozialen Umfeld sammelte, das in mancher Hinsicht dem Beobachter von den Sagas geprägt erscheinen könnte. Nehmen wir die Stellung der Dichtung in den historischen Werken Gíslis als Beispiel – sie gibt Anlass zu Überlegungen dieser Art. Woher stammt die Dichtung? Sie stammt aus der mündlichen Überlieferung und damit aus dem kulturellen Umfeld des Sammlers und Verfassers Gísli. Allerdings sollte berücksichtigt werden, dass Gísli einerseits zum Teil Gedichtsammlungen in Handschriften benutzt hat (Jón Torfason 1998, 8) und deshalb selbst nicht der direkt Verantwortliche für das Sammeln ist, andererseits, dass Gísli selbst der Dichter eines erheblichen Teils der Dichtung seiner historischen Werke ist. Es stellt sich die Frage, ob es nicht auf der Hand lag – ganz unabhängig vom Einfluss der Sagas –, Dichtung niederzuschreiben und ihr die Funktion zu geben, die sie in den *Sagnabættir* innehat, da sie in der Kultur, mit der sich Gísli beschäftigte, so lebendig war. Es ist möglich, dass dies der Fall war, aber eines ist doch nicht zu leugnen: Gísli hatte diesbezüglich in den Sagas Vorbilder, die zeigten, wie man Dichtung in historischen Erzählungen verwenden konnte.

Es ist außerdem interessant, dass Träume, Vorboten und Vorhersagen recht oft in Gíslis Werken vorkommen und einer ähnlichen narratologischen Funktion dienen wie in den Sagas, das heißt Spannung und Erwartung zu wecken. Welchen Wert haben diese Elemente für Schlussfolgerungen über die literarische Verbindung zwischen dem historischen Werk Gíslis und den Sagas? Das Werk Gíslis legt, neben anderen Quellen, ein deutliches Zeugnis dafür ab, dass die Bevölkerung ein lebhaftes Interesse an Träumen und Vorzeichen hatte und dass diese Gegenstand von Erzählungen waren. Darüber hinaus kann man annehmen, dass ein gewisser Glaube an übersinnliche Erfahrungen dieser Art existierte. Es ist deshalb verständlich, dass Erzählungen über Träume, Vorzeichen und Prophezeiungen aufgezeichnet wurden. Es ist jedoch fraglich, was größeren Einfluss auf die Abfassung der Texte hatte: Dass Laiengeschichtsschreiber wie Gísli Konráðsson in einer Gesellschaft lebten, in der die Bevölkerung solche Phänomene sowohl aus ihrer Gegenwart als auch aus der Sagaliteratur kannte und möglicherweise von ihnen geprägt war, oder dass die Autoren von älteren Texten in der Weise geprägt waren, dass sie Erzählungen über die genannten Phänomene in ihre eigenen Werke aufnahmen. Das ist schwierig zu entscheiden. (Es ist leicht, überall in isländischen Texten Erzählungen dieser Art zu finden. Hier sei stellvertretend auf Bemerkungen in der Einleitung von Marion Lerner zu der Auswahl der Reiseerzählungen von Pálmi Hannesson hingewiesen (Lerner 2007, 44–47, 90–92)).

Verschiedene Kenntnisse über Personen, Genealogien und Beschreibungen der Protagonisten, sind ohnehin die Elemente, die am intensivsten den Verdacht erwecken, es gäbe einen Einfluss der Sagas auf die historischen Werke von Gísli Konráðsson. Es ist offensichtlich, dass die Tradition, Menschen mit genealogischen Angaben vorzustellen, in der isländischen Schriftkultur sehr fest verankert war. Aber auch was die Beschreibungen von Personen in der frühen Neuzeit betrifft, waren die entsprechenden Passagen der Sagas ein einflussreiches Vorbild. Dies zeigt sich beispielsweise darin, dass in den Beschreibungen flüchtiger Delinquenten, die auf dem Alþingi publik gemacht wurden und die aus der Zeit von der Reformation bis 1800 stammen, auf Formulierungen zurückgegriffen wird, wie man sie auch in den Sagas findet (Magnús Hauksson 2007a; Þorleifur Hauksson und Þórir Óskarsson 1994, 342). Gísli Konráðsson ist, nach seinen Werken zu urteilen, in dieser Tradition fest verwurzelt.

Es ist generell wichtig, parallel zu den Sagas auch das kulturelle Umfeld zu Gíslis Zeit und die Texte der frühen Neuzeit zu berücksichtigen, wenn der Versuch unternommen wird, die

Vorbilder Gíslis zu benennen. Jón Espólíns historische Schriften, Annalen und andere historische Schriften der frühen Neuzeit und der Aufklärung haben ihren Anteil daran, wie Gísli seine Texte konstruierte. In einigen jener Werke können z.B. auch Einflüsse der Sagas auf den Stil gefunden werden. Dazu darf auf Beispiele aus den *Biskupaannálar* und dem *Skarðsáran-náll*, die in der *Stílfraði* Þorleifur Haukssons und Þórir Óskarssons (1994, 376–384) genannt werden, hingewiesen werden.

Zum Schluss möchte ich die Intertextualität der neuesten isländischen Literatur und der Sagas wieder aufgreifen. Es erscheint vernünftig, dabei in höherem Maß als bisher Texte, die in der frühen Neuzeit und im 19. Jh. geschrieben wurden, zu berücksichtigen und die Bedeutung der *Sagnaþættir* und anderer Laiengeschichtsschreibung für die Literatur der neuesten Zeit ins Bild zu ziehen. Hier kann auf eine Aussage Jón Yngvi Jóhannesson hingewiesen werden. Er schreibt in seinem Kapitel über die isländische Prosa nach 1970 in der *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* von 2006, wenn er Einar Már Guðmundsson's Trilogie *Fótspor á himnum, Draumar á jörðu, Nafnlausir dagar* bespricht, dieser hole sich „innblástur í önnur frásagnarform en skáldsöguna, nútímaþjóðsögur, anekdótur og ekki síst hinn séríslenska sagnaþátt. Bækurnar eru epískar, bæði í stíl og sjónarhorni, og aðferðin minnir á aðferðir sagnaritara allt frá Hómer til Gísla Konráðssonar ekki síður en skáldsagnahöfunda.“ (Jón Yngvi Jóhannesson, 2006, 610).

Übersetzung: Ute Zimmermann und Irene Kupferschmied.

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“Archaic” Assonance in the Strophes of Ragnarr Loðbróks Family and Other Early Skalds

Mikael Males, *Institutt for lingvistiske og nordiske studier, Oslo universitet, Norway*

In this paper I intend to deal with what I will call the Ragnarr group and the Bragi group of skaldic poetry. The former is supposedly late poetry with irregular assonances in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (RL) and *Ragnarssona þáttr* (RÞ), the latter is supposedly early poetry with irregular assonances, where Bragi gamli can be seen as emblematic.

It has been noted by Guðrún Nordal that the strophes in RL and RÞ are in the relatively simple metre *háttlausá*, that is, *dróttkvætt* without assonance.¹ In his edition Finnur Jónsson assigns these verses to the 13th century, and I am not aware of any attempt to date them earlier than that.² Indeed, even though the dating is intuitive, the diction differs so much from other supposedly early poetry that I doubt that any serious scholar would propose an early dating. Guðrún Nordal claims that the choice of the metre *háttlausá*, being less complex than “classic” *dróttkvætt*, mirrors the evolutionary perspective of the 13th century intelligentsia. In the 13th century Ragnarr was seen as one of the earliest skalds, and so it seemed appropriate for him to have composed in an undeveloped form of *dróttkvætt*.³

However, Guðrún Nordal’s classification of the metre of the stanzas in the Ragnarr group bears some scrutiny. There is assonance there, in some strophes about as much as one would find in what modern scholars consider to be early skalds, such as Bragi and Torf-Einarr. These are skalds that editors emphatically would not agree to place in the 13th century, but would rather have them compose some 300 years earlier. Other “early” traits are fronted assonance (as in *hǫrðum herðimýlum*) and assonance across lines, as in the metres Snorri calls *dunhent*, *iðrmælt* and *liðhent* (as in *Þá má sókn á Svǫlnis/salpenningi kenna*).⁴ I will refer to poetry with such traits as the fluid type, as opposed to the fixed type (see below).

So it would seem that the Ragnarr group is not simply the product of an evolutionary mindset in the literary milieu of the 13th century, construing a development from simple to complex. It is not composed in likeness of the contrived *háttlausá* of Snorri, or at least most of it is not. Instead, much of the poetry is composed with an assonance pattern that resembles what was then considered to be genuinely old poetry, and is so still.

So far I have followed Finnur Jónsson and Guðrún Nordal in writing about the 13th century, but relevant manuscripts call for a more detailed discussion on chronology. RÞ is found in Hauksbók, c. 1302–1310, and thus falls neatly into the period of the copying of the most important manuscripts of *Skáldskaparmál*.⁵ Clearly, interest in skaldic diction was great in this period and that is where I will place my focus and my *terminus ante quem* for further discussion. RL, however, is found in two manuscripts, one from the beginning of the 15th century and one more vaguely dated to that century in general.⁶ The manuscripts of RL are thus dated to a century or more after the period in question. That fact poses problems for a synchronic study, but in the following I will argue that circumstances still allow a focus on the period around 1300.⁷

¹ Guðrún Nordal 2001: 314.

² A II: 232–42.

³ Guðrún Nordal 2001: 314.

⁴ Hollander 1946, Kuhn 1983: 277. Examples are from *Ragnarsdrápa* 5 and 12 (B I: 2–3).

⁵ *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog: Register* 1989: 359.

⁶ NKS 1824 b 4to, AM 147 4to. For the dating, I rely on *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog: Register* 1989: 359.

⁷ Rory McTurk has written extensively on RL and RÞ (most notably McTurk 1991. There is a brief overview of his work in McTurk 2003), and they have been studied by Torfi Tulinius as well (Torfi Tulinius 2002), but I

RÞ contains seven relevant stanzas. RL contains 37 relevant stanzas, and is thus the more important source of comparison between the two groups of poetry. All the relevant stanzas in RÞ are also in RL, and though they display some variation between them, the tendency towards fluid assonance patterns is identical. In this regard they display what might be termed typological synchrony. Still, the additional poetry in RL could have been composed later, even though it follows the same pattern. It seems, however, that some form of RL existed at that time, since it is mentioned in RÞ, and that RÞ is based for the most part on that account, since RÞ contains similar, if less, narrative material as the extant RL, and it is reasonable to believe that the poetry has the same provenance.⁸ In both redactions of *Skáldatal* Ragnarr, Áslaug and their sons are grouped together as the earliest skalds after Starkaðr.⁹ That matches the poetic corpus of RL, whereas in RÞ there is no poetry by Ragnarr. An entire family of skalds is unique and its position right after the earliest skald is conspicuous. These circumstances make it reasonable to posit an account about their exploits including poetry by them, but hardly one where there is no poetry by the main protagonist Ragnarr. Rather, RÞ would be an abbreviation of such an account.¹⁰ Indeed, the abbreviation of the saga into a *þáttr* could very well have been undertaken by Haukr himself or under his auspices, which would well suit the general tendency in *Hauksbók*. Thus I would argue that the bulk of the poetry in RL existed at the time of the writing down of RÞ in a form typologically similar to that of both accounts as they exist in manuscripts today, and I will regard that group of poetry as synchronic for the present purposes. The period of investigation, then, would be the first quarter of the 14th century, but what with copying the conclusions might well be valid for some time before that as well (and *Skáldatal* was in existence around 1260).¹¹

So the Ragnarr poetry is designed not primarily to be simple, but to give a genuinely old impression. This proposition generates several questions. To begin with: What would the authors and scribes have us believe? If we are to understand the literary conventions of the early 14th century it is hardly helpful to draw a line between the “authentic” Bragi group and the “spurious” Ragnarr group. Despite the chronology of editions of skaldic poetry, which makes us feel that the poetry of Bragi and of Ragnarr are worlds apart, early 14th century erudites would in all probability view them both under the same lens as founders of the skaldic tradition. Indeed, in *Skáldskaparmál* Bragi is said to have composed in honour of Ragnarr, and the quotation makes it clear that he did so in thanks for a shield that Ragnarr had bestowed on him.¹² And in *Skáldatal* Bragi is Ragnarrs only skald.¹³ This close association of the two is most likely how the authors of RL and RÞ would have us view them. And this early poetry is not primarily marked by simplicity, but by different and more fluid aesthetics than the “classic”, fixed *dróttkvætt*. The intended dividing line goes between archaic and classical aesthetics, and not between the genuine, as transmitted by Snorri, and the contrived, as fabricated by some other author. This, at least, is true from a synchronic, 13th–14th century perspective.

And if finally we wish to get at the 9th and 10th centuries, what are our chances? If the conclusion is arrived at that the strophes in the Ragnarr group are composed in the likeness of early poetry, then there would seem to be such a possibility, provided that the late dating of the Ragnarr group is accepted. But it is equally possible to argue that since authors and/or

have not been able to find any discussion on the dating of the poetry in their works. It might be worth mentioning that Saxo has no poetry in his account.

⁸ Finnur Jónsson (ed.) 1892–96: 458.

⁹ DG 11 fol. 43, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar III* 1880: 251.

¹⁰ If my linking of such an account to *Skáldatal* is correct, that account would have been in existence around 1260 at the latest, due to the dating of the manuscript Kringla (Jørgensen 2007: 39, 80–86).

¹¹ See footnote 99.

¹² Faulkes (ed.) 1998: 50–51.

¹³ DG 11 fol. 43, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar III* 1880: 251.

scribes in the 13th and 14th century were capable of composing this kind of poetry we simply lack stylistic criteria for dating. Since the authorities within skaldic studies, notably Finnur Jónsson and Hans Kuhn, have had little doubt as to the authenticity of the early skalds and the spuriousness of the poetry of the Ragnarr group, they have wasted no effort at proving what they already knew. If one would engage in the humble business of establishing (or disproving) the facts they took for granted it would therefore be necessary to come up with some new criteria. As for the poetry in question, I see two issues as the most relevant. Firstly, one should look for external evidence that the fluid phonological pattern of “early” poetry is indeed early. Secondly, one should look for differences or lack of such between the Bragi group and the Ragnarr group. The Bragi group being heterogeneous, such a difference would leave the Ragnarr group standing alone. More on that below.

External evidence would in practice mean runic inscriptions. There is to my knowledge no comprehensive overview of metrical inscriptions, but two articles purporting to deal with the subject report no traces of a period of fluid phonology.¹⁴ As it is beyond my scope to undertake a separate investigation of the runic corpus I must conclude that at present there is no external evidence for such a period.

Are there then any differences between the two supposed groups of poetry? To answer that question I will first have to spend a few words on what might be called the “rule of phonological hierarchy” in skaldic poetry. In each verse-pair in the dróttkvætt metre, there is a balance between a falling tendency in the alliteration and a rising one in the assonance. The falling one is simple enough; there are two alliterating staves in the odd verse, one in the even. The rising tendency is valid for assonance in both the fluid and the fixed type of *dróttkvætt*, but with somewhat different realisations. In the fixed type the odd verses have half assonance and the even have full assonance. Sometimes the odd verse will have a full assonance, but the odd verse will *never be more conspicuously marked by assonance than the even*. A classic verse-pair will typically look thus:

Fólginn liggr hinn’s fylgðu
flestr vissi þat mestar¹⁵

Surprisingly enough, the verse-pair being the basic unit of *dróttkvætt* poetry, what little has been written about assonance in *dróttkvætt* regards the single verses, except in the particular case of *dunhent*, and so my description of the hierarchic principle in the fluid type is based on my own observations.¹⁶ The basic principle is rising, as in the classic type, but with varying outcome. Some verse-pairs will look like the fixed type, whereas others will have no assonance in the odd line and a half or full assonance in the even, and in some cases both may be equally marked (or unmarked, without assonance). A half stanza can look thus:

Vilið Hrafnetill heyra
hvé hreingróit steini
Þrúðar skalk ok þengil
þjófs ilja blað leyfa¹⁷

This principle for distribution of assonance is observed with some rigour in what is generally considered to be early poetry, but not so in the poetry in the Ragnarr group.¹⁸ To the modern

¹⁴ Marold 1995, Naumann 1995.

¹⁵ From the Karlevi-stone, see Jansson 1963: 134–37.

¹⁶ For *dunhent*: Hollander 1946, Brennecke 1971. Generally on assonance most notably: Kahle 1892, Hreinn Benediktsson 1964, Kuhn 1983: 75–89.

¹⁷ *Ragnarsdrápa* 1, B I: 1.

reader the pattern looks much like that in the Bragi group (especially Torf-Einarr), but there is a profound difference in that in the former case the pattern is random, in the latter it *looks* random, but is in fact dictated by phonological hierarchy.¹⁹ A Ragnarr group verse-pair can look thus:

Vilkaþ boð fyr bróður
Né baugum mey kaupá²⁰

So, in fact, we seem here to deal with an acute observer (or observers); he is able to reproduce the occasional lack of assonance, assonance across verses and fronted assonance, but he is an observer. He cannot feel the principle underlying the lack of assonance and what seems like random variation between half, full and lack of assonance. This in turn indicates that to the authors that composed and the scribes that copied these works, this mode of composition was no longer productive. The fluid hierarchic principle had been so completely replaced by the fixed one that the mechanisms of earlier phonological aesthetics were no longer readily accessible. And this, as I have argued, already around 1300, when interest in skaldic diction was great, and not only in the 15th century, which would hardly be surprising, given that skaldic poetry was by then for the most part no longer productive.

It would seem, then, that Finnur Jónsson was right in considering the early poetry to be early. How early is of course a different matter. It seems reasonable to assign quite some time to such a profound change in poetic sensitivities, that is, for the governing principles to no longer be recognised. The only thing we know for sure is that at least two runic inscriptions from around the year 1000 display a fully-fledged, fixed phonology.²¹ That does not mean, however, that “fluid sensibilities” may not have persisted for quite some time after that, parallel to the fixed type. However, when Snorri (d. 1240) reproduces the metres of the early skalds, he is so entrenched in the fixed type that he makes a strict rule out of each one of the irregularities that he has noticed in the poetry of those skalds.²² From what we can tell from the works we ascribe to him, Snorri had a leaning towards the orderly, but even so, I would argue that his rationalisation of the supposed metres of the early skalds would not have been possible without a profound change in metric sensitivities, the fluid type having become unproductive. Indeed, the mention of *háttaföll* ‘metrical flaws’ in the older skalds seems to indicate that Snorri was unaware of the basic principle behind the fluid pattern.²³ Bearing the runic inscriptions in mind, and since poetry that is ascribed to the period after the year 1000 displays fixed traits, whereas poetry ascribed to the period before that has tendencies towards the fluid, Ockham’s razor would indeed encourage us to cautious appreciation of poetry that in spite of long oral transmission has retained marks of considerable antiquity. At least, this conclusion is reasonable for the material I have surveyed so far, but further investigation will hopefully grant a safer footing.

¹⁸ See appendix.

¹⁹ I have found 17 breaks to the hierarchic principle in RL (A II: 232: II 1,5; 2,3; 3,1. 233: 4,3; 5,3; 6,5. 234: IV 1,3; 2,7; 3,3; V 1,1. 235: V 2,5; 3,7. 236: V 7,3; 10,1. 237: VII,1. 238: VI 3,1. 239: VIII 1,5). In RÞ I have found three (A II: 234: V 1,1. 236: V 10,1. 237: V 11,5), of which one is unique to RÞ (A II: 237: V 11,5).

²⁰ B I: 254.

²¹ Jansson 1963: 59, 134–37.

²² Faulkes (ed.) 1999: 24–26.

²³ Faulkes (ed.) 1999: 24, 26, the first instance also in DG 11 fol., 108 (after which *Háttatal* breaks off) and thus with all probability traceable to Snorri himself.

Appendix

Work is still in progress with localising breaks to the hierarchic principle in skaldic poetry. I will therefore give but a few examples from the Bragi group, that is, supposedly early poetry of the more or less fluid type, sorted here by skald rather than by narrative context or manuscript. In the survey I use Finnur Jónssons diplomatic edition (A), since in his normalised edition he is prone to emend irregularities of the kind I am looking for. Scribal alterations and mistakes, when detected, have been sorted out.

Bragi has one break to the principle in the verse-pair *svá lét ey þótt etti/sem orrosta letti*,²⁴ but the pair is marked by the unusual full rhyme at the end of the verses, and thus looks to be the result of some experimentation.

Torf-Einarr has only five stanzas ascribed to him, and has two breaks to the principle, conspicuously placed beside each other in the second stanza.²⁵

Egill, with his relatively large body of *lausavísur*, has no breaks to the principle.

Kormákr has two (possibly three) breaks to the principle, apart from stanza 61, which has three breaks out of four possible, reminiscent of the two in Torf-Einarr.²⁶ Holmgöngu-Bersi, in the same saga and manuscript, has one clear break to the principle and three possible breaks.²⁷ It should be noticed that the poetry of Kormákr and Bersi is nearly all contained in one manuscript only, so that scribal mistakes are difficult to detect.

This body of poetry is more than four times as large as the Ragnarr group and has considerably less breaks to the principle, even including the doubtful cases (9–13 against 18). Furthermore it should be noted that scribal errors, not listed here, show that scribes from the early 14th century onwards generally did not adhere to the principle. If one would posit a lengthy transmission of this poetry one might therefore expect breaks to the principle to appear in the process, just as there would be considerably more of them in my list, had not the same poems occurring in different manuscripts made it possible to rule some errors out (but not so in the case of Kormákr and Bersi). Also the curious concentrations of breaks in Torf-Einarr and Kormákr call for a discussion, but that will have to be postponed until more data have been gathered. And still, even without these considerations that might further emphasise the differences between the Ragnarr group and the Bragi group, the Ragnarr group has some 6–8 times as many breaks to the principle as the Bragi group.

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²⁴ A I: 2,9,5–6.

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The *kauphús* of Peter the Apostle in *leiðarvísir*: A Market or a Scribal Error?

Tommaso Marani, Durham University, England

Leiðarvísir is an itinerary from Iceland to the Holy Land that indicates stops and distances, but is also rich in relevant information on the places along the route. Its complete text is contained in MS AM 194 8°, dated 1387 (Kålund 1908: ii). The itinerary is attributed to Abbot Nikulás of Munkaþverá, who probably came back to Iceland from a journey in 1154, became abbot in 1155, and died between 1158 and 1160. Nikulás must have left the Holy Land before 1153, because he refers to Ascalon as ‘still heathen’ (Kålund 1908: 21¹⁵) so that L. was probably composed between 1154 and 1160 (see Simek 1990: 264–71 for the dating, the attribution, and the editions of L.). The section dedicated to the city of Rome (17¹⁶–19⁸) has a significant position in the itinerary because of its extension and its richness in detail when the main churches and other important sites are described.

This paper will focus on the reference made in the Roman section of L., immediately before the description of Old St Peter’s, to a *kauphús* of Peter the Apostle, which is commonly interpreted as a ‘market’ or a ‘bazaar’ (Magoun 1940: 286). First I will show how the existence of a market near St Peter’s is confirmed by medieval primary sources. Secondly I will take into account the possibility of a scribal error and put forward a possible emendation of *kauphús*. I will finally show that certain details in the description of St Peter’s are incompatible with the traditional dating of L. and indirectly reinforce the plausibility of a scribal error.

1. The *kauphús* of Peter the Apostle

After Castel Sant’Angelo L. mentions the *Kauphus Petrs postola hardla mikit ok langt*, ‘the market of Peter the Apostle, very large and long’ (18^{21–22}). Werlauff (1821: 46) saw *kauphús* as related to the Latin *basilica* and its ancient Roman use, a place constructed for the transaction of *negotia*. Kålund believes that *kauphús* could indicate the covered portico of St Peter’s, which connected Castel Sant’Angelo to the church or, less likely, the big atrium in front of the church (1913: 78). Magoun (1940: 286) believes that *kauphús* was the ‘shopping-arcade or Bazaar’ connecting Castel Sant’Angelo and St Peter’s. In fact, in the Middle Ages there were often markets near the churches and the area from St Peter’s to the Tiber was ‘a major shopping centre for visitors and pilgrims’ (Krautheimer 2000: 266).

In their present state, the Basilica and the Square of St Peter’s are the result of a radical reconstruction made in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They are entirely different from the medieval basilica, to which L. refers, built by Constantine between 320 and 333 (De Blaauw 1994: 451–463). In front of the Constantinian basilica there was an atrium, enveloped by a quadriporticus, probably contemporaneous with the rest of the building (Picard 1974: 855; De Blaauw 1994: 463–66).

The first account of the atrium is in a letter of Paulinus of Nola written in early 396, where it is narrated how a large crowd of poor people gathered for a banquet given in memory of the wife of a senator *intra basilicam, et pro ianuis atrii*, ‘inside the Basilica and in front of the doors of the atrium’ (PL: LXI 213; van den Hoek 2000: 174). This open court with a garden in front of the basilica was famous throughout Christendom as *Paradisus Sancti Petri* (De Blaauw 1994: 524–28). The *Paradisus* is mentioned in the twelfth-century *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, when the area around St Peter is described (VZ: III 44–47; Miedema 1996: 1–11).

The *curtina sancti Petri*, or *platea sancti Petri*, was the square that extended in front of St Peter and its atrium. It was connected to Castel Sant’Angelo by a covered portico. This covered portico, probably built in the fifth or early sixth century, is first mentioned by Procopius

of Caesarea in his History of the Wars, written around the mid-sixth century, where he refers to the στοά, ‘the roofed colonnade’, which led to St Peter’s coming from the Tiber bridge (Procopius 1919: 21; Krautheimer 1985: 18).

2. The Market of St Peter

The interpretation of the word *kauphús* as a place where goods are bought and sold, a ‘market’, is confirmed by historical evidence of business activity near St Peter’s. As early as the fourth century, an intense commerce is attested in the area:

‘Wine merchants, vendors of oil, fishmongers would have set up their stalls in front of the church along Via Cornelia coming from the Tiber bridge [...] so would presumably vendors of lamps and small religious trinkets to be offered at the shrine. (Krautheimer 1985: 17–18)

From the second half of the fifth century there was an ever-growing increase of the number of pilgrims come from afar, so that ‘sellers of wood and charcoal [...] cobblers, clothiers, bakers, money changers, vendors of “generi alimentari” would have been around to meet the pilgrims’ manifold needs’ (Krautheimer 1985: 23); from the later ninth to the eleventh century ‘nothing is known regarding the frequency of pilgrimages’ to St Peter’s, but ‘by the end of that century the pilgrims were back, flocking to St Peter’s from all over the West’, and in this period ‘private commercial activity took over to provide for the needs of the pilgrims as well as of the permanent residents of the Borgo’ (Krautheimer 1985: 31). Benedictus Canonicus mentions in his *Ordo Romanus*, written in 1143–44, several of these traders such as the *paliarii*, the ‘sellers of straw’, and the *fiolarii*, ‘sellers of phials’ (VZ: III 224).

Some eleventh- and twelfth-century contracts relating to business properties around St Peter’s, conserved in the Archivio Capitolare di San Pietro, provide evidence to confirm that business in that area must have been flourishing. In 1041 Vuilielmus, a *negotiens*, a ‘trader’, bought a house in the so-called Leonine City, the part of Rome around the Vatican within the walls erected by Pope Leo IV during the ninth century. The house was sold *cum [...] ergasteriis duobus ad preponenda negotia in portico maiore [cum] pergola et curte ante se*, ‘with two shops for doing business in the large portico, and with a pergola and courtyard in front of it’ (Schiaparelli 1901: 460). In 1043 Petrus de Rapizzo rented two houses, one of which was *coniuncta cum portico Sancti Petri cum argasteria in integrum intus portico ad negotia repreponendum*, ‘linked to the portico of Saint Peter, together with shops inside the portico for doing business’ (Schiaparelli 1901: 462). In 1127 Filippo de Goio sold a *caminata cum argasterio ante se cum uno casalino post se*, ‘a room heated by a fireplace, with a shop in front and a cottage at the back’ (Schiaparelli 1902: 277). In 1144 Sarracenus, son of Gregorius de Ceca, rented half of a house of brick with half of the storeroom inside and *medietatem de argasteriis ante se in porticu maiori*, ‘half of the shops in front of its large portico’ (Schiaparelli 1902: 285).

Eighty years later, in 1224, there were so many merchants and traders in the area that the situation around St Peter’s was probably out of control. For this reason the Senators Anibaldus and Napoleone commanded that *nulli omnino liceat infra ipsam basilicam et in porticu eius, paradiso et in ecclesia Sancte Marie in Turribus et in capite graduum ac in universis gradibus aliquid vendere vel comparare*, ‘no-one may sell or buy anything inside the Basilica and in its portico, in the paradise, and in the church of Santa Maria in Turribus, at the top of the steps, and on any of the steps’. The two senators justified their ordinance by a reference to Matt. XXI. 13, adding that the Lord *ementes et vendentes eiecit de templo, inquit: ‘domus mea domus orationis vocabitur’*, ‘cast out of the temple those who were buying or selling, saying: “my house shall be called a house of prayer”’ (Bartoloni 1948: 179). This ban did not

prove to be particularly effective. In the following centuries the trade in the area remained thriving, as is thoroughly demonstrated by Pio Pecchiai (1951) in his study on the stands and the shops in front of the Basilica of St Peter during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth century.

The information reported in L. seems to be confirmed by historical evidence, but no reference to a ‘market of St Peter’ can be found in the Latin medieval descriptions of Rome I have taken into account: no market of St Peter’s is mentioned in the seventh-century *Notitia ecclesiarum Urbis Romae* and in *De locis sanctis martyrum qui sunt foris civitatis Romae* (VZ: II 94–99; 106–7); in the *Mirabilia urbis Romae* (VZ: III 43–46; see Parthey 1869: 49–51); and in the *Indulgentiae ecclesiarum urbis Romae*.¹ These two facts, the lack of references to the market of St Peter in the medieval pilgrim guides and the abundance of historical evidence of its existence, may lead one to believe that the information given in L. was based on direct experience. It is interesting, however, that a market, probably the market of St Peter (Guidi 1877–78: 198; De Simone 2002: 87–89; cf. Krautheimer 2000: 364), is mentioned in the description of Rome given by the Arab Geographer al-Idrīsī, in his *Book of Roger*, completed in 1154 at the court of Roger II, the Norman king of Sicily (Oman 2009). al-Idrīsī’s description of Rome is full of fantastic elements and, using oriental – possibly Greek- written sources, he transferred on Rome much information which originally was about Constantinople (De Simone 2002: 87; Guidi 1877–78: 213, 217). The market he describes runs from the eastern to the western gate. He says that there are lines of huge stone columns in it, some of which are made of brass and near these columns are the shops of the merchants. A river, which crosses the city from east to west, flows in front of those arcaded loggias and the shops. The bed of the river is said to be entirely covered with copper slabs, so that it is impossible to drop anchor in it (De Simone 2002: 88). It is significant that we find this description of the market of St Peter in a work that we know to be based on written sources and that is full of fantastic elements that clearly cannot derive from the author’s direct experience.

3. The *Cantharus* of St Peter

The reference of L. to a ‘shopping centre’ near St Peter’s is thence not incompatible with both documentary and archaeological evidence. One might wonder, however, why, in introducing one of the holiest and most important centres of cult and pilgrimage in the Christian oecumene, the Basilica of St Peter was associated with such a profane activity as trading. As we have seen in the ordinance of the Senators Anibaldus and Napoleone (§ 2), this awareness of the profane nature of the business that developed around St Peter’s was not alien to contemporaries. The ‘bazaar of Peter the Apostle’, not only fails to find any correspondence in the Latin pilgrim guides describing St Peter’s which I reviewed, but it is also a hapax legomenon in the Old Norse and Icelandic tradition: the only occurrence of this word registered in Cleasby’s and Fritzner’s lexica is in fact the one from L. The possibility of a corruption of the text at this point can be taken into consideration in order to put forward a different reading of the passage.

In the tradition of texts about Rome we find other places mentioned before St Peter’s. One of the most important was the *cantharus sancti Petri*, a big laver for the ablutions of the worshippers, located in the middle of the *Paradisus sancti Petri*. The *Cantharus* is first mentioned by Paulinus of Nola in the same passage quoted above. Paulinus describes the Basilica of St Peter packed with needy people, and mentions its atrium where a richly decorated *cantharus* is used to wash hands and faces. (PL: LXI 214; van den Hoek 2000: 174–75).

¹ Hulbert (1923: 406–7); Huelsen (1927: 137:39); VZ (III: 79–81); Weißthanner (1954: 59–60); Schimmelpfennig (1986: 649–50).

Cantharus is originally a Greek word (κάνθαρος) with various meanings, one of which was a kind of drinking cup with large vertical handles. In Latin *cantharus* was also employed in a new sense, namely as a *cantharus aquarius*. ‘This was a water vessel that was used as a fountain or basin, rather than a drinking cup’ and it is likely that ‘the cantharus that Paulinus praised under the bronze canopy in the atrium had the form of a vase’ (van den Hoek 2000: 181, 203). In the *Liber Pontificalis* it is narrated how Pope Symmachus (498–514) decorated the basilica of St Peter’s with marble and that he decorated the cantharus with a quadruple porch made out of marble and with lambs, crosses, and palms made of mosaic (LP: I 262; van den Hoek 2000: 184). We find a description of the magnificence of the cantharus in the *Mirabilia*, where the information about Pope Symmachus is repeated, and the Pigna, as it is known familiarly, is first mentioned – a colossal bronze ‘pine cone’ which decorated the cantharus, working as a fountain head:

In Paradiso Sancti Petri est cant[h]arum, quod fecit Simachus Papa, columnnis porfireticis ornatumque tabulis marmoreis cum grifonibus connexae, pretioso caelo aereo coopertae, cum floribus et delfinis aereis et deauratis aquas fundentibus. In medio cant[h]ari est pinea aerea [...].(VZ: III 44–45)

In Saint Peter’s Paradise is a cantharus that Pope Symmachus made. It is erected with pillars of porphyry and adorned with marble tablets joined together with griffins and covered with a top of precious bronze, with flowers and dolphins, made of bronze and gilded, and that pour water. In the middle of the cantharus is a bronze pine cone [...].

The *cantharus* was already in the middle of the atrium by the fourth century, and the Pigna was probably placed at St Peter’s in the eighth century (De Blaauw 1994: 464–65). The pilgrims and the faithful coming to St Peter’s approached the church from the East, and, after entering the atrium, had the chance of washing in the *cantharus*. These ablutions had a clear ritual meaning (De Blaauw 1994: 504). The *cantharus* and the Pigna had a strong symbolic value, marking the *omphalos* of the Christian world and the nucleus of the Church’s jurisdiction (Finch 2000: 20).

It is worth considering the possibility of a scribal transcription error, prior to, or in the instance of, Manuscript AM 194 8o, which is dated two centuries after Abbot Nikulás: *Kauphús* might have been read for the abbreviated Latin word *cantharus*; or perhaps *kauphús* was read for *kanna*, the Icelandic translation of *cantharus*, which the scribe might have easily misunderstood in the context of the description of St Peter’s. The original meaning of *cantharus* is in fact a large, two-handled drinking cup. Transcription errors are not infrequent in the text of L. that we have in MS AM 194 8o. The possible corruption of *cantharus* in *kauphús* would not be very dissimilar to an example of a scribal error that we find later in the itinerary. *Flaiansbru*, for example, is mentioned twice in the text as the name of an alternative route from Rome to Brindisi (20⁹, 20¹²). This form has to be emended in *Traiansbru*, ‘Traian’s causeway’, which translates *Via Traiana*, the Latin name of a part of the Via Appia (Hill 1983: 183–84).

4. A New Dating for the Description of St Peter’s

We have seen that the textual tradition seems to be strengthened by the existence of a market of St Peter’s and that a *kauphús* of Peter the Apostle is not present in the pilgrims’ guides on Rome. Its presence in L. might thus confirm that a direct experience lay at the bottom of this reference. I will now show that the possibility of a corruption of the text can be indirectly confirmed by some details of the description of St Peter’s, immediately following that of the *kauphús*, which suggest that this description, as reported in AM 194 8^o, is incompatible with the

mid-twelfth century dating of the itinerary. These incongruities and the similarities with descriptions of St Peter's which can be found in the tradition of the *Indulgentiae ecclesiarum urbis Romae* corroborate the hypothesis that the description of St Peter's, and possibly also the reference to the *kauphús*, is text-based.

L. depicts the Basilica of St Peter as *gaufga*, 'noble', and *hardla mikil ok dyrlig*, 'very large and splendid' (Kålund 1908: 18²²⁻²³); after this we find the information that *þar er lausn öll of vandredi manna of allan heimi*, 'there is full absolution from the troubles of men from the whole world' (Kålund 1908: 18²³⁻²⁴). *Lausn* corresponds to the Latin *absolutio*, or *remissio*, and can be interpreted as a reference to the 'indulgence' granted to the pilgrims visiting St Peter's (Magoun 1940: 286). The adjective *öll*, 'full', 'complete', indicates the extent of the indulgence, which is clearly not partial but plenary (Raschellà 1985: 576–77). The term *vandræði* might correspond to the medieval Latin *poena*, in the meaning of 'suffering, misfortune, affliction' (Niemeyer 1976: s.v.).

In the early church, indulgences were linked to the *absolutio* and the *commutatio*, or *re-demptio*, the 'commutation' and 'reduction' of severe canonical punishments (LexMA: I 43, s.v. *Ablaß*; Frugoni 1999: 34–37). The concept and practice of indulgence as remission of temporal sins granted by the church began in the eleventh century and was analyzed and developed by the schoolmen of the thirteenth century (LexMA: I 44–46). In 1063 Pope Alexander II gave a complete indulgence to those who went to Spain to fight the moors, and at the synod of Clermont in 1095 Pope Urban II granted a plenary indulgence for those who went on the Crusade. The complete remission of the punishments for the crusaders remained for a long time the only plenary indulgence established by the Church. (Paulus 1922: I 195–211).

In the twelfth century, the popes only seldom granted indulgences of more than one year for those who bestowed alms or visited a church (Paulus 1922: I 157–77). As for St Peter's, it is relevant that there is no reference in the sources to a plenary indulgence before the one given by Boniface VIII in 1300. Petrus Mallius in his *Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae*, written under the pontificate of Alexander III (1159–1181; VZ: III 375), reports the indulgence of three years given by Pope Callixtus II on March 25 1123 for the consecration of the main altar that he had restored (VZ: III 435). In 1181, in a letter to the bishops of Sweden, Pope Alexander III granted three years of indulgence to the Swedish pilgrims visiting St Peter's, two years to the English pilgrims, and one year to the pilgrims of the continent (PL: CC 1316 AB). Romanus, who revised the *Descriptio* under Pope Celestine III (1191–1198) or at the beginning of the pontificate of Innocent III (1198–1216; VZ: III 376–79), specifies the information (already in Mallius, see Maccarrone 1983: 732) of a *remissio* on November 18, on Maundy Thursday, and on the Ascension Day. This indulgence was one year for the Romans and for the pilgrims from the surrounding areas; two years for the Tuscans, the Lombards, and the Apulians; three for *qui maria transmeare noscuntur*, 'those who were able to travel across the seas' (VZ: III 385). Apart from the crusaders' indulgences, Pope Innocent III granted only few indulgences: in a letter of April 21 1198 he mentions the indulgence granted to the pilgrims to Rome and to Santiago (Paulus 1922–23: I 175). It is relevant that Pope Innocent refers to this indulgence without specifying its extent or confusing it with the crusaders' indulgence: at the end of the twelfth century there was not any definite indulgence for the pilgrims to St Peter's, and Pilgrimage to Rome was not connected to an indulgence, nor did pilgrims come to obtain more indulgences than elsewhere, as happened in 1300 (Maccarrone 1983: 731). In 1208 Innocent III created a new indulgence of one year on the Sunday after the Epiphany Octave, when the *Veronica* was brought in procession from St Peter's (Maccarrone 1983: 733). A Manuscript of Basel, written at the beginning of the thirteenth century, contains a list of *stationes* and the corresponding indulgences: one year and forty days could be obtained in the period from the Sexagesima till the Sunday after Easter, an indulgence of forty

days for the five patriarchal churches and the *Sancta Sanctorum* (Schimmelpfennig 1968: 47–48).

In the thirteenth century, a tendency to create too generous indulgences was developing, so that the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215) limited their extent to one year for the dedication of a church, and forty days for the anniversary (Maccarrone 1983: 733–34). In 1240, however, Pope Gregory IX granted an indulgence of three years and three quarantines for those who visited St Peter's between Pentecost and the Octave of St Peter and St Paul (Frugoni 1999: 44). Pope Nicholas IV increased in 1289 the daily indulgence that was granted in St Peter's from forty days to one year and forty days (Maccarrone 1983: 740). It is true that around the mid-twelfth century the Portiuncola plenary indulgence on August 2 was believed to be authentic, but for a large part of the thirteenth century the only plenary indulgences were the crusaders' (Frugoni 1999: 37–39). A plenary indulgence for visiting a church was officially bestowed only in 1294 by Pope Celestine V to the visitors of the Church of Santa Maria in Collemaggio in L'Aquila (Frugoni 1999: 39–41). Pope Boniface VIII revoked this indulgence the following year, but the ground was clear for the plenary indulgence that he granted on February 22 1300 for the visitors to the Basilicas of St Peter's and St Paul's on the occasion of the first Jubilee. This was the first plenary indulgence ever granted for visiting St Peter's in Rome (Frugoni 1999: 48–50; Maccarrone 1983: 748–52). The fact that the description of St Peter's in L. refers to a *lausn öll*, a 'plenary indulgence', that could be gained there makes it extremely problematic to keep its dating around the mid-twelfth century

A second detail of the description of St Peter's in L. is hardly compatible with this dating. L. refers to the fact that under the main altar *ero half bein Petri et Pauli guds postola, og half hvorteggi ero i Pals kirkiu*, 'are half the bones of Peter and Paul, apostles of God, and the other half of both are in the Church of Paul' (Kålund 1908: 18). This is a reference to the altar *de ossibus apostolorum*, first mentioned in 1058, and to the legend of the weighing and division of the Apostles' bones by Pope Sylvester, who donated them to the two basilicas (De Blaauw 1994: 672). As Engelbert Kirschbaum has shown (1959: 209–11), this legend originated in a twelfth-century inscription found in St Paul's. It is first attested in 1165 in the *Summa de ecclesiasticis officis* by Jean Beleth (Beleth 1976: 271, 273), where, however, there is no reference as in L. to the two halves being kept in the two basilicas. Petrus Mallius was the first to connect explicitly the altar *de ossibus apostolorum* with this legend (VZ: III 421; De Blaauw 1994: 672). An explicit reference to the division of the bones by Pope Sylvester in two halves and their distribution between St Peter's and St Paul's is in the *Mitræ* of Sicardus of Cremona, written shortly before 1195 (LexMA: 7 1833). Sicardus writes that Pope Sylvester *medietatem in una ecclesia, medietatem in alia collocavit*, 'put one half in one church and the other half in the other church' (PL: 417A). This version of the legend of the *divisio apostolorum* has a large diffusion from the fourteenth century on (Kirschbaum 1959: 211, 241 n.65). Guillaume Durandus draws on Sicardus and reports it in his *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, written before 1286 (Durandus 2000: 59). It has its place also in the tradition of the *Indulgentiae ecclesiarum urbis Romae*: the text of MS Vat. Reg. 520 (dated 1364) reports the legend, concluding that the bones were weighed and the people put *medietatem in ecclesia sancti Petri apostoli et aliam medietatem in ecclesia sancti Pauli*, 'half [of the bones] in the church of St Peter and the other half in the church of St Paul' (Huelsen 1927: 137). A similar formulation is present also in the description of St Peter's in MS Vat. Lat. 4265 (dated 1375; Parthey 1869: 50) and in the *Indulgentiae* edited by Hulbert (1923: 407). The late origin of this legend and the fact that it is first attested in this form at the end of the twelfth century makes it implausible that it could already have been reported in L. around the mid-twelfth century.

5. Conclusions

On the basis of the indication in L. of a plenary indulgence for St Peter's, which was first granted in 1300, and of the reference to the legend of the division of the bones of the Apostles, attested only at the end of the twelfth century, a later dating of the description of St Peter's in the Icelandic itinerary can thus be proposed. 1300, the year of Boniface VIII Jubilee, can be taken as a *terminus post quem* and the possibility that the depiction of the Basilica was added only by a later scribe cannot be excluded. In fact, many of the details reported in the description of St Peter's in L. are present in fourteenth-century versions of the *Indulgentiae ecclesiarum Urbis Romae*: in the text edited by Schimmelpfennig (1988: 649–50) can be found the reference to the place where St Peter was crucified, and the indication of the altars and the tombs of Pope Sylvester and Pope Gregory, which are present also in L. (18^{26–27}, 19^{2–4}).

These considerations also have implications for the evaluation of the handed-down form *kauphús*. Given the state of the MS tradition a definitive answer cannot be given. The fact, however, that the description of St Peter's, immediately following the reference to the *kauphús*, is probably text-based and later than 1300 reinforces the hypothesis that the *kauphus* of Peter the Apostle does not reflect the direct experience of a 'Market of St Peter's', but is a *lectio facillior* for the *cantharus sancti Petri*, famous throughout Christendom and present in many of the medieval pilgrim guides to Rome.

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Isolerade graftyper i DG 11 (Codex Upsaliensis)

Lasse Mårtensson, Dept. of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University, Sweden

Min uppgift i projektet Studier i Codex Upsaliensis är att undersöka handskriften DG 11 från ett paleografiskt, ortografiskt och språkligt perspektiv. Ett av huvudsyftena är att utifrån paleografiska samt språkliga data pröva dateringen av handskriften. Denna handskrift dateras ofta till ca 1300–25 (Gödel 1892:11; Thorell 1977:IX), men en utförlig prövning av kriterierna för denna datering har ännu inte gjorts. Ett annat huvudsyfte är att pröva vilka möjligheter det finns att skapa sig en uppfattning om förlagans utformning. Detta är naturligtvis en svår uppgift, och till allra största delen är förlagans utformning oåtkomlig för oss. Samtidigt har framgångsrika undersökningar genomförts avseende sådana frågor, t.ex. av Gustaf Lindblad (1954); problemet är dock att få handskrifter visar upp samma heterogenitet som föremålet för Lindblads undersökning (Codex Regius av Eddadikterna).

DG 11 är med rätt stor säkerhet skriven av en skrivare, undantaget delar av lönnskriften på 47v och 48r (t.ex. Thorell 1977:IX f.). Den mikropaleografiska utformningen är mycket konstant igenom hela handskriften. Skrivaren har ofta ansetts vara skicklig (a.st.; Finnur Jónsson 1931:XII), åtminstone från ett tekniskt perspektiv. Däremot är det ofta han som får bära ansvaret för DG 11:s förment bristfälliga utformning; han har alltså identifierats med handskriftens redaktör (t.ex. a.a. s. XX).

I vissa fall är det möjligt att avgöra vad som härrör från skrivare av det aktuella manuskriptet och vad som är övertaget från förlagan, om inte med fullständig så åtminstone rätt stor säkerhet. En allmän arbetshypotes i min undersökning är att företeelser, paleografiska eller språkliga, som förekommer isolerat och ett fåtal gånger, *kan* vara kopierade från förlagan (men behöver inte vara det). Den inledande undersökningen har bestått i att kartlägga de graftyper som förekommer 25 ggr eller färre. Antalet 25 är ganska generöst tilltaget, och man kan självklart inte ta för givet att samtliga graftyper som förekommer färre än 25 ggr är kopierade från förlagan. Däremot är de nog infrekventa för att de kan vara det och därför är det värt att pröva dessa belägg kvalitativt.

Dessa infrekventa graftyper prövas därefter avseende vilka ord de förekommer i, var i handskriften de står samt huruvida de står i dikteitat eller prosa. Det har visat sig att många av de ovanliga graftyperna förekommer i ovanliga ordformer, bl.a. i dikteitat. Som exempel på en företeelse som enligt min uppfattning med rätt stor säkerhet är övertaget från förlagan är förekomsten av kappa-tecknet (*lc*). Detta skrivtecken förekommer endast en gång i hela handskriften, i skrivningen *\pakag* i Håttatal. Kappa-tecknet var förvisso den representation för långt *k* som Den förste grammatikern förespråkade (Hreinn Benediktsson 1972:111 f.), men den kom inte att brukas i särskilt stor utsträckning. I DG 11 är representationen för långt *k* konsekvent *ck*, och att skrivaren vid ett enskilt tillfälle självmant skulle välja en avvikande skrivning, i synnerhet av så pass ovanligt slag som den nämnda, ter sig mycket osannolikt. Istället är det mer rimligt att anta att skrivaren slaviskt kopierar denna graftyp från förlagan, möjligtvis p.g.a. att han var osäker på vad den representerade och därför inte kunde ersätta den med sin egen motsvarighet.

I andra fall visar sig den kvalitativa prövningen resultera i att det inte går att avgöra huruvida en viss infrekvent skrivning härrör från skrivare eller förlaga. Graftypen *\c* initialt i ord är ovanligt i DG 11 (totalt 16 ggr), men vid en kontroll av beläggen visar sig de allra flesta vara i latinska namn och citatord, t.ex. *Ciprus* och *Celius*, och då kan en skriftspråklig norm urskiljas bakom beläggen, även om de är få. Då kan man inte avgöra om denna norm var skrivarens egen eller förlagans (eller för den delen bådas). Prövningen av de isolerade förekomsterna är därmed helt nödvändig.

En tendens kan iakttas i det att de fåtaliga graftyperna ofta förekommer i dels namn, i synnerhet ovanliga sådana, dels i ovanliga, poetiskt markerade ord. Att namn, och allra helst ovanliga namn, skrivs mycket troget efter förlagan är ingen nyhet, och gäller inte bara DG 11. Namn följer ofta särskilda ortografiska regler i medeltida skrift, och det tycks som om det där finns en stark tendens att slaviskt kopiera förlagans skrivning.¹ Skrivning av namn förefaller också på andra sätt skilja sig från skrivning av andra ord i DG 11. T.ex. har skrivaren av DG 11 en klar preferens för *ir* framför *er* i obetonad ställning. Däremot finns det rikligt med *er*-skrivningar i just mytologiska namn (\bergelmer\ (*Bergelmir*), \kvafer\ (*Kvasir*), \lifþ:æfer\ (*Lifþrasir*), \And:imner\ (*Andhrímnir*) o.s.v.).

När den paleografiska undersökningen är färdig kommer handskriften att undersökas från ett språkligt perspektiv. Principen kommer här att vara att urskilja ålderdomliga företeelser och pröva dessa kvalitativt på samma sätt som de paleografiska företeelserna. Ett delmål med denna undersökning är att pröva den tidigare dateringen av DG 11.

Litteratur

Finnur Jónsson (utg.), 1931: Edda Snorra Sturlusonar udgivet efter håndskrifterna. København.

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Kenn mér réttan veg til þess kastala er Artús konungr sitr í: References to Kingship in the Old French *Conte du Graal* and its Old Norse and Middle English Adaptations

Suzanne Marti, Institutt for lingvistiske og nordiske studier, Universitetet i Oslo, Norway

While it is a hardly disputed fact that the Old Norse *Parcevals Saga* is based on Chrétien de Troyes' Old French *Le Conte du Graal*, there is considerably less certainty with regard to the circumstances under which this translation (and adaptation) emerged. For some time now, it has been assumed that *Parcevals Saga* and other *riddarasögur* – sagas of chivalry derived from Old French, Anglo-Norman and Latin works – originate from the milieu around the Norwegian King Hákon Hákonarson in the mid-thirteenth century (Glauser 2005: 375). This assumption mainly rests upon the fact that King Hákon is referred to as commissioner in the prologues and epilogues of some of these sagas, as, for example, in the prologue of *Tristrams Saga ok Ísöndar*: “Var þá liðit frá hingatburði Christi 1226 ár, er þessi saga var á norrænu skrifuð eptir befalingu ok skipan virðuligs herra Hákonar kóngs” (Kalinke 1999: 28). However, it can also prove to be fruitful to consider the introduction of European literature in Norway as part of a larger process of interaction and exchange between different cultures, instead of regarding these translations merely as the result of a single person's attempt to promote a new ideology.

Introduction

In my doctoral thesis, I examine how European literature was received and adapted in medieval Norway, basing my analysis on a close comparison of *Le Conte du Graal* and *Parcevals Saga*. Due to my focus on cultural interaction, I concentrate particularly on the way culture-related concepts are rendered in the Old French original and its Old Norse adaptation. At the Saga Conference in Uppsala, however, I will discuss only one of the concepts I study in my thesis, namely kingship. By investigating how kings on the whole, and King Arthur in particular, are referred to in the individual texts, I want to draw conclusions on two different levels: On a more general level, I will present the way in which references to kingship are transformed in the process of translation, and I will deal with the question of what such modifications can tell us about the target culture's attitude towards, and treatment of, imported material. On a more specific level, I will consider what the references to kingship can reveal about its role and status in the respective culture.

In order to further underline the changes that occur in the course of translation from one language – and culture – into another, I will additionally compare the Old French and Old Norse allusions to kingship to the corresponding references in the Middle English version of the Perceval matter. Dated to the mid-fourteenth century, the poem *Sir Perceval of Gales* is available to us in only one manuscript from around 1440, in which it appears alongside other Middle English literature of chivalry, such as the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, *Sir Gawain* and *Sir Degrevant* (Campion and Holthausen 1913: ix). As opposed to that of *Parcevals Saga*, the origin of *Sir Perceval of Gales* has been subject to considerable debate, and it remains somewhat unclear whether or not it is based on Chrétien de Troyes' work. However, I will argue that there are significant similarities between the Old French and Middle English texts, and that some version or other of *Le Conte du Graal* appears to have been known to the Middle English poet. Hence, I would like to suggest that it is feasible to consider both *Parcevals Saga* and *Sir Perceval of Gales* as rewritings of the Old French poem, and that they consequently lend themselves to an analysis of cultural transformation and adaptation.

While I will present and discuss the results of my study of kingship in three versions of the Perceval matter at the Saga Conference itself, I want to seize the opportunity offered by this pre print volume to introduce in more detail the methodological foundations of my analysis.

Methodological Foundations

To be able to gain insight into the degree to which a text is modified in the course of translation from, for example, Old French to Old Norse, I want to suggest a methodology to identify and categorize the strategies that appear to have been employed in this process. It should thereby become possible to distinguish a certain pattern in these changes – a pattern that can indicate a general tendency in the treatment of foreign literature, or a specific intention on the part of the translator, or rather a commissioner or patron. The main source for my inventory of translation strategies is the methodology put forward by Vinay and Darbelnet. In their work *Comparative Stylistics of French and English* (1995), they aim at identifying the difficulties translators are prone to encounter and suggest systematic solutions to specific translation problems. Thus, they come up with seven translation methods that, as I will show below, can also serve to catalogue the procedures underlying already existing translations. However, I will borrow only six of these methods for my purpose, and complement them by drawing on Chesterman and his work *Memes of Translation* (1997). Basing himself on a number of earlier attempts of classifying changes that happen from source to target text, as for example Vinay and Darbelnet's, Chesterman supplies a rather elaborate inventory of 30 translation strategies. His aim with these strategies is to “provide useful conceptual tools for talking about translation, for focusing on particular things that translators seem to do, and for improving translating skills” (1997: 93). Chesterman groups his strategies into three categories: mainly syntactic/grammatical, mainly semantic and mainly pragmatic strategies. For the purpose of this study, pragmatic strategies are of particular value, as they concern the way a translator selectively treats information on the basis of his knowledge about the target audience. Below, I will present only those of Chesterman's strategies that I consider to be particularly relevant for my analysis. That is, they are not only suitable to complement Vinay and Darbelnet's methodology, but are of special interest due to the information they can give us about the target culture's reception and handling of imported literature.

In the following two sections, then, I will introduce the translation methods I borrow from Vinay and Darbelnet and Chesterman, respectively, and illustrate them with examples from the Old French *Conte du Graal* and the Old Norse *Parcevals Saga*. Thus I will demonstrate how certain strategies can be discovered in translated texts – also in medieval material.

A: Vinay and Darbelnet's Translation Methods

The first, and at the same time most straightforward, translation method that I want to present here is *literal translation*. This procedure implies the direct transfer of a source language text into a “grammatically and idiomatically appropriate [target language] text in which the translators' task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic servitudes of the [target language]” (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 33–34). In the case of *Le Conte du Graal* and *Parcevals Saga*, there is one significant obstacle that restricts the frequency of literal translation, namely genre. Because the original is written in verse, its syntax is slightly unnatural for a literal rendering in Old Norse prose. Thus, the occurrence or lack of word for word translation is rather difficult to evaluate, as problems of syntax may well interfere with a translator's desire to remain close to the original. Nevertheless, some passages of almost literal translation can be detected in *Parcevals Saga*, for instance when *En sveinninn vissi ekki hverjum hann skyldi heilsa, þvíat hann þekti eigi konunginn* (Kölbing 1872: 6) translates *Li vallés est avant venus,*

/ *N'il ne set quel il salut, / Car le roi mie ne connut*¹ (Busby 1993: 38, ll. 912–914). In general, such passages can indicate a certain faithfulness to the source text on the side of the translator.

When literal translation is rendered impossible due to some kind of lacuna in the target language, the simplest way of overcoming this problem is that of *borrowing*. This translation method certainly played an important role in the Middle Ages, and borrowings even have a tendency to become an integral part of the target language lexicon after being widely used over a period of time. Consequently, it is rather difficult to determine when a loanword was actually borrowed for the first time. That is to say that we cannot usually tell whether a translator resorted to borrowing in order to fill a lacuna, even if we have an instance where the respective word is employed in both the source and the target text. Thus, the fact that the Old French line *Yvonés qui molt fu cortois*² (Busby 1993: 38, l. 920, my emphasis) is rendered in *Parcevals Saga* as *En Íonet var hinn kurteisasti maðr* (Kölbing 1872: 7, my emphasis), does not entail that the Old Norse translator borrowed the word *cortois* at this exact point. On the contrary, the loanword *kurteiss* may well have entered the Old Norse lexicon at an earlier stage, and possibly not even by direct borrowing from Old French. Nevertheless, the use of borrowings is certainly a noteworthy aspect of translation, as it may give us an indication of the status the source language had in the target culture.

The next translation method suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet, *calque*, is, in fact, a special kind of borrowing. In the case of a calque, a language borrows the form of an expression from another language, but translates its constituents. The result of this process can be either a lexical or a structural calque. According to Vinay and Darbelnet, the former is a “calque which respects the syntactic structure of the [target language], whilst introducing a new mode of expression”, while the latter “introduces a new construction into the language” (1995: 32). Similarly to borrowing, calque is a translation method that is at the same time informative and difficult to uncover. Even if we encounter a target language expression that corresponds to that used in the source text, the way, for example, *guð signi yðr* (Kölbing 1872: 12) in *Parcevals Saga* structurally corresponds to the Old French *Diex beneïe toi*³ (Busby 1993: 56, l. 1364), it is not necessarily a calque. In fact, it may simply be a coincidence that an expression has the same form in the source and the target language. Hence, a more thorough investigation into the use and frequency of a certain target language phrase is often required if one wants to draw conclusions regarding the possibility of it being a calque. Still, a regular occurrence of structurally equivalent expressions in the original and its translation could give some evidence for the influence the former has on the latter.

While the methods discussed so far are what Vinay and Darbelnet refer to as *literal translation methods*, the following three are so-called *oblique* ones. Oblique translation methods have to be applied when a direct translation would be unacceptable, for example because of its giving the wrong meaning – or even none at all (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 34–35). The first oblique translation method to be presented here is *modulation*. According to Vinay and Darbelnet, modulation implies a variation of the form of the message, or, more precisely, a modification of its point of view. This can be justified “when, although a literal, or even transposed, translation results in a grammatically correct utterance, it is considered unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the TL” (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 36). Hence, an example of modulation would be the shift from a negative source language expression to a positive one in the target language. Such a shift happens, for instance, when the Old French *Nus qui le voit*

¹ “The boy came forward but did not know whom to greet, since he did not recognize the king” (Kibler 1991: 392).

² “Yonet, who was very courteous” (Kibler 1991: 392).

³ “God bless you” (Kibler 1991: 398).

nel tient a sage, / *Mais trestot cil qui le voient / Por bel et por gent le tenoient*⁴ (Busby 1993: 40, ll. 976–978, my emphasis) is rendered, in Old Norse, as *Allir er orð hans heyrðu, héldu hann fyrir heimskan mann; en sá hann þó vera bæði fríðan ok vaskligan* (Kölbing 1872: 7, my emphasis). As Vinay and Darbelnet’s notion of modulation is rather broad it could well be divided into several sub-classes. In fact, Chesterman derives a number of strategies from Vinay and Darbelnet’s concept of modulation, for example *emphasis change* (see below). Due to the limited scope of this paper, however, they cannot all be treated here in more detail.

One concept that is well-known from earlier approaches to the study of translation is that of *equivalence*. While equivalence has, for some time, been regarded as the only aim in translation, Vinay and Darbelnet consider it to be just one of a series of possible translation procedures. In their opinion, equivalence is achieved when one and the same occurrence is rendered by two texts that are entirely different with regard to the stylistic and structural methods applied. As particularly frequent examples of equivalences, Vinay and Darbelnet mention the translation of idioms and proverbs (1995: 38). Since such a repertoire of idioms and proverbs is deeply rooted in the culture engulfing a language, the method of equivalence as defined by Vinay and Darbelnet is certainly relevant for my study. In fact, it can be rather revealing to examine the extent to which source language expressions are translated into the target language by calque or equivalence. The use of calque, on the one hand, can be interpreted as an indication of the translator’s faithfulness to the original, or as way of underlining the distinctness or ‘strangeness’ of the source language expression. Equivalence, on the other hand, points towards more independence on the side of the translator and towards more stress on comprehensibility for the target audience. Thus, when the Old French expression *Et cele pleure et dist que ja / A Dieu ne le comandera*⁵ (Busby 1993: 32, ll. 773–774) is translated into *En hon bað tröll hafa hann allan ok svá hans ömbun* (Kölbing 1872: 5), this indicates that the translator opted for an equivalent expression that would be more suitable or better understandable in the target language.

The last of Vinay and Darbelnet’s methods to be discussed here is *adaptation*. In their opinion, this method touches on the very limits of translation inasmuch as it is used when the source language message refers to an item or situation entirely unknown to the target culture. Such cases oblige translators to generate corresponding, or equivalent, situations that are comprehensible for the target audience. Hence, adaptation can also be interpreted as a special type of equivalence – namely situational equivalence (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 39). Just like the method of equivalence, then, that of adaptation is of considerable interest for this study. After all, the use of adaptation also suggests that the translator attempts to render the contents of the original text comprehensible for his target audience. This can be illustrated with the Old Norse translation of *Se li apareille et atorne / De canevas grosse chemise / Et braies faites a la guise / De Gales, ou on fait ensamble / Braies et cauces, ce me samble*⁶ (Busby 1993: 21, ll. 498–501, my emphasis), where an unfamiliar reference in the source text is adapted and becomes *þá gerði hon hánum klæði eptir bónda sið svá sem kotkarls barni byrjaði at hafa* (Kölbing 1872: 4, my emphasis) in the target text. If, alternatively, the translator wanted to stress the differentness of certain elements of the source text – and culture – he would be more likely to refrain from adaptation and apply another translation strategy. Thus, the use of adaptation can, just like equivalence, convey to us to some extent the target culture’s attitude towards imported texts.

⁴ “None who saw him thought him wise, but everyone who observed him considered him handsome and noble.” (Kibler 1991: 393)

⁵ “But she wept and said she would never commend him to God” (Kibler 1991: 390)

⁶ “She outfitted and dressed him in a coarse canvas shirt and breeches made in the style of Wales, where breeches and hose are of one piece, I believe.” (Kibler 1991: 387)

B: Chesterman's Translation Strategies

After this discussion of some of Vinay and Darbelnet's translation methods, let me now turn to the strategies that I borrow from Chesterman's *Memes of Translation*.

The first of his strategies that I would like to present here is a so-called semantic strategy, namely *paraphrase*. According to Chesterman, this translation method tends to result in a target text version "that can be described as loose, free, in some contexts even undertranslated" (Chesterman 1997: 104). That is to say that the translator lays more emphasis on the pragmatic sense of an entire clause, sentence or passage than on the translation of smaller semantic components. A striking example of paraphrase is the description of Blancheflor, which is very detailed in its Old French version:

Et se je onques fis devise / En biauté que Diex eüst mise / En cors de feme ne en face, / Or me replaist que une en face / Que je ne me[n]tirai de mot. / Desliee fu et si ot / Les chaveus tiex, s'estre poïst, / Que bien quidast qui les veïst / Que il fuissent tot de fin or, / Tant estoient luisant et sor. / Le front ot haut et blanc et plain / Come s'il fust ovrez a main, / Et que de main d'ome ovrez fust / De pierre ou d'yvoire ou de fust. / Sorciex brunez et large entr'ueil, / En la teste furent li oeil / Vair et riant, cler et fendu; / Le nez ot droit et estendu, / Et miex avenoit en son vis / Li vermeus sor le blanc assis / Que li sinoples sor l'argent. / Por embler sen et cuer de gent / Fist Diex en li passemerville, / C'onques puis ne fist sa pareille / Ne devant faite ne l'avoit.⁷
(Busby 1993: 75–77, ll. 1805–1829)

In *Parcevals Saga*, however, the entire passage is paraphrased by means of just one sentence: *Hon var svá fögr at eingi lifandi mann hafði fegri sét* (Kölbing 1872: 17). As Chesterman points out, translators also resort to paraphrase for the translation of idiomatic expressions that lack a corresponding idiom in the target language. It can thus be argued that paraphrase is made use of when no other strategy is applicable – or when the translator does not consider the passage important enough to translate it more literally. Hence, it is certainly interesting to consider examples of paraphrase in a study of cultural adaptation.

Another of Chesterman's semantic translation strategies that is well suited for complementing Vinay and Darbelnet's model concerns emphasis. *Emphasis change*, as suggested by Chesterman, can involve an addition, reduction or alteration of the emphasis in a message. Furthermore, it can entail a change in thematic focus from the source to the target text (Chesterman 1997: 104). A change of emphasis can, for instance, be detected in a passage on Perceval's mother's tutoring. In the Old French text, she tells her son, *Dames et puceles servez, / Si serez partout honerez; / Mais se vos aucune en proiez, / Gardez que ne li anuiez / De nule rien qui li desplaise; / De pucele a molt qui le baise. / S'ele le baisier vos consent, / Le sorplus je vos en desfent, / Se laissier le volez por moi⁸* (Busby 1993: 23, ll. 541–549, my emphasis), stressing the fact that he should not do *anything* against a woman's will. In *Parcevals Saga*, on the other hand, the emphasis lies on not taking *more* than a kiss against her will: *Ver væginn við alla menn ok helzt við konur; ok þóat þik lysti til nökkurrar konu, þá tak ekki*

⁷ "And if ever before I have described the beauty God formed in a woman's face or body, I should like to try a new description without varying at all from the truth: her hair flowed free and was so lustrous and blonde that anyone who saw it might mistake it, if that were possible, for strands of purest gold. Her forehead was white, high, and as smooth as if it had been moulded by hand or as if it had been carved from stone, ivory, or wood. Her eyes, under dark eyebrows widely spaced, were laughing and bright, shining and narrow. Her nose was straight and long, and the rosiness of the cheeks on her white face was more pleasing than vermilion on silver. God had made her an unsurpassed marvel to dazzle men's hearts and minds; never since has He made her equal, nor had He ever before." (Kibler 1991: 404)

⁸ "Serve ladies and maidens and you will be honoured everywhere. And if you ask any for her love, be careful not to annoy her by doing anything to displease her. He who kisses a maiden gains much; for if she grants you a kiss, I forbid you to go any further, if you'll refrain for my sake." (Kibler 1991: 387–388)

meira af henni nauðigri *en einn koss* (Kölbing 1872: 4, my emphasis). In general, this strategy can be of interest insofar as a recurring change in emphasis can show the influence of the target culture, or even point towards a conscious interference from a translator or scribe.

In contrast to paraphrase and emphasis change, the following three strategies are examples of what Chesterman denotes as pragmatic strategies. As mentioned above, pragmatic strategies primarily concern the translator's selection of information in the target text, a selection that is based on his knowledge of the prospective audience of the translation. Consequently, they are potentially of much interest for this study, and this is certainly true for the strategy of *cultural filtering*. As Chesterman puts it, cultural filtering, which is sometimes referred to as naturalization or domestication, "describes the way in which [source language] items, particularly culture-specific items, are translated as [target language] cultural or functional equivalents, so that they conform to [target language] norms" (Chesterman 1997: 108). The opposite procedure, then, would be to transfer such items directly or to borrow them into the target language. When *.III. bons pastez de chievrol fres*⁹ (Busby 1993: 31, l. 743) become *þrjá hleifa* (Kölbing 1872: 5), this can be an instance of cultural filtering, possibly due to the fact that an Old Norse audience would not have been familiar with venison pies. With regard to the study of literary translation from Old French to Old Norse, the strategy of cultural filtering is relevant for two main reasons; firstly, because it deals specifically with culture-related elements, and, secondly, because it concerns the degree to which such elements are adapted to the norms of the target culture. After all, the frequency of cultural filtering can give us an indication of the translator's desire to emphasise or understate the exoticism of the source text.

Another pragmatic strategy that is well suited to complement Vinay and Darbelnet's translation methods is what Chesterman calls *information change*. This strategy entails either the addition of new information to the source text, or the omission in the target text of information given in the source (Chesterman 1997: 109–110). In the case of an addition of information, what is added cannot be inferred from the source text but is included in the target text because the translator considers it to be relevant. On the other hand, the omission of certain information from the target text, which can also manifest itself in summarising, suggests that the translator does not deem it to be significant. A clear example of information change occurs at the beginning of *Parcevals Saga*, namely in the rendering of Perceval's family history. In the *Conte du Graal*, Perceval's mother's elaborate account includes references to his deceased brothers:

*Et vos, qui petis estiiez, / .II. molt biax freres aviiez; / Petis estiiez, alaitans, / Peu aviiez plus de .ii. ans. / Quant grant furent vostre dui frere, / Au los et au conseil lor pere / Alerent a .ii. cors roiaus / Por avoir armes et chevax. / Au roi d'Eschavalon ala / Li aisnez, et tant servi l'a / Que chevaliers fu adoubez; / Et li autres, qui puis fu nez, / Fu au roi Ban de Gomorret. / En .i. jor andui li vallet / Adoubé et chevalier furent, / Et en .i. jor meïsme murent / Por revenir a lor repaire, / Que joie me voloient faire / Et lor pere, qui puis nes vit, / Qu'a armes furent desconfit. / A armes furent mort andui, / Dont j'ai grant doel et grant anui.*¹⁰ (Busby 1993: 19–20, ll. 455–476)

⁹ "three freshly made venison meat pies" (Kibler 1991: 390)

¹⁰ "And you, a child at the time, had two very handsome brothers. You were tiny, still being nursed, barely two years old. When your two brothers were grown, on the advice and counsel of their father they went to two royal courts to receive their armour and horses. The elder went to the king of Escavalon and served him until he was knighted. And the other, the younger, went to King Ban of Gomeret. Both youths were dubbed and knighted on the same day and on the same day they set out to return to their home, for they wanted to bring happiness to me and to their father, who never saw them again, for they were defeated in arms. Both died in combat, which has brought me great grief and sadness." (Kibler 1991: 386–387)

In the corresponding passage on ‘genealogy’ in *Parcevals Saga*, however, there is no allusion whatsoever to brothers:

Eigi eru orð þín með mikilli bleyði, ef þat er satt er mælt er, at hvatvetna dregr í sína ætt ok at krjúpa skal, ef ekki má ganga, þvíat faðir þinn var æ talinn með hinum beztum riddarum er í þessu landi váru ok hann ok ek af hinum beztum ættum. Auðig váru vit at eignum ok fé ok margir nutu þess ok urðu vit af þessu vinsæl; eyddist þá ok okkarr kostur ok flýðu vit hingat sem nú eru vit. Nú, góði son, ef guð hefr mál þitt til nökkurrar giptu, þá líkst þú feðr þínum. (Kölbing 1872: 4)

On the whole, the process of information change can be a comparatively subtle intrusion on the part of the translator, and could, for example, be a means of adapting the source text in accordance with a hidden agenda of sorts.

The last of Chesterman’s strategies that I want to propose for the completion of these methodological foundations is *visibility change*. What is meant by visibility is, in this case, the presence of the author or translator. Hence, visibility change can refer to an alteration in the authorial presence from the source to the target text, or to the “overt intrusion or foregrounding of the translatorial presence” (Chesterman 1997: 112). An intrusion by the translator can take the form of footnotes, comments or glosses, which make the reader aware of his presence. Thus, the translator accentuates his own presence and creates somewhat of a distance between the author of the source text and the readership or audience. In the case of the *Conte du Graal*, the presence of the author can clearly be detected at the onset of the poem, where he states, *Dont avra bien salve sa paine / Crestiēns, qui entent et paine / Par le commandement le conte / A rimoier le meillor conte / Qui soit contez a cort roial: / Ce est li Contes del Graal, / Dont li quens li bailla le livre. / Oēz comment il s’en delivre*¹¹ (Busby 1993: 5, ll. 61–68). In *Parcevals Saga*, on the other hand, neither the author’s nor the translator’s presence is perceptible in any explicit form. Similarly to the information change discussed above, a visibility change can be of interest for my study as it may reveal to us to some extent the translator’s intentions when transforming the source text.

Summary

Having now presented in some detail the translation methods that I borrow from Vinay and Darbelnet and Chesterman, I hope to have demonstrated the central argument of this paper. That is to say, it should have become clear that it is possible to apply prescriptively intended translation methodologies to already existing translations. In fact, they can be valuable tools for the analysis of translated texts. The examples selected from the Old French *Le Conte du Graal* and its Old Norse rewriting *Parcevals Saga* illustrate how strategies underlying the process of translation can be uncovered through close inspection. Furthermore, I have exemplified how we can interpret the recurring use of certain translation methods. Hence, a prescriptive translation methodology can indeed serve to identify and analyse the changes that occur in the course of translation – also when we deal with medieval material.

At the Saga Conference itself, I will employ the translation methods examined here to evaluate how references to kingship are transformed during the process of translation and transmission from Old French to Old Norse and Middle English, respectively. Thus, I want to

¹¹ “Therefore Chrétien’s efforts will not be in vain, since he aims and strives by command of the count [Philip of Flanders] to put into rhyme the greatest story that has ever been told in royal court: it is the Story of the Grail, the book of which was given to him by the count. Hear now how he acquits himself of it.” (Kibler 1991: 381–382)

expose general tendencies in the way the original text is dealt with in the different cultures, and draw conclusions with regard to the status of kingship in the relevant societies.

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The Valtari story in *Pidriks Saga af Bern*: sources and parallels

Inna Matyushina, Moscow, Russian State University for the Humanities

The hero of chapters 241–4 of *Pidriks Saga af Bern* is Valtari of Vaskenstein, kinsman of King Thidrek and nephew to King Erminrek. The events of these chapters reflect the Germanic legend about an Ostrogothic ruler, Walter of Aquitaine, which must have existed in oral tradition before it became fixed in writing in several literary texts: Anglo-Saxon (*Waldere*), Latin (*Waltharius manu fortis*), Italian (*Chronicon Novaliciense*), German-Austrian (*Nibelungenlied*, *Graz fragment*, two *Vienna Fragments*, *Biterolf und Dietleip*, *Rosengarten*, *Alpharts Tod*, *Dietrichs Flucht*, *Rabenschlacht*) and Polish (*Wielkopolska Kronika*).

In Scandinavia the tale of Valtari is interwoven into the legend of Dietrich of Bern and given written form in *Pidriks Saga*. The initial variant of the lengthy compilation of epic legends about King Dietrich is believed to have been created in Germany around the end of the 12th century and translated in Norway in the first half of the 13th century (Andersson 1987:52). In the prologue of the saga we find reference to its oral Germanic sources, among which could have been the legend about Walter of Aquitaine, hypothetically based on the south-German epic lays of the Lombardian cycle (Learned 1970:191).

One of the earliest versions of this legend is preserved in the Latin poem *Waltharius* which is more detailed than any of the texts mentioned above. The dating of the poem varies between about 890 if it is ascribed to Gerald, whose name is given in the dedication (Kratz 1984, XIV), and nearly a century later if it is ascribed to Ekkehard (910–973). It is thought that the origin of *Waltharius* goes back to the Germanic heroic legend, known to the Latin poet in its oral or written form (Carroll 1952:123–179; Magoun, Smyser 1950:3; Norman 1968:21–35). This legend must have been the source of not only *Waltharius*, but also *Pidriks Saga*, as well as the Italian, Polish and German texts listed above, which have parts of the story in common.

It is with *Pidriks Saga* that *Waltharius* shares its setting. The brief mention in the saga of King Attila of Susa conquering many lands, having great power and many retainers, becomes in the Latin poem a description of Attila's victories. The conquered Kings send hostages to the Huns: the King of the Franks Gibicho sends a nobleman Hagano instead of his son Guntharius who is too young, King of the Burgundians Heriricus sends his daughter Hiltgunt, and the King of the Aquitanians Alphere sends his son Waltharius. In *Pidriks Saga* Valtari is called the son of King Erminrek's sister, and this change in the story as told in the saga is in keeping with Germanic custom according to which the sister's son, i.e. the nephew, was regarded a closer relative than the son himself.

In *Pidriks saga* we find little about the hostages sent to the Huns. Strictly speaking Valtari is sent to Attila not as a hostage but in an exchange of guests. The saga tells that King Attila becomes such a friend of Erminrek, King of Apulia, that he sends him his kinsman with twelve knights, and in return Erminrek sends his nephew, Valtari of Vaskenstein, with the same number of knights (ch. 24). However the description of the main characters is similar. In *Waltharius* the hero is called a youth in “primevo flore” (78); in the saga it is said that Valtari was twelve years old at the time (ch. 241). Likewise Hiltgunt, called in the Latin poem the only daughter of Heriricus, of noble birth and with a beautiful figure, is described in the saga as a daughter of Earl Ilias of Greece who came to serve as a hostage to King Attila when she was seven years old. In the Latin poem Waltharius and Hiltgunt are betrothed before going to Attila; in the saga it is said that the young people loved each other very much, but Attila did not know this.

The Latin poem dwells at length on the life of the heroes at Attila's court. It describes how carefully they are reared by Attila and his wife Ospirin. Waltharius is given a close friend, Hagano, with whom he shares his military exploits. Hiltgunt is made keeper of Queen Ospirin's treasures. The young maiden's position is clearly known to the compiler of *Didriks saga*, where Valtari calls her the maid of Queen Erka, Attila's wife, watching over the treasure chests.

Whereas in *Didriks saga* Högni's name is not mentioned during the heroes' stay at Attila's court, the Latin poem devotes substantial space to Hagano's fate, narrating his return home after hearing that Guntharius has inherited Gibicho's throne and refused tribute to Attila. His escape makes Ospirin and Attila fear that Waltharius may follow Hagano. None of this information is in the saga, nor is anything said about the new wars and victories of Waltharius, which are described at length in the Latin poem.

The second scene is present in both *Didriks saga* and the Latin poem, with some details in common. In the poem this is the scene when Waltharius, returning victorious from battle and finding Hiltgunt in Attila's hall, embraces and kisses her, then orders her to bring him a drink and reminds her of their betrothal. He then asks her to escape with him to his native land. Hiltgunt hesitates but is finally persuaded to go. In the saga a similar scene takes place though at the festival. In both texts the hero takes the maiden's hand when talking to her.

In the verbal exchanges between the characters there are considerable similarities. Thus in *Didriks Saga* Valtari asks Hildigund how long she is planning to remain the maid of Queen Erka. He says that it will be better if she travels home with him. In *Waltharius* the hero addresses the maiden similarly reminding her of their long exile and asking her to escape with him. In the saga Hildigund laconically asks Valtari not to ridicule her, even though she is not with her kinsfolk, whereas in the poem Hiltgunt gives a lengthier answer expressing distrust in the bridegroom's feelings. She thinks that his words do not correspond to his actions because he finds it shameful to marry her. Similar distrust in the hero's feelings expressed by the heroine is found not only in *Didriks saga* but also in the *Graz fragment*, where Hagen has to tell Walther to love his bride.

In *Didriks saga* Valtari reminds the maiden of her genealogy and in accordance with Germanic tradition this is enough to stir her pride. Valtari reminds Hildigund of her glorious relatives: her father Earl Ilias of Greece, and her two uncles Osantrix, the King of Vilkinamen, and the King of Rus. He then reminds her of his own kin: his uncle King Erminrek of Rome and his kinsman King Thidrek of Bern. This gives him ground to rebel against serving Attila and, expressing his love for Hildigund, he asks her to run away from the Huns. Neither character's genealogy is given in the Latin poem, which leaves the intolerability of exile for the hero as the sole motive for escaping. The Latin poem contains an additional exchange of remarks not retained in the saga, but the maiden's reply is very similar. In both texts she expresses utmost obedience to her lord's will. In *Didriks Saga* she says that she was only four years old when she first saw him and loved him ever since, so she is willing to travel with him wherever he wishes. In *Waltharius* she assures Valtari that nothing can be more important for her than his commands and that she will eagerly follow wherever he tells her to go.

Having received these proofs of obedience, the hero tells the maiden about the flight. In *Didriks Saga* he asks her to come the next morning when the sun rises to the outermost gateway, and to bring as much gold as she can carry in both hands from the treasure chests of Queen Erka (ch. 242). In the Latin poem he gives Hiltgunt detailed instructions what to take: the King's helmet and shirt, the triple-ply hauberk bearing the mark of its maker, two medium sized coffers filled with so many Hunnish bracelets that she can scarcely lift them. The detailed plan of how the flight is going to be arranged is not reflected in *Didriks saga*, but in the Latin poem Waltharius tells Hiltgunt that seven days later he is going to prepare a feast for the Hunnish court and make everybody so drunk they will not realize that the two heroes have

escaped with the treasure. The motive of feast, which is so important for *Waltharius* and could have been present in the legend, is reflected in *Bidriks saga* when Valtari proposes the escape to Hildigund during the great festival that Attila holds in the open courtyard. However in the saga Valtari tells her to come to the gate at sunrise, so the actual flight takes place the next day.

The third scene, the pursuit of Valtari and Hildigund, is elaborated in the saga differently from the Latin poem. In the saga King Attila demands the return not only of the treasure but of Valtari's head as well, and here we hear Högni's name for the first time in this episode. He is called the son of King Aldrian and is given twelve warriors to help him defeat Valtari. In the poem, on the contrary, there is no pursuit because when King Attila hears of the escape and offers reward for the capture of the fugitives, nobody dares to follow them.

Unlike *Bidriks Saga* the Latin poem tells not of pursuit but of the journey. The episode of the Frankish pursuit woven into the theme of the journey is likewise absent from *Bidriks Saga*, in which Gunnar who plays an important role in the saga in connection with the *Niebelungen-cycle* takes no part in the Valtari episode. The episode of the hero's fight against the enemies interests both the compiler of *Bidriks Saga* and the creator of *Waltharius*. In the poem Waltharius and Hiltgunt take shelter in a cave. Hiltgunt sees the Franks approaching but takes them for Huns and wakes Waltharius. In both texts the maiden is described as very frightened, but in *Bidriks Saga* she says to Valtari what causes her grief is that he is going to fight with twelve warriors and she asks him to ride off and save his life, whereas in the poem she implores Waltharius to cut her head off to save her from dishonour. In both texts the hero gives her a similar reply. In the poem he reassures her saying that none except Hagano presents any danger for him. In *Bidriks Saga* Valtari says he has already split helmets, broken shields, torn byrnies, and made men fall from their horses.

The battle that follows is not shown in *Bidriks Saga* whereas in the Latin poem the defeat of each of the eleven warriors is described in great detail. Instead of these scenes which constitute a large proportion of the poem *Bidriks Saga* only states that a great battle took place and night fell before it was ended (ch. 243). The next chapter in the saga starts with Valtari already badly wounded and having killed eleven knights, but not Högni who escaped to the woods. In the poem Cundharius and Hagano also withdraw to the woods.

The final scene in *Bidriks Saga* has some reminiscences of the main motives of the poem. In both texts the heroes have a rest. In the poem Waltharius and Hiltgunt continue their journey after a night's rest. In the saga Valtari finds Hildigund after the combat and setting up camp in the forest, roasts the back-bone of a wild boar. In both texts the heroes undergo renewed attack. In the saga Högni returns and tries to stab Valtari with his sword. Hildigund sees him and warns Valtari, who casts the boar's back-bone at Högni, tearing his cheek open and his eye out. Högni runs to his horse and returns to Attila. In the Latin poem Hagano leaps from ambush with Guntharius and they attack together. Waltharius cuts Guntharius' thigh with his sword but Hagano lops off his right arm at a stroke. Waltharius knocks out Hagano's right eye and six of his teeth. In the saga there is no scene of reconciliation, whereas in the poem the combatants exchange jokes while Hiltgunt binds their wounds and gives them wine. In *Bidriks Saga* we are told that Valtari goes back to King Erminrek and tells him about his trip. The fugitives regain King Attila's friendship with gifts of money sent by King Erminrek. In the Latin poem Waltharius and Hiltgunt also continue their journey to Aquitaine, where their wedding is celebrated, and where Waltharius reigns for thirty years after Alphere's death.

If we look at the description of the last and hardest battle of Waltharius against Guntharius and Hagano in the context of Germanic epic it is hard not to notice how different the final part of the Latin poem is from the traditional ending of the Germanic epic (Eddaic heroic lays,

Beowulf, The Battle of Maldon). It is very likely that the Valtari legend had a tragic ending probably determined by the motive of treachery.

Apart from the Latin poem one of the earlier versions of the legend is reflected in the Latin chronicle, composed in prose with poetic insertions in the Novalesse abbey in the 11th century. The second book (ch. 7–13) of the *Chronicon Novaliciense*, written before 1027, contains a story of one Waltharius, a monk in the abbey. At first we are told about his appearance in the monastery, and his ordination (ch. 7) but then (ch. 7–9) he is identified with the epic hero Waltarius, son of the Aquitain King Alferius, who together with a Burgundian princess Ildegunde and a Frankish nobleman Agano are hostages of Attila, King of the Avars or Huns. Agano escapes when Cundicharius inherits the Frankish throne. As in the saga and in *Waltharius* the hero of the *Chronicon* proposes a joint escape to Ildegunde, who is keeper of the treasures of Attila's wife, Queen Ospirin. In the saga as in the Latin poem he organises a feast for the Huns, and escapes with his bride taking the treasures with them. In all three texts Attila offers reward to those who agree to return them but he only follows them in the saga.

The rest of the story follows *Waltharius* rather than *Pidriks Saga*. The compiler of *Chronicon Novaliciense* must have known that Waltharius killed all the Franks, except Cundcharius and Agano, but clearly did not have at his disposal the ending of the legend. His story finishes with mention of how Cundcharius and Agano suffering from thirst and hunger direct their glances at the bottle of wine tied to Waltharius's saddle. The following chapters of the *Chronicon* (10–13) show a new hero, the result of contamination of the first two images of the 7th and 8th chapters: he is a monk, committing heroic deeds, and then dying in old age in his abbey. The contamination of the images of monk and warrior in the *Chronicon Novaliciense* shows that the legend of Waltharius must have been included into monastic culture, owing to which it acquired the written form.

In Germany and in Austria the written version of the Walther legend belongs to a later period, the 13th century. Apart from the *Niebelungenlied* where Walther is always mentioned in connection with Hagen (1756, 1796–1797, 2344), the legend is reflected in two extracts of Bavarian-Austrian epic (early 13th century), which probably belonged to the epic cycle now lost. These fragments are devoted to the fates of Walther and Hildigund and like the Valtari episode in *Pidriks Saga* contain no battle scenes. In the badly preserved *Graz fragment* (MS 15, *Steirmärkisches Landesarchiv, Graz*) Hagen overhears Hildegund's complaint to Walther who is on the verge of leaving her. Hagen advises Walther to love her as they had been betrothed in infancy in Hagen's presence. Walther assures his bride of his fidelity. In *Pidriks Saga* Hildigund was also expressing doubt in the sincerity of Valtari's feelings and was also reassured by him. However in the *Graz fragment* there is a detail different from other texts including *Pidriks Saga* – Hagen leaves the Hunnish court not in secrecy but openly – he bids a friendly farewell to Etzel and then returns to his homeland.

The *Vienna fragment* (MS 13383, *Nationalbibliothek, Vienna*) is better preserved than the *Graz fragment* and consists of two parts. The first part describes the journey of Walther and Hildegunde in Gunther's land. Walther sends messengers to his father Alpker, King of Spain. The messengers tell the King that King Etzel will remember Walther forever, as on the way home the hero killed a lot of Hunnish warriors. Alpker expresses joy that he will never have to fear Etzel, because Walther will always protect him. The second part of the *Vienna fragment* (*Hildegunde Brute*) is dedicated to the preparations for the wedding of Walther and Hildegunde. Neither of the two parts have anything in common with the Valtari episode reflected in *Pidriks Saga*.

As in *Pidriks Saga* the Huns appear to be Walther's enemies in the Austrian poem *Biterolf und Dietleip* (dated 1260–1270), in which Biterolf is first depicted fighting with his nephew Walther, who is returning from the Huns, and then after their reconciliation he is shown listening to the story of Walther's life at Etzel's court (576–808). Walther tells Biterolf of how

he with Hagen and Hildegunt were Etzel's hostages (767). When the Hunnish troops come to the Rein Walther fights together with Hagen on Gunther's side and is described as a hero (776–808).

As in *Pidriks Saga*, in the plot of *Biterolf und Dietleip* the legend of Walther is woven into the cycle of Ditrich of Bern to which it is subordinated. In another German poem *Rosengarten* (middle 13th century) the legend of Walther also plays subservient role to the legend of Ditrich, which is united here with the Nibelungen cycle. Walther, now called a hero from France (37) is fighting again together with Hagen against the warriors of Gibich and is the only Burgundian who is not defeated, which makes the beautiful Hiltegunt clap her hands (235).

Other fragments of German texts of the 13th century are also based on the legends of Ditrich of Bern and are even less related to the plot of Walther's legend. Thus in the poem *Alpharts Tod* Walther is only mentioned as *geboren ûz Diutschlant*, 429 and is an ally of King Ditrich. In another poem *Dietrichs Flucht* Walther von Lengens supports Ditrich together with Hagen (8599). In the third poem *Rabenschlacht* Walther der Lenges calls Etzel his lord (553), which perhaps refers to the time of Walther's captivity.

The enumerated texts show that the legend of Walther incorporated in the cycle of Ditrich of Bern was widely spread in the Bavarian and Austrian territory. Perhaps the reason for uniting these two legends lies in the fact that Germanic tradition singled out the most valiant of legendary heroes as protector of the ruler, who was invariably shown in Germanic epic as unfairly treated by fate. But in these poems the only remnants of the Walther legend are the proper names. On the contrary in the poems developing the legend in greater detail, we find not only the names but also the motives, apparently constituting the essence of the legend: Walther is shown as Etzel's hostage, loves Hildegunde from infancy, escapes to his homeland with her, defeats his enemies. These motives are preserved in all German and Austrian texts that have come down to us and coincide with the main motives in the *Pidriks Saga*, *Waltharius* and *Chronicon Novaliciense*. The main peculiarity in the texts reflecting the legend consists in the description of the hero's enemies. As in *Pidriks Saga* in the poem *Biterolf and Dietlip* and in the first part of the Vienna fragment the enemies of the hero appear to be not the Franks but the Hunnish King Attila, which distinguishes these texts from the second part of the *Vienna fragment*, the *Graz fragment*, *Nibelungenlied* and *Chronicon Novaliciense*.

In Poland the earliest version of Walther's legend is preserved in *Chronicon Poloniae* or *Wielkopolska Kronika*, which is also called after Bishop Boguphal II (†1253). Ch. 29 of the *Boguphali Chronicon* tells us about the Polish count Walterus Robustus or Udaly Walczerz. In comparison with *Pidriks Saga*, *Waltharius* and other texts, the place of action is changed, from the Hunnish court to the Franks. The motivation of the hero's action is likewise changed: Walczerz comes to the Frankish court to learn knighthood and falls in love with Helgund, the daughter of the Frankish King. With the help of sweet songs he persuades her to escape with him and has to fight the German prince who is also in love with her. Walczerz defeats him and returns home. The second half of the episode in which Helgund acquires a new lover, has no parallels in *Pidriks saga*.

It is clear how radically the legend of Walther is changed in Poland. The character playing an essential role in *Pidriks Saga* and other variants of Walther's legend first as a friend and then as an enemy (Norse Högni) is replaced in the Polish chronicle by a German prince unknown to the other versions. The main character of the *Boguphali Chronicon* is shown as a knight mostly preoccupied with love as opposed to the image of the hero created by other traditions – a monk in Italy, a ViKIng throwing bones at his enemy in *Pidriks saga*. Variations in the images could perhaps be accounted for by differing local and temporal conditions. Although the Polish variant incorporates the motif of the "unfaithful wife" into the image of

Helgund, whereas other versions show her as a chaste and loyal companion of the hero, it retains the main motives (foreign court, escape, battle) shared by all traditions: Old Norse, Latin, Italian, German, Polish, Anglo-Saxon.

The culminating scene of the Germanic legend, the last battle of the hero, not retained by *Bidriks saga*, has been preserved by our earliest source, the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Waldere* which has come down to us in two fragments of 32 and 31 lines, and was probably composed in Northumbria in the 8th century (Norman 1949:23; Magoun, Smyser 1950:1; Surles 1987: 19). In the 63 lines of these fragments 12 proper names are mentioned, including the key names of the Valtari legend: Ætla (Attila), whose best spearman (ordwyga, 6) the hero used to be, Ælfhere, Waldere's father, Hagen (Högni in *Bidriks Saga*), Waldere's old friend, Guðhere (Gundharius of the Latin poem, Gunnar in Old Norse), who appears to be Waldere's foe. The fragments depict two scenes most traditional for the Germanic epic, the incitement before battle and the flyting of heroes.

The first fragment is related to the stage in combat when the hero, who has already lost one of his swords (*Waltharius* also mentions his two swords 335–337), is addressed by Hildegýð (or by Hagen) inspiring him to show valour in the battle, as the day has come (*nu is se dæg cumen*, 8) when he will either lose his life or achieve lasting glory. If Waldere is addressed by the maiden then her role in the Anglo-Saxon poem appears to be very different from *Bidriks Saga* and *Waltharius*, in both of which she was described as timid and consistently needing encouragement. Yet her image in the Anglo-Saxon poem has some features in common with *Bidriks Saga*. In the saga Hildigund expresses grief that Valtari is going to fight against so many warriors; in the Anglo-Saxon poem she says that she “fears for his fate that he seeks fight so eagerly”. The role of Hildegýð as an inciter given to her by the poem is more in keeping with a traditional woman's role in Old Norse epic (cf. Guðrun or Brynhild). Her name also carries memories of the legend of Hild and the famous Hjaðningavíg with its main motives of the escape of Heðinn and Hild, their pursuit by her father Hçgni, the battle in which both combatants perish (known in different versions from the German *Kudruna* and several Scandinavian sources including *Snorra Edda*, Saxo Grammaticus, *Sçrla þáttr*). The legends of Valtari and Hild have a lot in common: not only the names are the same (Hild – Hildigund, Hçgni – Hagen) but also the motives of captivity, flight, battle. In one of the variants of Valtari's legend (Polish) the hero also comes to the ruler and then escapes with his daughter. It is likely that the proximity of the two legends could have influenced the image of the heroine in the Anglo-Saxon poem.

The second fragment could be part of the flyting of the heroes preceding the battle. Waldere as in all other sources including the *Bidriks Saga* is not attacking but defending himself and his bride. In the Anglo-Saxon poem he calls himself “tired of battle” (heaðuwerigean, 17), implying that he has already defeated all his enemies; in *Bidriks Saga* it is also mentioned that Valtari is badly wounded. It is likely that this flyting observes all the rules of traditional Germanic *senna*. The place of *senna* is the battlefield, as in the *Hildebrandslied*, the *Battle of Maldon*, Eddaic *HHv.*, *HHI*. Introduction of the combatants is also present – *wine Burgenda* is referred to Guðhere. In the *Atlakviða* Gunnar is called *vin Borgunda* (18,3), which probably reflects the earlier version of the legend of the destruction of the Burgundian realm closer related to history than the *Waltharius* and *Chronicon Novaliciense* where Guntharius is the King of Franks (Learned 1970:180). It has been suggested (Pheifer 1960:183–186), that Guðhere could have been the leader of the group of warriors sent by Attila to capture the fugitives and the treasures. If this view is accepted, we have to agree that in the Anglo-Saxon poem, as in *Bidriks Saga* where the main enemies of the hero are the Huns (but not the Franks as in the Latin poem), the most archaic variant of the Valtari legend acquires written fixation.

The formal similarity of *Waldere* with *Waltharius* is restricted to the words of the main hero addressed to his adversary (Hagano in *Waltharius* and Guðhere in *Waldere*) and the

mentioning of his two swords one of which is called in the Anglo-Saxon poem *Welandes geworc*, 2 (this alliterative collocation must have been borrowed by the Latin poem *Wielandia fabrica*, 965; cf. also *Welandes geweorc*, 455 in *Beowulf*). On the other hand there are numerous discrepancies between the two texts, both in the way they portray characters and in details. Thus in *Waldere* and in *Pidriks Saga* only one battle is mentioned and it lasts for one day (in the saga night falls before the battle is ended). In *Waltharius* there are two battles, the second between Gundharius and Hagano against Waltharius taking place the day after the first. The difference in images is not only limited to Hildegýð (cf. Hild) but also involves the character of the King of the Burgundians (the Franks in *Waltharius*); in *Waldere* Guðhere is shown as a great man of valour in keeping with the Germanic tradition reflected for instance in the Eddaic *Atlakviða*. Thus we may assume that the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin poem could have been independent renderings of the Valtari legend.

Thus we may conclude that although *Pidriks Saga* shares some major motives of all these texts (such as the sojourn at the Huns' court, the flight home with the bride, and victories over enemies) which must have been present in the Germanic legend, it has others in common with only some of them. Thus *Pidriks Saga* shares the scene of Attila's feast and the plotting of the two lovers with the Italian *Chronicon Novaliciense* and the Latin poem. The details of Högni's wounds are given only in *Pidriks Saga* and the Latin *Waltharius*.

There are also some differences between *Pidriks Saga* and *Waltharius*. Thus in the former Hildigund is not Burgundian but Greek, and Valtari is not the son of the King of Aquitaine but Erminrik's nephew and King Þidrik's kinsman. It appears that in Old Norse tradition an additional connection needs to be drawn between the two cycles of legends about Thidrik of Bern and of Walther of Aquitaine with the help of genealogy, one of the most characteristic devices of the sagas.

In *Pidriks Saga* the hero's main enemies are not the Franks, as in *Waltharius* and several other traditions, but the King of the Huns, Attila, as in the *First Vienna Fragment* and the poem *Biterolf und Dietleip*. In *Pidriks Saga* (unlike *Waltharius*) Högni, who is not at all torn between loyalty to his friend and duty to his King, is acting under Attila's orders. The description of Attila as an enemy can be interpreted as an archaic motive drawing on Old Norse tradition. In the Eddic *Atlakviða* and *Atlamál* the King of the Huns is shown as he must have appeared to the Goths – a cruel and relentless torturer of the Niflung brothers Gunnarr and Högni. Scandinavian tradition shows Gunnar and Högni as brothers, not as master and servant as in the *Nibelungenlied* and other Austrian, Italian and Latin poems. It is possible that these characters, together with their main enemy (the King of the Huns), penetrated Walter's legend from the cycle of the destruction of the Burgundian royal kin. Comparative textual analysis shows that, despite the presence of the later elaborations shared with *Waltharius* and *Chronicon Novaliciense*, the version of the legend of Walter of Aquitaine in *Pidriks Saga* is in many respects more archaic than in other literary traditions.

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Overcoming Óðinn: the Conversion Episode in *Njáls saga*

Bernadine McCreesh, Dept. des Arts et Lettres, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Canada

Two foreign missionaries attempted to preach Christianity in Iceland before the country converted en masse at the Althing of AD 999. One of them was Bishop Friðrekr; the other a priest called Þangbrandr, the son of Count Vilbald of Saxony. Þangbrandr's mission is related in greatest detail in *Brennu-Njáls saga* (NS, ÍF 12:256–269), closely followed by *Kristni saga* (KS:255–62) and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (OSTM 2:150–60), which differ only in minor details. It is also mentioned briefly in other sources, such as Ari's *Íslendingabók*, Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* and *Landnámabók*.

The emphasis varies in each version. For example, Ari gives a list of those whom Þangbrandr converted and mentions only in passing that the missionary killed some men who slandered him; the names of those he slew are not given (ÍF 1:14). The author of the *Landnámabók*, on the other hand, does not mention who was converted, but tells us that Þangbrandr's victim was Vetrliði (ÍF 1:348). Snorri mentions briefly both who was converted and who was killed (ÍF 26:320). Once we get to *Njáls saga*, *Kristni saga* and *OSTM*, the story and the emphasis change again. Although KS and *OSTM* mention Vetrliði's slanderous remarks, his opposition to the new faith and his demise at the hands of Þangbrandr and his companions (KS 259–60, *OSTM* 2:150–60), the emphasis is not so much on this incident but on those whom Þangbrandr converts and the opposition he encounters in the shape of a sorcerer, a poetess and a berserkr. In NS, the Vetrliði story is made even less of, and the accounts of Galdra-Héðinn the Sorcerer, Steinunn the Poetess, and Ótryggr the Berserkr are further expanded.

The Galdra-Héðinn incident is almost identical in both NS and KS-*OSTM*. In both versions, the magician is paid to bring about Þangbrandr's death. After Galdra-Héðinn performs a sacrifice – on Arnarstakkr heath, according to NS – the earth splits open under the missionary's horse, and neither the animal nor its trappings are seen again. Þangbrandr, however, manages to leap off the horse's back in time. KS and *OSTM* stop the story there and leave Galdra-Héðinn's fate open, whereas in NS we are told that he was pursued and killed by one of Þangbrandr's companions.

It is now generally accepted that Þangbrandr's horse must have fallen into one of the sand-covered glacial cavities found in the south of Iceland. Although this is the only example of the earth opening up under somebody's feet, the sagas have several instances of witches supposedly causing landslides (e.g. ÍF 8:96; ÍF 6:59–60). Laying the blame for an accident at the feet of a witch or sorcerer is typical of a pagan world-view; according to Thomas (1971:538), a belief in witchcraft “served the useful function of providing the victim of misfortune with an explanation when no other was forthcoming”. In the sagas, both men and women practise witchcraft; in fact, the perpetrators of magic who oppose Christianity are almost always male, and an accusation of sorcery is often used to justify attacking a political opponent. This is particularly obvious in the sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason, most of whose political opponents are either wizards or obdurate heathens (Simpson 1973:182), but it also applies in the *Vatnsdæla* saga, when the *Vatnsdælir* accuse Þorkell silfri of being a shape-changer and a wizard who has influenced the drawing of lots in order to justify their refusal to accept him as *goði* when his lot comes up (ÍF 8:110–12).

Although very similar, the Steinunn episode is not quite identical in KS-*OSTM* and NS. In the former, although Steinunn composes verses about Þangbrandr, she and the missionary do not have a personal encounter. According to *Njáls saga*, on the other hand, when Þangbrandr travelled to the west of Iceland, Steinunn came to meet him and *hon boðaði Þangbrandi heiðni ok talði lengi fyrir honum* (ÍF 12:265) (“she preached heathenism and lectured at great

length to Thangbrandr” [Cook:177]). She claimed that Þórr challenged Christ to a duel and Christ was cowardly enough not to fight. Þangbrandr’s reply is that Þórr would be dust and ashes if Christ did not wish him to live.¹ Steinunn then asks Þangbrandr if he knows who wrecked his ship and recites a poem – with the stanzas in reverse order from KS-OSTM – explaining that it was Þórr. After that, the two part company.

Steinunn is mentioned in the Landnámabók (ÍF 1:99–101); she is the mother of Refr the Poet and comes from a family of *goðar*. Although most of the poets we hear about are male, female poets did exist; we know of at least three besides Steinunn (Jesch 1991:161–68; Straubhaar 2002). What is interesting here is the different approach to missionaries and their message by male and female poets.² The male poets make personal, verbal attacks on the missionaries: Bishop Friðrekr and Þorvaldr Koðránsón were also victims of slanderous poets who accused them of having a homosexual relationship. Faced with such insulting accusations, the Christians’ reaction was not to turn the other cheek but to slay their detractors. Steinunn, on the other hand, makes the message and not the messenger the butt of her attacks. Missionaries were trying to persuade would-be converts that the Christian God could offer them more than the *æsir* had done. This explains Steinunn’s attitude: to denigrate the new religion, she has to denigrate its leader; since men will not follow a cowardly lord, she relates that Þórr challenged Christ to a duel which Christ did not dare to fight. She also takes advantage of Þangbrandr’s shipwreck to illustrate that Þórr is more powerful than the God that the missionary worships. Despite the assertion by the author of NS that Þangbrandr *sneri því öllu, er hon hafði mælt, í villu* (ÍF 12:265) (“showed everything she said to be wrong”), it is not altogether clear who has come off better in the encounter.

The berserkr episode is the one which differs most in KS-OSTM and NS. In the former, it is a much smaller affair, a personal duel in which the warrior challenges the missionary. The berserkr boasts that he will be able to walk across burning coals and then fall on his sword with impunity, invulnerability to fire and iron being qualities attributed to berserkr also in the *Heimskringla* (ÍF 26:17). Þangbrandr blesses the fire and makes the sign of the cross over the sword. The berserkr gets his feet burned, and, when he falls on his sword, he is killed (KS:262). The missionary is not guilty of murder, for it is the berserkr who has issued the challenge and, presumably, God who has decided that he will no longer be impervious to weapons.

In NS, the episode takes place at a large feast Gestr Oddleifsson is giving to welcome Þangbrandr and his companions. A berserkr, who is now given the name of Ötryggr (“Untrustworthy”, “Unreliable”), invites himself, much to everybody’s consternation. Þangbrandr then decides to give concrete proof of the superiority of his religion. He has three fires built; he blesses one; the heathens bless one; and nobody blesses the third one. If the berserkr walks through the fire blessed by the heathens but falters before the one blessed by Þangbrandr, the heathens are to accept Christianity. The berserkr arrives, walks through the heathens’ fire and stops before Þangbrandr’s. He then raises his sword and gets it stuck in the crossbeam. Þangbrandr hits him on the arm with a crucifix, and, according to the author, a miracle happens: the sword falls from the berserkr’s hand. The warriors present, including Þangbrandr, are then able to kill him.

¹ Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson (1999:169) sees this scene as an illustration of the different conception Steinunn and Þangbrandr have of Christ. For the poetess, Christ is comparable to the Old Norse gods. “Þangbrandr’s words, on the other hand, suggest a very different understanding of the nature of deities. For Thangbrandr, Christ is the almighty God who rules everything on earth and in heaven, and at the same time has the power to decide the length of time that the heathen gods will be permitted to exist.”

² On this scene in particular, and on the role of women in the Conversion process in general, see Grønlie (2006:293–4).

Of the three stories, this is probably the least plausible to modern eyes. Nevertheless, berserk fits, however caused, were a reality in medieval Iceland. According to Grágás (1974:25), men had an obligation to restrain anybody who was overtaken by one. Berserks are stock figures in the Sagas of Icelanders, normally appearing in pairs and being all brawn and no brain. A pair of them, both called Haukr, appear in the Conversion story in Vatnsdœla, connected this time to Bishop Friðrekr rather than Þangbrandr. Once again we have three fires, but this time there is no comparison made between Christian and pagan magic, and the berserks are simply badly burned before they get through the second fire and then beaten to death. KS has both berserk incidents: the two Hauks and the bishop but only one fire, and Þangbrandr and the single berserk. Having two berserk incidents suggests borrowing between the two conversion-stories.

The world-view of NS is now Christian rather than pagan. In fact, the author actually goes so far as to say that a miracle has taken place: *Þangbrandr laust með róðukrossi á höndina, ok varð jarregn svá mikil, at sverðit fell ór hendi berserkinum.* (ÍF 12:268) (“Thangbrand struck him on the arm with his crucifix and a great miracle happened: the sword fell from the berserk’s hand.” [Cook:179]) The whole story has a hagiographical ring to it, with overtones of St. Patrick’s contest against the druids found in Jocelyn of Furness’ *vita* (late 12th century) and in the *Leabhar Breac* or “Speckled Book”.³ In this story, which is also a Conversion-narrative, Patrick blesses a hut of dry wood and the druid blesses one of green wood. Then Patrick’s attendant, wrapped in the druid’s cloak, goes into the dry hut, and the druid, wearing Patrick’s cloak, goes into the other. Both huts are set alight. The druid is burned up in his, but Patrick’s attendant is unscathed, although the druid’s cloak has been consumed by fire. In both stories the superiority of Christianity has been demonstrated by the use of fire.⁴

The author of *Njála* does not, however, seem to be altogether happy about this version of events. Three times he prefaces a statement by *var sagt* (“it was said”): once when he gives the number of men present and twice when he talks about the berserk. What seems to be happening here is not so much that the author of *Njála* doubts that Þangbrandr fought with a berserk but that southern tales about what happened are at variance with the generally accepted tradition. Local lore has converted the account of Þangbrandr’s mission to the south into a much more impressive affair than that found in other sources, increasing the number of men present in Síðu-Hallr’s house, adding in extra fires, attributing the challenge to the missionary rather than the berserk, and giving Þangbrandr a much more active role in the berserk’s death.

That Þangbrandr should take on three opponents is not surprising. Icelandic authors have a distinct propensity to arrange episodes in threes if at all possible (Bock 1921, 1922), which may also explain the third fire which serves no obvious purpose in the berserk story in *Njála*. What is interesting, though, is that these three opponents all represent aspects of Óðinn, who is the god of magic, the god of poetry and the god of battle. What we have here, then, is not so much a literal account of the Conversion as a symbolic depiction of the struggle of Christianity against paganism.

The Þangbrandr episode is not the only place in which the ascendancy of Christianity over paganism is depicted as a struggle between a human being and one of the old gods. In a well-known episode found in the *Heimskringla* (ÍF 26:312–14), OSTM (2:86–88) and Oddr’s saga of King Óláfr (KS 1:110–12), a one-eyed stranger, who is later revealed to be Óðinn, tells King Óláfr Tryggvason such fascinating stories that he wants to listen all night

³ Although the book dates from the fifteenth century, the texts in it are believed, on linguistic evidence, to be at least 300 years older. (Hewish, 2006)

⁴ For a discussion of other possible sources, see Grønlie (forthcoming); She finds that the most likely source is Rufinus’ *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, a text ascribed to Jerome in the Middle Ages.

and is in danger of oversleeping and missing Mass the next day. In this tale, various layers have to be peeled off the figure of Óðinn. On the surface there is the man Óláfr Tryggvason assumes to be no more than a storyteller. Underneath the disguise there is one of the *æsir*, or old gods, who will presumably be recognised as such by those listening to the story. And underneath the pagan god there is the Fiend who will assume any disguise to lead men astray. The audience will recognise the one-eyed man as Óðinn; the monks Oddr and Gunnlaugr (or his successors) point out that this is not Óðinn but the Fiend.

These three layers correspond to three of the four levels of Christian exegesis which were common in the Middle Ages: the literal/historical; the allegorical; and the tropological (which refers to the Christian way of life). Oddr in particular is determined that his audience will not miss the point, for he prefaces his version with the tropological explanation:

Ok nú sá óvinr alls mannkyns, djöfulinn sjálfr, hversu eyðast tók hans rétrr [...]. Hann bregðr nú á sik mannligri sýn, til þess at hann mætti þá auðvelligar svíkja menn, ef hann sýndist svá sem einn hverr maðr. (Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta eftir Odd Munk:110)

And now the enemy of all mankind, the devil himself, saw how his influence was decreasing [...] He took on the appearance of a human being so that he could deceive people more easily by looking like any man.

The Þangbrandr episode in NS and KS can also be read on three levels. On the surface we have the missionary and his three human opponents. On the second level, we have the representative of King Óláfr taking on the representatives of Óðinn. On the third level, we have the struggle of Christianity and paganism. This time, however, the layers do not correspond to the three levels of Christian exegesis. Satan and Óðinn are absent, and a priest would be hard pressed to draw a moralising conclusion from the episode. In fact, the three levels of the episode bear a greater resemblance to a skaldic kenning of the *tvíkennt* (doubled) variety than to Christian exegesis.

Having Óðinn and King Óláfr Tryggvason pit their wits against each other is not surprising, since Óðinn was the god of kings and princes. As such, however, he seems to have had little following in Iceland. Þórr, the god of farmers, was responsible for directing Icelanders to their abodes in the new country by means of their high-seat pillars, and nearly a quarter of the settlers mentioned in the Landnámabók have Þórr in their names. When Steinunn challenges Þangbrandr, she maintains that it is Þórr who has damaged his ship. In the Flóamanna saga, Þórr appears in dreams to Þorgils after he has given up his old faith in favour of Christianity. Those settlers who were not devotees of Þórr seem, like Hrafnkell Freysgóði, to have worshipped Freyr, the god of fertility and also of the Swedes, and may have been settlers from Sweden (Barthi Guthmundsson 1967:54). The only family who might possibly have worshipped Óðinn is that of the poet Egill Skalla-Grímsson (Turville-Petre 1972:9). In Hallfreðar saga, the becalmed men do, it is true, promise a large sum of money to Óðinn and Þórr if they get a wind to Iceland (ÍF 8:151–2), but the connection here is probably with Óðinn the god of poetry since Hallfreðr is a skald.

Since Óðinn has such a small following in Iceland, why is he and not Þórr depicted as the representative of paganism in the country and Þangbrandr's opponent?

The reason appears to lie in the different ways Christianity and paganism were viewed in the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Late thirteenth-century Icelanders seem to have believed that the Conversion of Iceland was, for their ancestors, not so much a change of faith as a change of allegiance (Cochrane 2003:108). This can be seen, for example, in the story of Þorgils and Þórr in Flóamanna saga, in which Þórr appears in dreams, kills Þorgils' livestock and leaves him becalmed at sea when he refuses to renounce Christianity and return to his old

beliefs (ÍF 13:274–80). According to this saga, eleventh-century Icelanders did not stop believing in the *æsir* after they were baptised; for them, the old gods still existed, but they were outclassed by a more powerful god called Christ. This view explains the mixed faith of Helgi magri, who was nominally a Christian, but prayed to Þórr on voyages and in difficult times (ÍF 1:250). It also explains Steinunn's attitude.

When Icelanders stopped believing in the existence of the *æsir* is unknown. Poetic kennings based on their names dropped from 28% in pagan times to 9% in the century following the Conversion and continued to decline to a low of 2–3% in the second half of the twelfth century (Fidjestøl 1993:102). Bishop Jón of Hólar, who reigned from 1106 to 1121, is credited with banishing from Iceland pagan practices such as naming the days of the week after Óðinn and Þórr (Jóns saga:96–97). The law-code Grágás, set down in writing between 1122 and 1133 but thought to have been composed nearly a hundred years earlier, orders people to believe in one God and not consecrate livestock to heathen beings. Hrafnkels saga looks as though it might have begun life as an exemplum illustrating the non-existence of the pagan gods and the folly of consecrating livestock to them. At the end of the twelfth or start of the thirteenth century, the monks Oddr Snorrason and Gunnlaugr Leifsson (d. 1218) from the monastery of Þingeyrar, following the teachings of St. Augustine, are claiming that pagan gods are demons. This view seems to have little following outside monastic circles, for, within a generation, Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241), basing himself on an alternative theory of Augustine's, claims in his Edda and in the Ynglingasaga of the Heimskringla, that the *æsir* were merely men who were euhemerized, or turned into gods by popular belief. It is after Snorri retells pagan myths in the Edda that the use of the names of the *æsir* starts to increase in poetry, reaching 10% again in the thirteenth century.

In this thirteenth-century renaissance, Óðinn seems to have been regarded as by far the most important of the *æsir*. After examining the 53 kennings referring to pagan gods in the Sturlunga saga, Boyer (1979:379) notes that 13 refer to Óðinn, 5 to Freyr, 3 to Baldr and Njörðr, but none to Þórr. In the Heimskringla, it is Óðinn and not Þórr who calms the sea and changes the direction of the winds (ÍF 26:18). In Snorri's Edda, the peasant aspect of Þórr is emphasised: his chariot is pulled by goats, he stays with farmers and has a farmer's children for his servants. Óðinn, on the other hand, is the most important of the *æsir*:

Óðinn er æztr ok elztr Ásanna. Hann ræðr ǫllum hlutum, ok svá sem ǫnnur guðin eru máttug, þá þjóna honum ǫll sva sem börn föður. (Faulkes 1982:21)

Óðinn is the highest and the oldest of the gods. He rules all things and, no matter how mighty the other gods may be, they all serve him as children do their father. (Young 1954:48)

Wanner attributes this change in attitude to Snorri himself:

Snorri's retention of Óðinn as source and patron of the skaldic art led him to recast this figure as a Trojan culture-hero who, though ousted from the realm of the sacred, could still be revered as wellspring of the north's most distinctive artistic achievement, as well as its royal houses. (2008:160)

Whether the displacement of Þórr by Óðinn is due to Snorri, to the Church, or to popular belief, the result is that, by the late thirteenth century, Óðinn and not Þórr is the *óvinr alls mannkyns*.

The Conversion episode can then be read on two levels, which correspond to two different concepts of Christianity at two different points in Icelandic history. The first level is that of the late tenth century, when people still believed in the *æsir*, accidents were attributed to

witchcraft, berserks roamed the country, and Þórr was worshipped by most families. The missionary Þangbrandr has to defend himself from literal onslaughts by a magician and a berserkr warrior, thereby demonstrating that Christian magic is stronger than pagan.⁵ He also has to demonstrate that his God can offer Icelanders more than Þórr could, so that they will change their allegiance. Although Þórr can wreck Þangbrandr's ship, Christ has ultimately to be stronger.

The Óðinn level represents the thirteenth-century version of the Conversion. By then, Iceland is a Christian country. The *æsir* belong to the realm of fiction. The doctrine of the Trinity is well established; the fact that Óðinn had three facets may have helped Icelanders to grasp the notion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. People believe that the most important of the old gods was Óðinn and not Þórr, and as such it is he who has to be vanquished by Óláfr Tryggvason, the Apostle of the North. Just as Óláfr sends his representative to Iceland, so too Óðinn sends his representatives to meet and dispose of the missionary. But the message of Christianity proves stronger than pagan magic, and Galdra-Heðinn and Ótryggr both perish. Steinunn, who eschews violence in favour of argumentation, survives.

This is the state of affairs which is found in Iceland in the second half of the thirteenth century. Witchcraft and berserk fits are not mentioned at all in *Jónsbók*, a law-code dated to 1281. Pagan poetry and tales of the old gods are flourishing, albeit as literature rather than as a religious belief. And this is what is depicted in the Þangbrandr episode in *Njáls saga*: magic, in the shape of Galdra-Heðinn, is dead; berserks, in the shape of Ótryggr, are dead; but pagan poetry, in the shape of Steinunn, lives on and flourishes.

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⁵ According to Thomas (1971:25), "Conversions to the new religion [...] have frequently been assisted by the belief of converts that they are acquiring not just a means of other-worldly salvation, but a new and more powerful magic."

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Áslaug Granadóttir? When, where and how was Áslaug conceived?

Rory McTurk, School of English, University of Leeds, England

In *Völsunga saga* Sigurðr and Brynhildr meet face to face four times: first on the mountain Hindarfjall, where they vow mutual loyalty (chs 21–22); secondly at the home of Brynhildr's brother-in-law, Heimir, where they renew their vows (ch. 25); thirdly in Brynhildr's flame-encircled hall, where they sleep together with a drawn sword between them, Brynhildr believing that she is sleeping with Gunnarr Gjúkason, with whom Sigurðr has exchanged shapes (ch. 29); and fourthly at the court of Gjúki, where Brynhildr, now married to Gunnarr but having since discovered that it was Sigurðr with whom she had slept in the flame-encircled hall, accuses him of having tricked her into a loveless marriage (ch. 31). Just after the third meeting, before Brynhildr has become aware that it was Sigurðr with whom she slept on that occasion, Brynhildr tells Heimir that Sigurðr, to whom she swore oaths on the mountain, was her first lover, and entrusts to Heimir's care her daughter by Sigurðr, Áslaug, who in *Völsunga saga*'s sequel, *Ragnars saga*, becomes the second wife of Ragnarr loðbrók and the great-grandmother of Haraldr hárfagri. What were the circumstances of Áslaug's conception? *Völsunga saga* gives no clear answer to this question, and nor does the Poetic Edda, since the relevant part of the Codex Regius is lost. It is noteworthy, however, that Sigurðr's horse, Grani, is present with Sigurðr and Brynhildr in the flame-encircled hall, since it is on Grani's back that Sigurðr crosses the flame barrier; and that in one version of the Faroese 'Dvørgamoy' ballads, which according to de Vries (*ZDP* 53 (1928), 286–89) reflect a relatively early version of the story of Sigurðr and Brynhildr, the hero, Sjúrdur, after sleeping in a forest with a dwarf-maiden, Ása, and begetting a daughter by her, finds that his horse, Grani, is missing, whereupon Ása lends him a substitute horse, instructing him to send it back to her after leaving the forest, at which stage he will find Grani, as indeed happens (V.U. Hammershaimb, ed. *Færöiske kvæder*, I (1851), 92–100, 190–95). It may be asked whether these various details reflect a memory of the Indo-European ritual associated with the installation of kings, in which, as indicated by M.L. West, *Indo-European poetry and myth* (2007), 414–19, the queen lay with the corpse of a stallion while verses were chanted encouraging it to impregnate her.

A somewhat expanded version of this abstract appears in Icelandic as an article in Þórunn Sigurðardóttir *et al.*, eds, *Sturlaðar sögur sagðar Úlfari Bragasyni sextugum 22. apríl 2009* (Reykjavík: Menningar- og minningarsjóður Mette Magnussen, 2009), 94–95.

*Alu and hale II: ‘May Thor bless’**

Bernard Mees, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia

In 1974, Edith Marold published a survey of the ‘may Thor bless’ texts of younger runic epigraphy, assessing them in light of the broader connection of Thor with *vígja* or consecrating evident in Old Norse tradition, investigating literary sources as well as epigraphs, later folklore, prehistoric rock-carvings and a manuscript charm. She concluded that the connection of Thor with the function of blessing represented Christian influence – a syncretic feature of late Scandinavian paganism – a conclusion that seems to be supported by archaeological evidence (Wamers 1997). In 2006, however, Mindy MacLeod and I published the first analytic survey of runic magical texts in light of literary and archaeological evidence. Although the book has been reviewed rather furiously by members of the runological community, it seems a propos now to revisit the relationship of Thor to *vígja* from a broader magico-religious as well as linguistic perspective.

As Cleasby and Vigfusson (1957) note, a pagan sense of *vígja* is employed several times in collocation with Thor’s hammer Mjöllnir, and perhaps the most important of the literary sources which link Thor to *vígja* is strophe 30 of *Þrymskviða*. At the climax of the ruse devised by Loki for Thor to regain his hammer from Thrym, the thunder god, disguised as a bride, gets his hammer back by farcical means:

*Þa kvað þat Þrymr,
þursa dróttinn:
“Berð inn hamar
brúði at vígja,
lekkð Mjöllni
í meýjar kné,
vígið okkr saman
Várar hendi.”*

Then said Thrymr,
the lord of the ogres:
“Bring the hammer
to bless the bride;
place Mjöllnir
on the maid’s lap;
bless us together
with Vár’s hand.”

And as soon as Thor retrieves his hammer, *Þrymskviða* is essentially over – Mjöllnir is restored to Thor and the giants get their bloody comeuppance.

It is this scene which seems best to explain the reference to *Þórr vígi* that appears in the Canterbury charm (McKinnell and Simek 2004:127, MacLeod and Mees 2006:120 and cf. Hall forthcoming). A manuscript charm written in runes, the text features both an explicit linking of Thor to *vígja*, but also the formulaic expression *þursa dróttinn* ‘lord of ogres’ also found in *Þrymskviða* 30:

Gyri!l sārðvara,

* Cf. Mees forthcoming.

far þū nū!
Fundinn es(tū).
Þórr vígi þik
þursa dróttinn!
Gyri!l sārðvara.
Viðr æðravari.

Gyri!l wound-causer,
go now!
You are found.
May Thor bless you
lord of ogres!
Gyri!l wound-causer.
Against blood-vessel pus.

Indeed it is only in reference to *Þrymskviða* that *Þórr vígi þik*, *þursa dróttinn* makes any immediate sense: it appears to be a reference to the putting of Mjöllnir on Thor's lap, the scene which forms the climax of the Old Norse lay, which most obviously explains the use of similar language in the Canterbury charm. The reference to Thor 'blessing' the sickness spirit Gyri!l seems quite inscrutable otherwise, unless of course we assume that *vígja* had a broader range of meanings in some magico-religious contexts than it did in literary Norse. From a text-critical perspective, these lines presumably represent some sort of *historiola* or narrative charm, then – i.e. a magical text which presupposes knowledge of the old Norse lay.

Another scene where Thor uses his hammer to bless something appears in *Gylfaginning* 49 where the thunder-god consecrates Balder's funeral pyre (*Þá stóð Þórr at ok vígði bálit með Mjöllni*). Thor seems rather unlike the other Norse gods, though, in that his hammer seems so central to his character. Thor's hammer is like Samson's hair or the heel of Achilles – he is well nigh powerless without it. Similarly the hammer also seems to symbolise the power of Thor, and rather than his power in slaying giants – the main reason he seems to travel *á Austurvegr* in Norse literature – it is the connection with *vígja* that appears to explain so much of the physical evidence for his cult which dates from the Viking Age.

Thor is mentioned on some six rune-stone memorials – from Glavendrup (Fyn), Sønder Kirkby (Falster), Virring (North Jutland), Veland (Västergötland), Jursta (Södermanland) and Rök (Östergötland) (McKinnell and Simek 2004:118–21, 125–26). And usually (i.e. with the exception of the Jursta and Rök stones) he is mentioned in a form of the formula *Þórr vígi (þessa) rúnar / þessi kuml*, 'may Thor bless (these) runes / this monument'. Sometimes this is expressed more elliptically (i.e. at Veland merely as *Þórr vígi* and at Rök and Veland presumably just as *Þórr*), but given the highly formulaic nature of younger-runic memorial epigraphy, it seems fair to say that this formula had somehow become an accepted part of the discourse of early Danish and Swedish funerary practice. Indeed such an association also seems to be reflected in the similarly distributed practice of inscribing hammers on younger memorial stones. Hammers appear in connection with inscriptions at Læborg (Central Jutland), Hanning (North Jutland), Spentrup II (Scania) and Gårdstånga III (Scania), whereas rather more rococo hammer motifs are found in conjunction with runic memorials from Åby (Södermanland), Stenkvista Kyrka (Södermanland) and Bjärby (Västergötland) (McKinnell and Simek 2004:121–25). Thor's hammer amulets are rather more prevalently found throughout the Norse-speaking world – and even sometimes in funerary contexts (Wamers 1997). It seems reasonable to assume, then, that much as *Þrymskviða* provides the model for the appearance of Thor in the Canterbury charm, his blessing of Balder's funerary pyre in *Gylfaginning* is reflected in the connection of the thunder-god with memorial practice represented by

such physical finds. Yet there is a relative lack of mention of other gods in runic and archaeological contexts (a matter which becomes only more remarkable in the early runic period) – all sorts of speculation has arisen about the names which appear in sources such as the golden bracteates, but Thor is by far the best represented of all the pagan divinities in terms of physical testimony, that is of hammers and inscriptions. The distribution of mentions of Thor (or his hammer) on Viking-age rune-stones might be thought to represent a comparatively late development, however, as might his association (à la Marold) with runes and the verb *vígja*.

After all, it is Odin who is especially connected with runes in Norse literary sources – and it is not as if he is absent from runic epigraphy. But there is one early continental text that may represent evidence for a much earlier and more widespread association of Thor and *vígja*: the compound **wigiponar** which appears on the German Nordendorf fibula (Krause with Jankuhn 1966: no. 151, MacLeod and Mees 2006:17–19). A reading ‘bless’ here has been disputed – *víg-* ‘battle’ (to ON *vega* ‘fight’) is much more common in compounds in Old Norse and Thor is even called *Vingþórr* ‘Battle-Thor’ in *Þrymskviða* (cf. Latin *vinco, vincere* ‘conquer’ for the nasal infix). But such forms do not explain the appearance of the medial palatal vowel in **wigiponar**: Marold (1974:222) cites forms such as OHG *antwīgi* ‘bulwark’ and *einwīgi* ‘single combat’ (cf. ON *einvígi* ‘id.’), yet the orthography *kirihuuiigi* ‘scenophagia’ (cf. later *kirihwīhi* ‘consecration of a church’) is similarly found in the earliest Old High German of the *Abrogans* (Steinmeyer and Sievers 1879–1922:I.253.12), and compounds in *wīgi-* are not attested from early German manuscript sources. The closest OHG comparanda to Nordendorf **wigi-** are two compounds which feature geminated *wīggi-* ‘battle’ (i.e. OHG *wīggigarawi* ‘armour’ and *wīggiwafni* ‘weapon’) – cognates of *vígja* usually do not appear in Vernerised forms in Carolingian sources. Nonetheless the widespread lack of comparable Vernerised compounds may simply indicate loss of this form of the ‘blessing’ term from Old High German, much as Old Norse does not feature a direct descendant of early runic **wī(h)jan* – a Vernerised cognate is clearly represented in Old English *wīg* ‘idol’ and *wīglian* ‘to divine’; the loss of such lexical variants from Old High German might be put down to the resolution of pernicious homophony (i.e. of *wīg-* ‘battle’ and *wīg-* ‘bless’) if not a pejoration / restriction (and hence subsequent loss) comparable to that evident in Old English. Indeed the discovery of a similar triadic inscription on a cranium fragment excavated at Ribe in 1973 puts the Nordendorf sequence in a rather new light. The Ribe find features a triad with Odin named in the centre (as seems to be a mandatory feature of such listings), but it also shares two other stylistic characteristics with the Nordendorf listing (Marold 2003, McKinnell and Simek 2004:50, MacLeod and Mees 2006:25–27). Not only is it the first term that is interpretatively difficult at both Ribe and Nordendorf (Ulfr/Ulfurr and Logapōre), the third nominal expression in each inscription features the name of a well-known Germanic divinity preceded by a modifier (Hō-týr, Wīg(g)i-ponar). This kind of listing reflects a typical Indo-European practice, a widely attested stylistic device first described by Otto Behaghel (1909:139, 1923–32:iv.6; and cf. Watkins 1995:24, 47–48). If the loss of the Vernerised forms of **wīthjan* from Old High German is to be accepted as comparatively late, the A + B + epithet C style employed in both the Nordendorf and Ribe inscriptions would suggest that Thor + *wīgjan* was a traditional Common Germanic (or at least quite early) magico-religious collocation.

Thor does not appear in the Ribe inscription and it is not made clear why the owner of the Nordendorf brooch felt the need to invoke **wigiponar**, but it does seem likely from his appearance in texts such as the Canterbury charm that Thor was sometimes invoked because he was seen to be an apotropaic figure – a chaser off or indeed destroyer of evil creatures such as giants as well as various kinds of supernatural embodiments of disease. After all, the only giantish term to feature in runic inscriptions is *purs* – not *jötunn*, *risi*, *ent* or the like (MacLeod and Mees 2006:118–22). As Chris Bishop (2006) has argued, thurses seem to have been dangerous liminal creatures – etymologically the form seems to mean ‘wounder’ (cf.

Goth. *þaurnus*, OE, ON *þorn*, OHG *dorn*, Welsh, Cornish *drain* ‘thorn’, Skt *turá-* ‘wound’, Gk *τρώω* ‘pierce, wound, hurt’ < IE **trH₃-*). Calling on Thor in such charms seems to have reflected a magically sympathetic reflection of the tales of him vanquishing all sorts of giantish figures. But if so, surely the use of what may be a German cognate of *vígja* at Nordendorf suggests that the connection between the collocation of Thor and *vígja* and magico-religious practice goes much further and deeper than the comical scene recorded in *Þrymskviða* would seem to allow.

Some of the reviews of *Runic Amulets* (e.g. Antonsen 2008) upbraided us for not including an elaborate consideration of what “magic” is, our introduction (MacLeod and Mees 2006:11) referring the interested to the relevant entry in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996). Yet Silke Sitzler (Trzcionka 2007) has written an entire book on classical magic without employing the infamously problematic term anywhere other than in her introduction – attempts to separate what is “magical” from what is “religious”, as she notes (and as is well known in classical scholarship), have generally failed (it was sad indeed to see Elmer Antonsen citing the New Age luminary Stephen Flowers as model here, instead, for us to emulate). But it does seem logically to follow that if we are to adopt the hyphenated magico-religious mode of modern anthropological enquiry that invocations of pagan deities in charms convey as much a religious (cultic) as magical (instrumentalised) understanding. After all, *vígja* has long been seen to represent one of the most religious of all verbs of early Germanic times.

One key problem that emerges with accepting any more than a superficial linkage (i.e. in the sense of a magical accretion) of Thor with *vígja* is the reconstruction of the use of this term and its broader cognates in the classic 1942 investigation by Walter Baetke of *Holiness in Germanic*. Baetke notes in his survey that the forms represented by Gothic *weihs* ‘holy’ seem to have a different set of associations than did those represented by *hails* ‘hale’. The key difference (which Baetke argued was especially clear in Old High German) was that *weihs* and its congeners usually seem to refer to ritual expressions – priestly consecrations and the places they performed them (cf. ON *vé*, OS *wīh* ‘temple’) – whereas *hails* (or rather its North and West Germanic cognates) was more immanently deific. In an anthropological sense the two roots seem to represent complementary but opposed expressions: *weihs* indicates the action of mortals, *hails* that of the divine.¹ Baetke saw the use of expressions such as ON *véar* to mean ‘gods’ and OE *wīglian* to mean ‘to divine’ as late developments – i.e. expressions from a time when this former opposition was no longer maintained. But Baetke’s theory of a late deprivileging of some congeners of *weihs* to the point where they came to take on meanings which seem quite perverse from an etymological perspective scarcely seems enough to explain the widespread nature of the association of Thor with *vígja* (even to the point of skaldic burlesque) so evident in Nordic sources.

It is fairly clear from such early runic testaments as have survived of early verbal congeners of *weihs* that Baetke’s model holds for the inherited Indo-European root **weik-* ‘sift, set apart’ in early Germanic. Some scholars (particularly German ones) have argued that names such as GlijaugiR on the Nebenstedt bracteate represent divine *heiti*, but it seems quite obvious from comparable early runic fabricatory expressions that *Glī(j)augiR uī(j)ū r(ū)n(ō)R*, ‘(I) GlijaugiR, bless (these) runes’, is a reference to the making (holy) of the legend of the amulet by the designer (or perhaps commissioner) of the die (Krause with Jankuhn 1966: no. 133, MacLeod and Mees 2006:95). Similarly, the more recently found Nydam axe-haft appears to

¹ Indeed Benveniste 1973:445–69 took this opposition even further, implying that *weihs* originally may have represented an inherited Indo-European notion of sacredness ‘that which is set apart, circumscribed, cut off (from mortals)’ and *hails* ‘that which is charged with divine (healing, fecund etc.) presence’; cf. Markey 1972:375.

represent (if Marie Stoklund’s 1993 reading is to be followed) a rather more clearly mortal subject governing the inherited **weik-* verb. Indeed as Frands Herschend (2001:369) has suggested the textually difficult axe-haft inscription may represent a metrical expression, its scansion presumably of the short ~ long syllable-counting type which seems to be characteristic of early runic epigraphy (Mees 2007, 2008):

<i>WagagastiR</i>	(4)	‘(I.) WagagastiR,
<i>alu wihjū</i>	(4)	consecrate <i>alu</i> –
<i>Sikijar Aipalātar</i>	(7)	(the) wetlander, (the) oath-speaker.’

Here it seems to be an ‘oath-speaker’ (cf. the ON *lögmaðr*) who is blessing the axe-haft with (or rather as) *alu*, much as if this, the early runic magico-religious term *par excellence*, had a meaning similar to *weihs* (cf. the *wih (h)ailag* of the Pietroassa find); see Mees (forthcoming). Blessing ale makes no sense here, and indeed inscriptions such as that on the Setre comb and especially the Eggja stone (the only other runic texts in which *alu* appears in a syntactically regular environment) are not obviously reconcilable with a meaning ‘ale’ for *alu*. At Setre *alu* appears in collocation with the name Nanna – presumably designating the wife of Balder – whereas at Eggja *alu* appears in apposition to the pejorative *misyrki* ‘evil-doer’ (Krause with Jankuhn 1966: nos 40, 101, McKinnell and Simek 2004:163–65, MacLeod and Mees 2006:23–24, 216–18, Mees forthcoming). *Alu* appears to be a form which exhibits contrastive polysemy, much as do classical terms like Latin *sacer* ‘holy, accursed’ (and cf. Greek *ἄρα* ‘prayer, curse’). Indeed the negative use of *sacer* in the traditional formula *sacer esto* ‘may he be accursed’ of Old Roman law (e.g. *patronus si clienti fraudem fecerit, sacer esto*, ‘If a patron defrauds his client, may he be accursed’)² is clearly to be connected with the semantic sphere of *victima* ‘sacrificial victim’, the Latin cognate of *weihs* – things ‘set apart’ as *sacer* for the gods were ‘holy’, people (or animals) reserved to the gods in this manner were ‘accursed’ (Bennett 1930, Fugier 1966). Old Norse *vígja* clearly serves as an equivalent of Medieval Latin *consecratio* ‘consecrate, bless’ (i.e. ritually set apart) in Christian contexts. Presumably, then, *vígja* may well (like *alu*) have been able to represent a negative sense (‘accurse’) in early Nordic pagan tradition, particularly when the (imagined) target of the action was a giant.

Of course early runic *wījū* is not the same form as ON *vígja*, however – the two terms derive from different (Verner’s law) alternations of the same basic form, but the variants must have been in competition in early runic times. Nonetheless after the loss of the medial *-h-, early Nordic **wī(h)jan* presumably came under morphological pressure from the more phonologically marked (and hence functionally distinctive) Vernerised form **wīgjan*. Hence, presumably, the loss of the attested early runic form from later Nordic. Yet the replacement of **wī(h)jan* with ON *vígja* is not enough to explain the emergence of the ‘may Thor bless’ formula as Vernerised variants rarely (if at all) assume meanings as distinct as would be expected to explain the novel collocation of (ritual) blessing (a function of priests) with the Norse god Thor.

Yet Thor and his hammer themselves share an essentially oppositional function in Old Norse literature: Thor either uses his hammer to battle against the enemies of the gods (and of men) or to use his hammer for blessing. Indeed this dual aspect of Thor and his hammer is brought out particularly well when viewed from a comparative Indo-European perspective. Thor and Mjöllnir have long been recognised to have a parallel in the Latvian deity Perkun (whose name is cognate with that of Thor’s mother Fjörgyn) and his weapon Milna (a description cognate with Mjöllnir); see Nagy (1974, 1990:183–91). Moreover not only do Mjöllnir and

² *Leges XII tabularum* (ed. Bruns 1876) viii, 21.

Milna seem to be cognate with Old Prussian *mealde*, Old Church Slavonic *mlъnъji* and Welsh *mellt* ‘lightning’,³ the Continental Celts worshiped a god called Taranus, who like Thor was literally named for thunder (cf. Welsh *taran* ‘thunder’). Taranus (who is called Taranis in some sources) is also associated with both a wheel and a thunderbolt in Gallo-Roman art. And the god associated with a giant wheel and a club in Old Irish myth is the Dagda (literally the ‘good god’), a figure clearly associated both with war and fertility, and a divinity who can use his club both to fight and to revive (much as Thor uses his hammer in *Gylfaginning* to resurrect his goats); see Bergin (1927), Gray (1982:§93).⁴ A similar dualism is clearly represented in the figure of Thor, but the Indo-European comparisons go further than just Baltic and Irish mythology.

Three gods with similar names and functions might be put down to chance, but it is the attestation of a god of the thunder-and-weapon type in Anatolian belief which makes the idea that Thor represents a particularly archaic figure especially seductive. In Luwian texts a god called Tarhunzas (Hittite Tarhunna or Tarhunta) is attested who is broadly represented in other Anatolian sources and is typically represented in reliefs holding a three-pronged thunderbolt and a mace (Vanel 1965). Tarhunzas is clearly a storm god and his name appears to be much the same as that of the Continental Celtic figure Taranus. Yet the theonym Taranus is usually held to represent a metathetic form, a derivation of IE **tṛH₂-r-* ‘thunder’, the same root as that which gives us Thor (< **bun-r-*). The style Tarhunzas clearly continues another root with a very similar structure, but one that does not mean ‘thunder’, but which instead means ‘vanquisher’ (i.e. Tarhunzas < IE **tṛH₂-n-*). Calvert Watkins (1995:429–40) connects these figures with the Indic god Mithra and his ‘mace of contracts’, Martin West (2007:238–55) to the more war-like Vedic figure Indra. But it is as if the ancient Anatolian god Tarhunzas has become confused with a word for thunder in Celtic and Germanic – much as if **tṛH₂-n-* ‘vanquish’ was so close to **tṛH₂-r-* ‘thunder’ that the two forms simply became confused (as in Celtic where the word for ‘thunder’ is morphologically irregular) or that ‘thunderer’ was originally an epithet of Tarhunzas – i.e. there was a common Indo-European figure who was considered both a vanquisher (of giants, demons etc.) as well as a ‘thunderer’, a god of the storm. Such an equation might well also explain why the Roman god Mars was both a god of war and a god of agriculture – it was the rains that followed the thunder produced when the storm god was fighting his otherworldly enemies that was seen as a fructifying blessing. Such reconstructions of course must remain tentative by their very nature, but at the very least an Indo-European perspective on Thor seems to obviate the need to invoke Christian parallels for a connection of Thor with blessing.

It seems likely, then, that Thor had always been distinct from the other early Germanic gods in that he was fundamentally associated with a weapon that could bless. As the dressing up of the thunder-god as a bride in *Drymskviða* suggests (an action that is almost suggestive of *níð*),⁵ Thor was a particularly human-like god: much like a priest, like Wagagastir the ‘oath-speaker’ at Nydam, he was presumably a functionally liminal figure, one whose role and nature were considered to straddle the spheres of both gods and men. Like Alaric Hall’s (2007) anthropologised elves, Thor seems to have belonged to both the mortal and divine worlds, and hence much like a priest, could be thought to use his hammer in religious rituals. Old Norse poets seem to have been less ready to mock an Odin, a Frigg or a Frey (Höfler 1971) – Thor appears to be revealed by the absurdity of *Drymskviða* to have been a figure who embraced in-

³ A further connection to cognates such as Lat. *malleus* ‘hammer’ and *molare* ‘crush’ as advocated by West 2007:253–54 (as part of a developmental chain of ‘crush’ > ‘crushing instrument’ > ‘thunderbolt’ > ‘lightning’) presumably also explains the odd form of Thor’s hammer.

⁴ *Gylfaginning* 44: *tók hamarinn Mjöllni ok brá upp ok vígði hafrstökurnar*. Cf. also Ellis Davidson 1988:204–7.

⁵ Cf. Clunies Ross 1994:108–11 and 2002.

between things, between gods and men, between Asgard and Jötunheim, between *weihs* and *hails*, and even occasionally it seems (sometimes) between masculine and feminine.⁶

Yet it is the use of *alu* in the Eggja inscription that best seems to explain the appearance of the ‘may Thor bless’ formula (and its symbolic representation) on younger runic memorial stones. Although Thor’s hammers seem functionally equivalent to Christian crosses, the thunder-god is sometimes called upon to bless the runes in these texts, not the monuments (like the pyre of Balder) or the souls of the deceased. And a pagan blessing in runes is clearly to be associated with *alu*, a form which on the Eggja stone is used in terms of a curse (*alu misyrki*). Thor blessing the runes on the memorials of the Viking Age appears to be a reference to him making their funerary texts magical – rendering them *sacer* ‘holy, accursed’. Such invocations presumably represent curses against violators or haunting by ghosts (although of the ‘may Thor bless’ inscriptions, only the Glavendrup stone features a curse formula explicitly of this type)⁷ – not expressions inspired by Christian devotions. Much as the invocation of Thor to ‘bless’ Gyril wound-causer in the Canterbury charm can be seen to represent a sickness-banishing curse (as well as a reference to *Þrymskviða*), the appearance of the ‘may Thor bless’ formula on runic memorials of Viking antiquity can be interpreted not just as a reflection of the blessing of Balder’s funeral in Snorri’s *Edda*, but also as evidence that pagan consecration could be two-fold in nature, much as the former association of **wīhjan* with *alu* (and *alu misyrki*) is best explained through reference to the contrastive polysemy of foreign magico-religious expressions such as *‘αρά* and *sacer esto*.

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⁶ It is perhaps worth noting here that the Dagda is similarly portrayed comically in Irish myth (Gray 1982:88–93) and that it is liminal divinities (such as Persephone and Hermes) that are most strongly linked with magical practice in Graeco-Roman tradition.

⁷ *At rætta sǫ værði æs stēn þænsi æltri æða æft annan dragi* (MacLeod and Mees 2006:224).

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Er *Njáls saga* skrevet av Sturla Þorðarson?

John Megaard, Oslo, Norway

Siden Barði Guðmundsson for 70 år siden publiserte sine første artikler om parallellene mellom innholdet i *Njáls saga* og i *Sturlunga saga*, har forskere vært opptatt av forbindelsen mellom islendingesagaer og enkeltepisoder i sagaforfatternes samtid. Barði argumenterte for at *Njáls saga* var forfattet av en person som hadde levd lidenskapelig med i samtidens strider, som endte med fristatens undergang. Barðis tilnærming setter fokus på den nære sammenhengen mellom spørsmålet om hvem som har skrevet dette veldige verket og hva hensikten med et slikt verk har vært. I denne artikkelen prøver jeg å følge spor som er lagt av Barði og andre forskere. Disse sporene fører meg til Sturla Þorðarson. Ved hjelp av en nærlesing av enkelte episoder i *Njáls saga* og i andre sagaer kommer jeg frem til et trekk som jeg tror skiller disse sagaene (muligens forfattet av Sturla) fra eldre islendingasagaer.

Eymundar saga Hringssonar: literary representation of oral tradition

Elena Melnikova, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

The story about Eymund's adventures in Rus' (preserved as a *þáttr* in *Óláfs saga hins helga* in the fourteenth century compilation *Flateyjarbók*) used to be and still remains one of the most popular source of information for historians studying the fratricidal feud between the sons of Vladimir the Saint after his death on the 15th of June, 1015. Though already the first translator of the saga into Russian (1834), Osip Sen'kovskij warned against its straightforward usage as historical source due to its literary character, the temptation to turn to the saga in search of information either additional or alternative to Old Russian sources is too strong to prevent from constructing new interpretations of events on the basis of its picturesque descriptions in the saga.

The *Eymundar saga* includes many literary motifs as it was thoroughly revealed by R. Cook (1986). Still, the plot of the saga goes back to real events. At the same time the narrations of other voyages to Rus' provoked the contamination and exchange of motifs. Here I'd like to stress just two occurrences of this type.

The first episode is the feast celebrating Eymund's arrival to Rus' with Ingigerd being present at it. The episode was the stumbling-block for dating of events. If Eymund participated in all three battles with Burislaf-Svjatopolk as it is told in the saga with details that agree with the depiction of the events in the *Primary Chronicle*, he had to come to Rus' not later than early in summer 1016. The marriage of Jaroslav and Ingigerd took place most probably late in summer or autumn 1019 when the struggle between the brothers concluded in Svjatopolk's defeat and death. Ingigerd's participation in the feast has a close parallel in *Yngvars saga víðförla* in queen Silkisif's reception of Yngvar. Together with significant facts that after this episode Ingigerd disappears from the saga until its second (and probably independent) part, Jaroslav, the host, is characterized as Ingigerd's husband, and the episode is ended with a traditional laudation of Ingigerd as wise and generous contrary to her stingy husband, it seems to indicate that the traditional perception of Jaroslav only in connection with Ingigerd was the main source of this episode.

The second motif is that of Jaroslav constructing a stone house for Eymund and his men. The building of a hall was one of the conditions of the agreement of Eymund and Jaroslav. The hall built by Jaroslav appears in another context in *Morkinskinna*. The preserved text of *Magnúss saga góða ok Haralds harðráða* opens with the episode of a quarrel between Jaroslav and Ingigerd over the new hall of Jaroslav. The quarrel is of structural importance as it explains the appearance of Magnus Olafsson at the court of Jaroslav the Wise, so the motif of Jaroslav's hall must have had formed by the compilation of *Morkinskinna*. The motif, however, seems to derive from memories going back to retellings of Jaroslav's mercenaries. According to the *Primary Chronicle*, in 1015 there existed special living quarters for Varangians called *Poromon' dvor* < *farmannagarðr* (Mikkola 1907) in Novgorod. Most probably its foundation was not connected with Eymund's arrival. *Poromon' dvor* is mentioned in connection with the events just before the news about Vladimir's death reached Novgorod, i.e. before Eymund could come to Rus' if he indeed came to profit from the struggle between Vladimir's sons. As Jaroslav, the prince of Novgorod from soon after 988, had Varangian detachments permanently and hired a new troop in the beginning of 1015, it was only natural for him to quarter his mercenaries in one place close to his own residence. The memories of the 'Varagian quarters' in Novgorod must have generated the motif of a newly-built hall of Jaroslav that was later realized in various variants.

The oral background of *Eymundar saga* is revealed in many different ways, one of them being the literary reinterpretation of traditional motifs.

Eymundr, Ingigerðr, Yngvarr enn víðförli, Anunder a Ruzzia: Swedish Princes in Russia in the 11th Century

Savva Mikheev

According to the epilogue of the Yngvars saga víðförla Yngvar was a grandson of Olaf Skötkonung.

Fiodor Braun (1910) suggested that the protagonist of the saga was a son of Emund the Old, the elder son of Olaf Skötkonung. His hypothesis was based on the Swedish runic inscriptions mentioning *sons of Emund* and brothers Anund, Eric, Hakon, Yngvar and Ragnar (U 513, U 540, Sö 279). Brauns supposition accounts for the scale of the Yngvar's campaign. Many runestones erected in Svealand were dedicated to its participants.

Elena Mel'nikova (1976) suggested that Yngvar's campaign should be dated 1043 when Vladimir, son of Yaroslav the Wise and Ingigerd, Olafs daughter, attacked the Greeks. Yngvars saga mentions a warrior named Valldimar. It seems that Yngvar and his brother-in-arms Vladimir were cousins.

Eymundar þáttur Hringssonar as well as Yngvars saga describes a campaign in the East with the Scandinavians involved in it. After several battles Emund stays in Russia as a local king.

According to the prologue of the Eymundar þáttur Emund had Norwegian origin. But the prologue was evidently added to the þáttur at a late date in its long history. Robert Cook (1986) suggested that Emund was a member of Swedish and not Norwegian ruling family.

There is reason to believe that Emund the Old was the prototype for the Eymundar þáttur' protagonist Emund. If we follow the þáttur and assume that Emund the Old was actively involved in intestine wars of Russian kings in the first half of the 11th century, we get a number of questions answered: (1) why memorial stones for Emund's sons were erected by their brothers and not by their father, (2) why one of the candidates for the Swedish throne after Emund's death was referred to as *Anunder a Ruzzia* (i. e. Anund from Russia) by Adam of Bremen, (3) why in both the Saga and the Þáttur we meet a Gardaketill (i. e. Russian Ketill) serving Emund and then Yngvar, and finally (4) why around 1020 the younger son of Olaf Skötkonung Anund Jacob rather than his elder brother was elected king.

More detailed argumentation of proposed genealogy of Emund can be found in my book about the Russian intestine war of 1015–1019 (Mikheev 2009: 174–194).

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Myth and Memory in Swedish Conversion Narratives

Stephen Mitchell, Germanic Langs. & Lits., Harvard University, USA

Far from being fact-filled presentations of reality, medieval histories are often a kind of myth, especially myth as understood in the light of the word's etymology (< *muthos* 'narrative', 'story'), a connection made already in antiquity by Thucydides in his critique of writers of prose histories in particular. How writers framed the national narratives of late medieval and early modern Scandinavia, a world defined by the jostling egos of two dominant polities, matters a great deal, all the more so given the degree to which their stories had to do with propaganda and purpose, rather than factuality and verisimilitude.

Medieval West Norse sources often present the Swedes as pagans and reluctant, even backsliding, Christians; well-known examples include *Hervarar saga's* epilogue concerning the deposing of the Christian King Ingi and Snorri's presentation of the crusade of the Norwegian and Danish kings against the heathen Smålänningar and other Swedes, who are said to be still mostly heathens or only superficially Christian (*Magnússona saga*, chap. 24). A different view, of course, is provided in Old Swedish writings.

Whereas the favored genres of the late medieval era in Iceland remained the prose sagas and, increasingly, *rímur*, the dominant literary form in medieval Sweden was manifestly the rhymed historical chronicle, which over time came to encompass the broad sweep of Swedish history in a series of coordinated works. Two texts that barely merit mention in most accounts of historical writing in Sweden are the mid-15th-century histories called *Lilla Rimkrönikan* and *Prosaiska krönikan*, the first attempts to present a consolidated Swedish national history, or perhaps more correctly, the first formulations of an omnibus Swedish national myth.¹

Both histories offer panoptic presentations of the nation, its beginnings, its conversion to Christianity, and its subsequent relations with foreign powers, particularly Sweden's struggle against Denmark. *Lilla Rimkrönikan*, for example, uniquely undertakes a panoramic history of Sweden from its beginnings to the nearly contemporary date of 1448. Close in scope and outlook, and often in treatment, perhaps also in compositional history, is its prose twin, known by that name, *Prosaiska krönikan*: these comprehensive and innovative histories are among the very first to treat in a vernacular context the question of Sweden's conversion, the focus of my paper. In it, I examine the social production of these texts and compare how these 15th-century histories treat the conversion of the Swedes with their source materials and suggest, based on that comparison, the purposes the texts were meant to fulfill.

¹ *Prosaiska krönikan* is published in *Småstycken på fornsvenska*, ed. G. E. Klemming, Stockholm, 1868–81, 219–40, where it bears the title, "Sveriges krönika (vanligen kallad den prosaiska) från Gog t.o.m. Karl Knutsson." *Lilla Rimkrönikan* came out as an appendix to *Svenska Medeltidens Rim-Krönikor. I. Gamla eller Eriks-Krönikan*, ed. G. E. Klemming, Stockholm 1865, 215–31.

Óláfr sœnski and his skalds in Old Norse tradition

Jakub Morawiec, Institute of History, Silesian University, Katowice, Poland

Studying Old Norse/Icelandic literature we clearly see that its authors did not pay much attention to kings of Svithjóð, especially when compared to the kings of Norway and even Denmark. It is even more striking as many of saga characters were approaching in Sweden and their adventures very often took place there. One can actually meet Eiríkr inn sigrsæli almost exclusively in *Styrbjarnar þátttr Sviakappa*. Styrbjörn Ólafsson himself is mentioned several times in various sagas, however only as symbolic point of reference (Morawiec 2008). In this context, Óláfr sœnski, Eirik's son can be judged as an clear exception. The king plays his special role in two events, thoroughly described in *konungasögur*, it is the battle of Svoldr and his conflict with Óláfr helgi, finished with the latter's marriage with Ástriðr. We also come across Óláfr sœnski in two of *skáldasögur*, namely *Hallfreðar saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*. He appears there as one of numerous monarchs, praised with poetry by protagonists of both narratives.

The aim of my paper is first to analyse Óláfr sœnski's image in various sagas and to compare it with other, often contemporary sources, second to consider visible discrepancies between both groups in presenting the king's image and reign. Tradition about Óláfr sœnski's skalds, their activity at his court and their poetry composed for him seems to be of key importance to make effective insight into this problem. It is this tradition, that can help us with the attempt to answer following crucial questions : how did the tradition about skalds at the Óláfr sœnski's court influence his image in the sagas? If there is any historical truth behind this tradition, what can presence and activity of skalds at Óláfr sœnski's court tell us about reign?

The Swedish king plays some role in descriptions of the battle of Svoldr. Already both *Ágrip* and *Historia Norwegie* mention Óláfr sœnski's lack of ability to overcome Óláfr Tryggvason's army, similarly to his father-in-law Sveinn tjúguskegg. Both accounts confirm, that the Swedish king took part in whole campaign, summoned by Sveinn and suggest that it was the case of his duty towards the Danish king, and not free will (*Ágrip*:32–34; *HN*:96–100).

Later *konungasögur* provide us with more detailed accounts. Óláfr sœnski is involved in queen Sigríðr's intrigue against king Óláfr Tryggvason (*Oddr*:198). The Swedish king, who had his own reasons to conspire against Óláfr Tryggvason (*Fsk*:116), gladly had jarls Eiríkr and Sveinn of Hlaðir staying at his court (*Fsk*:106; *Hsk I*:299,337)¹. Óláfr sœnski is found among the protagonist's enemies waiting for his fleet and planning a trap (*Oddr*:198). Summoned by Sveinn tjúguskegg, he and jarl Eiríkr who supported him, both gathered immense army and proceeded south to join Danish forces as they *váru þessarar ferðar albúnir* (*Hsk I*:349). During the battle, Swedes, led by Óláfr, could not overcome the enemy and soon they retired from the fight losing many men and ships (*Oddr*:213; *Fsk*: 123; *Hsk I*:359). Despite this fact, the author of *Fagrskinna* does not hesitate to call the Swedish king *mikill hofðingi*. After the victory over the Norwegian king, Óláfr sœnski had equal rights when the coalitions shared its fruits, gaining control over several regions of Norway and jarl Sveinn of Hlaðir as his vassal (*Fsk*:130; *Hsk I*:372).

¹ Both sagas, when referring to jarls' visit at the Swedish court, quote several stanzas of Þorðr's Kolbeinsson's *Eiríksdrápa*. According to the skald *þrænzkr jarl sótti reiðr sœnskan konung at róðum*. In my opinion, there are grounds to assume, that both authors probably wrongly identified *sœnskan konung*. Actually Þorðr could have had Eiríkr inn sigrsæli in mind as his son Óláfr was rather too young to help Hákon's sons effectively. Jarl Eiríkr's later activity in Sweden was rather the effect of cooperation with Sveinn tjúguskegg.

All the circumstances of the battle of Svoldr and the fight itself are the opportunity for saga authors to present Óláfr sœnski as independent, quite powerful and effective ruler, who is determined to take action against king Óláfr Tryggvason. Moreover, although direct clash with Norwegians showed the Swedes' weakness and lack of determination, the Swedish king himself seems to be of crucial importance in whole campaign and treachery against the Norwegian king.

Such an image seems to be confirmed also by the story of his conflict with Óláfr Haraldsson. It gives saga authors many opportunities to both present the Swedish king and explain his obstinacy and reluctance towards the Norwegian king. The reasons why he can't make agreement with him are explained by Óláfr sœnski himself twice, when he talks to his daughter Ingigerðr and Hjalti Skeggjason (Hsk II:96–98,132; Flat II:61–62). The king's argument is simple: he does not find his namesake as his equal and potential friend, thus he sees no chance for his daughter's marriage with Óláfr Haraldsson. Contrary, he finds himself superior to Óláfr Haraldsson, that is why his legitimate daughter cannot be his wife (Matyushina 1997:438).

This attitude is visibly confirmed by Ásgaut's words when he expresses Óláfr sœnski's errand to the king of Norway (Hsk II:76; Flat II:49–50). We can see it also in *Fagrskinna*, when the saga presents Óláfr sœnski's offer for Óláfr Haraldsson. The Norwegian king can marry Ástriðr if he wants to, but she is illegitimate, the fact Óláfr Haraldsson is conscious about and considers all the prospects (Fsk:156–157; Moberg 1941:91). We however, clearly see, that Óláfr sœnski's proposal is not even to make his namesake his son-in-law but first of all to show his own social and political superiority over his opponent.

Once again we see Óláfr sœnski as powerful, ambitious and influential ruler, proud of his descent from royal kin. He is able to gather large army to face Óláfr Haraldsson attacking Mälaren area. He protects his Norwegian vassal, jarl Sveinn of Hlaðir, and promises military help in clash with the Norwegian king. His splendor is praised by Hjalti Skeggjason, who does not hesitate to say: *engi konungr er jafngöfugr á Norðrlönd sem þú* (Hsk II:96; Moberg 1941:92). It corresponds well with the presence of the skalds Gizurr svartir and Óttarr svartir at his court, who are in the closest Óláfr sœnski's retinue (Hsk II: 91).

On the other hand the story of conflict between both Óláfs, is the opportunity to show the Swedish king as haughty, stubborn, arrogant and lawless ruler. These features are distinctly confronted with good will of such persons as Óláfr Haraldsson, jarl Rögnvaldr, Ingigerðr and others who constantly aspire to peace and reconciliation *pro publico bono*. It not only lets us see them as much more positive figures than Óláfr sœnski. What seems to be more important, attitude of the Swedish king may lead to his potential fall, as he not only opposes the saintly king but also stands alone against his subjects, represented by both jarl Rögnvaldr and Thorgný Thorgnýsson the Lawspeaker, and, last but not least, his own family (Ingigerð). To make peace with Óláfr Haraldsson and accept him as son-in-law is the only way for Óláfr sœnski to save his throne and loyalty of his subjects.

We find the Swedish king also in two *skáldasögur*, *Hallfreðar saga* and *Gunnlaugs saga ormsstungu*. In the first narrative, its protagonist visits Óláfr sœnski's court to deliver the king a poem he had composed for him. At this occasion the saga informs us, that the Swedish king is willing to hear praise-poetry about him. Moreover, Óláfr sœnski appears as a person who perfectly knows Hallfreðr and his skaldic activity. Thus, the king rewards the skald for his performance giving him *góðar gjafar* and proposing staying at his court (IF 8:176–177).

Gunnlaugr's story brings us more interesting details. Óláfr sœnski's court is another stage in the skald's *útanferð* (IF 3:80–81). His arrival at the court of the Swedish king and the duel between him and Hrafn Qnundarson gives excellent opportunity to present Óláfr. First, saga readers should not be surprised by protagonist's initiative to visit the Swedish king as he *var ríkr konungr ok ágætr, metnaðarmaðr mikill* (IF 3:78). We can only assume that the same

reasons made Hrafn to join Óláfr's court. Both skalds are rewarded by the king with *góðar gjafar* for their poetry when they decide to leave his court. Anyway, we see the Swedish king as ruler who not only is aware of royal duties when the court poetry is at stake. Óláfr sœnski appears as enough respected and famous to host skalds and effectively manage their activity. They not only find absolutely appropriate for their fame and their other aims to visit his court but also undisputedly stay under his will and grace (de Vries 1999:123). When Gunnlaugr and Hrafn start to quarrel fiercely about order of their performances, the only possible way is *látum konung ráða* (IF 3:80). On the other hand the Swedish king is presented as a monarch who values skalds highly as advisors and important members of the retinue, as Hrafn's example seems to indicate.

Both *skáldasögur* and *konungasögur* present Óláfr sœnski as typical ruler, one can come across in narratives of that type. The king is independent, influential and significant ruler, but also stubborn and narrow-minded (Schück 1956:199). He is highly esteemed and respected enough that famous skalds have no doubt whether to visit his court or no and present their poetry. The king of Sweden surrounded by group of poets, competent to judge their efforts, reward them properly for it and able to control their activity, is definitely complete ruler. We are allowed to assume that behind this schematic but explicit presentation, there are other features that probably saga audience takes for granted. Óláfr sœnski is probably said to be warlike, courageous, victorious and generous. His court is full of splendor and greatness that surround famous ruler. Otherwise, how could we understand *hofuðskáld* like Hallfreðr or Gunnlaugr willing to visit his court and win his grace for their poetry exclusively composed to praise and memorize the king? Moreover, certainly, the way the Óláfr sœnski behaves towards both his namesakes is also the key to understand greatness and significance of two missionary kings. Óláfr Tryggvason, just before facing the Swedish troops at Svoldr, seeing only pagans in them, seems to ignore completely the fact how their king is desperate to fight with him. When compared to the Swedish king, we see even better Óláfr Haraldsson as typical Christian ruler who does not hesitate to defend his honor and patrimony but who at the same time constantly declares the will to make peace with the Swedish king. Still the latter is very attractive for skalds and Óláfr sœnski's court gathers some of them. The Swedish king skillfully exploits their talents, shows that judging their efforts and rewarding them for that is the skill he is very familiar with. To sum up, although Óláfr sœnski certainly does not belong to the most famous saga heroes, he is presented as significant and powerful enough to be sufficient counterpart of both, much more famous missionary kings and through his policy underline their greatness and status.

It seems interesting to compare the image of Óláfr sœnski, that we see in sagas, with various and very often contemporary sources that also refer to the Swedish king. Among our main informants one should first of all mention Adam of Bremen and his *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*. The author, informed mainly by the king of Denmark Sveinn Ástríðarson (Úlfsson) (Hallencreutz 1984a:11;1984b:356), refers to Óláfr sœnski several times. The Swedish king appears to be a very good Christian (Adam:99), filled with devotion to religion, whose desire was to convert his subjects to Christianity (Adam:118) and who helped Óláfr Haraldsson when the former fought against Knútr and died as martyr (Adam:121). Moreover, Óláfr sœnski is presented as sole sovereign over the Swedes, who dies as memorable king, in fact equal to Knútr (Adam:134). Such an presentation seems to be explained by Adam himself. The chronicler writes that Óláfr decided to establish a bishopric in Skara, the largest city of Gothia and managed to do it thanks to archbishop Unwan's will who consecrated Thorgaut as the first ordinate (Adam:119). This relationship was confirmed by many gifts sent by Óláfr to the metropolitane (Adam:119). However, when we read Adam's account between lines, intriguing conclusions appear. First, it is difficult to accept the chronicler's enthusiasm when he writes about Óláfr's agreement with those of his subjects who refused to be baptized. One has

to agree with the opinion, that it meant king's failure (Duczko 2002:17; Duczko 1997:130; Hallencreutz 1984a:21). Óláfr sœnski not only had to limit his ambitious plans but also give up control over Svealand, the main part of his patrimony. I also agree with those who see the Swedish king's weakness and dependence in pact established in 1014 or 1015 between Óláfr and Kuntr planning to attack England and securing Swedish aid (Duczko 2002:15,19). Adam's presentation of Óláfr sœnski includes also two other dubious features. First, it is hardly reliable, that it was Óláfr himself who restored Sveinn tjuguskegg in Denmark as the Swedish king was still child at that time, perhaps at the age of 10. Second, the account about Óláfr's military help for his namesake not only ignores the whole Norse tradition, expressed by sagas, but also probable chronology as the Swedish king most likely was already dead in Stiklastaðir period.

Anyway, we can see, that in Adam of Bremen's presentation of Óláfr sœnski, below the surface of good, memorable Christian monarch, who is sole sovereign in his realm, there is maybe even ambitious and determined ruler who, however, suffered failures with his main plans, did not succeed in promoting Christianity in his country, lost control over part of his patrimony and had to accept Danish domination.

Such an image of the Swedish king seems to be confirmed also by other contemporary sources. Although Adam does not mention Óláfr sœnski while describing the Øresund clash, Halldór ókristni's *Eiriksflokkur* and Hallfreð Óttarsson's *Óláfsdrápa, erfidrápa* not only seem to confirm, that young Swedish king took in fact part in the battle, but also, that it was jarl Eiríkr of Hlaðir, who gathered troops in Sweden, in behalf of Sveinn tjuguskegg. Thus, contemporary skaldic stanzas seem to indicate, that around the year 1000, Óláfr sœnski had the king of Denmark not only as his stepfather but also as his sovereign (Duczko 2002:15).

Relatively strong position of Sveinn in Sweden, marked by his marriage with Óláfr's mother, was probably used to strengthen the young king's position in his patrimony. Scholars, quite rightly in my opinion, suggest, that both Óláfr sœnski's marriage with Obodritian princess Estridh and initiative to mint coins were also reflex of strict Danish influence (Duczko 2001:376; 2002:16; Malmer 1989;1997). Inscriptions struck on Óláfr's coins refer to two most important aspects of royal power: sovereignty over both Sigtuna and Svealand (Malmer 1997:364; Ros 2002:171). Coins minted in Sigtuna with blurred inscriptions are rightly interpreted as an evidence of uncertain political situation in that region, where there was lack of strong royal power. That fact was very likely the effect of weakening position of the Swedish king, who was forced to give up his control over Svealand. It was probably strictly connected with Óláfr's efforts to promote Christianity in Sweden. Apart from Adam of Bremen's account, one should also remember about the Bruno of Querfurt's letter to the emperor Henry II, where we also find references to Christian mission in Sweden. Bruno mentions some unnamed bishop, who managed to baptize *seniorem Suigiorum* and thousand of his people. Despite some recent controversies, it seems likely, that the Saxon monk referred to Óláfr (Duczko 1997:131–132). Óláfr's missionary initiatives could be seen as an attempt to strengthen not only his personal and royal power but also foreign influences who most likely were decisive for the king's reign in Sweden (Duczko 1995; Syrett 2000:268). The king had to deal with resistance of his subjects and visible territorial limitation of his power. It seems very likely, that until the end of his reign, Óláfr remained subordinate to Danes, ruling effectively only in Gothia and not being able to overcome Svealand elites, gathered around the pagan centre in Uppsala (Line 2007:51).

Both versions of *Skáldatal* list jointly Gunnlaugr Illugason, Hrafn Qundurson, Gizzur svartir and Óttarr svartir as Óláfr sœnski's skalds (SnE:252,260; Nordal 1997:205–212). It is however difficult to estimate, how big was the range of skaldic activity at the Swedish court. We are today in possession only of six half-stanzas attributed to Óttarr svartir, preserved in *Snorra Edda* and known as *Óláfsdrápa sænska* (Skj:267). The poem, probably composed

about 1018, is composed in rare *hálfhnept* metre, which is believed to be of Irish origin (Poole 1993:459; de Vries 1999:237, Fidjestøl 1980:193).

I am especially interested in the way Óttarr address the Swedish king in his *drápa*. Already in half-stanza 1 the skald not only conventionally asks the ruler for hearing, but saying *hann nemi hóttu bragar míns* he leaves no doubt that according to him, the king will appreciate not only the praise itself but also the way it is composed. It is especially interesting as the Óttarr's initiative to use *hálfhnept* metre is found as innovation in skaldic court poetry (Poole 1993:459; de Vries 1999:237). Assuming that Snorri's attribution is right, we would see Óláfr sœnski's court not only as friendly to newly arriving poets but also open and competent to accept and appreciate new trends in the field of poetry.

In following half-stanzas, Óttarr refers to some, probably numerous fights and some sea voyages during storm, perhaps linked with the former. The skald uses conventional devices: *orn drekkr sylg, ari getr þar verð* to describe warlike activity of the hero of the poem. Some half-stanzas underline Óláfr sœnski's royal position. Óttarr calls him *jofurr, vísi, allvaldr* or *þengill*. The skald similarly addresses both Óláfr Haraldsson and Knútr inn ríki respectively. Maybe potential and suggested character of the poem for the Norwegian king made the skald use more sophisticated epithets: *manngofur allvaldr, dýr þengill, víðfrægr vísi*. Nevertheless, willing to underline the royal title and position of all three monarchs, Óttarr uses identical expressions. It seems interesting to note, that both Óláfr Haraldsson and Knútr inn ríki won their royal titles by force, in Norway and England respectively. Circumstances in both cases produced the need of legitimization of royal power. Both monarchs used skaldic praise poetry in great extent (Frank 1994). Analogy can of course be accidental, nevertheless, numerous ways, Óttarr refers to royal power in *Óláfsdrápa sœnska*, let us assume, that also in this case, royal rights of the young king (*ungr vígr*) are at stake. Other elements seem to confirm such view.

In half-stanza 6 Óttarr declares that *Svíá gramr es framr*. The prominence and superiority of the ruler are here equally important as the fact that they are directly linked with the royal reign over Svear. Even more striking are explicit references to pagan lore. We can already see them in half-stanza 6, when Óttarr calls Óláfr *folk-Baldr*. In my opinion however, much more attention should be paid to the skald's words we find in half-stanza 2: *vísi tekr víst munlaust víf Óska austr*. Here we are not only informed by the skald that the ruler inherits so far heirless and located in the east patrimony. Of much more importance is the way this patrimony is called by Óttarr: Óski's wife. Obviously it is Odinn himself that hides under that name (Price 2002:101–107). The way the skald calls land of Svear reminds strictly expression used by Hallfreðr Óttarsson in his *Hákonardrápa*. As it is well known, the poem is contributed to the jarl of Hlaðir, Hákon's, rule over Norway that is called by skald as *biðkván Priðja, Auðs systir, einga dóttir Ónars, breiðleit brúðr Báleygs*. The poem is full of Odinic references and strictly relates to the motive of *hieros-gamos* (Ström 1983:67–79; Steinsland 1989). In my opinion the expression *Óska víf* should be interpreted the same way. Consequently, *Óláfsdrápa sœnska* can be seen as another example of ideology, that underlined chieftain's or ruler's ability to ensure fertility within society. The ability secured by the gods standing by his side (Arwill-Nordbladh 2003:32) and as such explained and legitimized his power. The case of Óttarr's *drápa* is especially intriguing as Óláfr sœnski is generally considered Christian ruler, whose beliefs seem to be fully confirmed by both his missionary attempts and his coinage.

We could of course treat Óttarr's devices, along the unusual metre, as his own initiative, being only the effect of skaldic convention. In my opinion, however, it is not the case. The *drápa* itself points, that the skald presented his poem before the king. It seems hardly possible, that Óláfr sœnski and his retinue neither accepted nor understood the content of the poem and symbolic notion of particular epithets and expressions found in its content.

There is no doubt, that we should treat *Óláfsdrápa sænska* as typical tool of royal propaganda. Óttarr very effectively presents Óláfr as an sole ruler over Svear, who has undisputed rights to the kingdom. The Swedish king appears as warlike, courageous and victorious monarch, who will effectively rule his subjects ensuring their prosperity, favor of gods and fertility of the land and people.

The question remains, why Óláfr sænski is presented that way? In other words, why the king and his retinue try to seek grounds for his royal position in pagan lore? In my opinion, Óttarr's *drápa* is somehow connected with Óláfr's rather weak position in his country. Consequently, the poem should be seen as the Swedish king's attempt to strengthen his royal power over his, often insubordinate, subjects. That is why we would see pagan content of the *drápa* as the way to justify Óláfr sænski's royal rights towards the pagan elites, connected mainly with the Uppsala pagan center and the royal town Sigtuna. Bearing in mind Adam of Bremen's account, we cannot exclude the possibility, that Óláfr sænski aspired to regain his power in Svealand and skaldic poetry was used to transfer the exclusive ideological grounds for such initiatives.

Óláfsdrápa sænska gives us one more interesting insight into Óláfr sænski and his court. By introducing new metre and remarking the king's ability to appreciate skald's effort, Óttarr svarti' poem creates the impression, that the Swedish king's court was very well acquainted with skaldic art and very likely often had a chance to host skilled poets. Moreover, Óttarr's *drápa* seems to indicate, that Óláfr was not only competent to judge skalds' artistic efforts but also found them very effective way of royal propaganda.

At the beginning of my paper I asked about the relation between the tradition of Óláfr sænski's skalds and his image in later sagas. It is possible, that the way the Swedish king appears in *Óláfsdrápa sænska* directly influenced saga authors. They needed strong, warlike, brave and ambitious ruler to compete with both Norwegian missionary kings. Óttarr's *drápa* refers to exactly the same virtues as particular *konungasögur* and *skáldasögur*. Although not used to corroborate any of the events where Óláfr plays some important role (Svoldr, conflict with Óláfr Haraldsson), the *drápa* was probably well known, as other Óttarr's poems, and would constitute suitable base for creation of the king's image. The image of famous, influential, sole and powerful ruler, praised by skalds, eager to enter his court, where they would find good reception and except generous reward for their work. It would explain not only how later authors presented Óláfr's attitude towards his Norwegian namesakes but also why, according to them, relatively big number of famous skalds were active at his court.

It is of course difficult, if possible at all, to judge reliability of the tradition about skalds composing for the Swedish king. However, in my opinion we can treat *Óláfsdrápa sænska* as the exclusive and fragmentary evidence of maybe larger artistic activity, that can tell us something about Óláfr sænski's reign in Sweden. The poem and its content lets us assume, that skaldic poetry was treated at the Swedish court as another effective tool of propaganda, needed to strengthen Óláfr's position in his patrimony and legitimize his royal power towards his subjects. The king is said to be competent to judge skald's efforts. Perhaps Óttarr's remark in half-stanza 1 is not only skaldic convention but points at frequent skaldic performances at the Swedish court, where the praise of the king would be the leading topic. In this context, it is not surprising, that in *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* Óláfr sænski's court is chosen as the arena of poetic duel between Gunnlaugr and Hrafn, and the king himself presented as the patron of the event.

Various sources suggest that Óláfr sænski's reign was marked by relatively weak position of the king who failed promoting Christianity, lost control over part of his kingdom, and remained subordinate to Danes. The king tried to legitimize his power presenting himself as Christian ruler and this image was supported by extensive coinage and attempts to establish Church organization in Gothia. Contrary, *Óláfsdrápa sænska* seems to be directed to those

who rejected the royal plans and were standing in opposition to Óláfr's policy. The poem can be treated as the evidence of the king's efforts to regain his control over Svealand, where pagan influences seem to remain much stronger. We do not know, whether Óláfr sœnski (and his retinue) treated both ideologies almost equally as long as they effectively explained the king's rights towards different groups of subjects or maybe the *drápa* should be treated as desperate move to either save or rebuild influences in Svealand when other, first of all military means, either failed or were not accessible. Anyway, Óttarr's poem seems to suggest that the Swedish king, known as declared promoter of Christianity, did not hesitate to use pagan ideology when needed, and can be itself intriguing reflex of complex and fluent political situation in 11th century Sweden.

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Kva kan vi vite om munnleg tradisjon?

Else Mundal, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Bergen, Norway

I 1915 utgav den norske folkloristen og sagaforskaren Knut Liestøl boka *Norske trollvisor og norrøne sogor*. Hans tese var at dei norske trollvisene – og for så vidt også andre greiner av balladediktinga – representerte ein direkte samanheng tilbake til norrøn dikting, og i den aktuelle boka var det samanhengen mellom trollvisene og fornaldarsogene han retta søkelyset mot. Liestøl meinte å finne ikkje mindre enn 9 fornaldarsoger – eller tåttar – som hadde danna grunnlag for balladar.¹ Med ‘fornaldarsoger’ meinte Liestøl ikkje nødvendigvis skriftlege soger. Han drøfter dette spørsmålet og konkluderer med at det er mest sannsynleg at norske trollviser går attende på munnlege forteljingar – men avviser sjølvstilt ikkje at fornaldarsoger skrivne på Island kan ha vore kjende i Noreg. Ei skriftleg fornaldarsoge veit vi har funnest i Noreg. *Orvar-Odds saga* er nemnd i lista over bøker som fanst i biblioteket som ein meiner tilhørte biskop Arni Sigurðsson i Bergen (d. 1314). Visene som byggjer på omsett riddardikting må sjølvstilt gå tilbake på skriftlege tekster, men ikkje nødvendigvis direkte. Liestøl rekna med at det gjerne kunne liggje munnleg tradisjon mellom den skriftlege saga og den munnlege visa (Liestøl 1915: 238).

Men kva kan vi vite om denne munnlege mellomaldertradisjonen? Munnleg tradisjon i fortida har det ved seg at den dreg seg unna ei direkte gransking. Den munnlege tradisjonen vert synleg først når den vert skriftfest, eller eventuelt kan vi sjå ein slags refleks av munnleg dikting i t.d. biletframstillingar eller i tekster som nemner den munnlege diktinga, men ikkje gjengjev den. Døme på det første har vi t.d. i biletframstillingar på norske kyrkjeportalar av motiv som gjengjev scener frå Sigurdsdiktinga. Det same har vi på svenske og engelske biletsteinar. Dette er sjølvstilt ei indirekte kjelde til ein tradisjon som fanst på den tida kyrkjeportalane og biletsteinane vart laga. Ei samtidig kjelde til mellomaldertradisjon har vi t.d. også i den norske runeinnskrifta frå Hennøy i Nordfjord som reflekterer eit segnmateriale om ei reise til riseland. Innskrifta lyder: *her lago þeir men er komo af risa lade með loþno skipi af gulli ok þet er i þesum steini* (her låg dei mennene som kom frå riseland med skipet lasta med gull og det er i denne steinen).² Vi har også nokre opplysningar hjå forfattarar i tidleg moderne tid som nemner lokal tradisjon som synest å kunne identifiserast med tradisjon om personar som også er kjende frå skriftleg norrøne tekster. T.d. nemner den norske presten Jonas Ramus, som forfatta *Norriges Beskrivelse* (ferdig 1715, utgitt posthumt 1735) at det fanst ei vise om Åslaug Kråka (Liestøl 1915: 11), Torfæus nemner i brevveksling med Árni Magnússon i 1698 også norsk tradisjon om Ragnar Lodbrok som han hadde funne på Lista (Kålund (red.): 251), og i *Noregshistoria* si nemner han tradisjon om Orvar-Odd (Liestøl 1915: 88ff.). Dersom ikkje desse lærde mennene har stilt svært leiande spørsmål, synest dette å bekrefte ein folkeleg tradisjon som ikkje kan vere avleidd av skriftlege kjelder, og som samstundes har så klar samanheng med skriftlege fornaldarsoger at hovudpersonar har dei same namna.

Kjelder av typen biletframstillingar eller tradisjon som berre er omtalt og ikkje gjengjeven, er relativt sjeldne. Den skriftlege balladediktinga, derimot, utgjer eit ganske omfattande kjeldemateriale, som kan granskast frå mange vinklar. Men det må innrømmast at som kjelde

¹ Disse sogene nemnde Liestøl som: *Ásmundar saga flagðagæfu*, *Torkell Adalfars saga*, *Orvarodds saga*, *Hervarar saga*, *Ormars saga*, *Ragnars saga*, *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*, *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*, *Hemings þátr*. Dessutan fann han viser som bygde på dei romantiske sogene *Karlamagnus saga* og *Mágus saga*. Han rekna her ikkje med soger som berre har avgitt eit enkelt motiv til ein ballade.

² Innskrifta er prenta i *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* 4: 231.

til munnleg dikting eller tradisjon frå mellomalderen knyter det seg store metodiske problem til alle desse tre kjeldetypane.

Biletframstillingar av motiv som vi gjennom samanlikning med skriftlege tekster kan identifisere som scener frå Sigurdsdiktinga, fortel oss at denne diktinga har vore kjend innanfor eit stort område, ikkje berre på Island der tekstene er overleverte. Men vi kan ikkje seie om alt det som tilsvarar innhaldet i overleverte eddadikt innanfor Sigurdsdiktinga var kjent, eller kor nær variantane av forteljningane bak stavkyrkjeportalar og biletsteinar stod dei variantane av forteljninga vi kjenner frå skriftelege kjelder. Biletframstillingane seier heller ikkje noko om kva form denne diktinga har vore kjend i: dikt, prosa eller begge delar.

Ei tekst som den i runeinnskrifta frå Hennøy kan kanskje samanliknast med ein svært kortfatta ingress. Vi får hovudtrekka i ei historie, men heller ikkje noko meir.

Opplysningane frå Torfæus og Ramus kan indikere at detaljar i ein munnleg tradisjon, t.d. namn på hovudprsonar, som kanskje kan indikere ein klarare samanheng mellom den yngre tradisjonen og norrøne kjelder enn det vi har i mange andre tilfelle, under gjevne omstende kunne halde seg over eit svært langt tidsrom. Men opplysningane om norsk tradisjon hjå Ramus og Torfæus seier oss ikkje særleg mykje om kor omfattande innhaldet i dei norske tradisjone kan ha vore.

Balladediktinga som synest å byggje på ein tradisjon som har så stor likskap med motiv og plot i mellomaldertekster at vi må gå ut frå ein samanheng av eit eller anna slag, gjev på ein måte eit meir detaljert bilete av tradisjonen bak dei skriftlege tekstene, men som kjelder til ein mellomaldertradisjon er dei skriftlege balladane sjølv sagt ei svært indirekte kjelde. For det første vart dei fleste av balladane nedskrivne først på 1800-talet. Dei er sjølv sagt relativt gode kjelder til balladane i munnleg form slik dei eksisterte umiddelbart før nedskrivninga, sjølv om balladane då dei vart nedskrivne, nok må seiast å vere ei dikting i oppløysing. Noko heilt anna er det å sjå balladane som kjelde til den mykje eldre munnleg tradisjonen som dei i si tid bygde på. Dateringa av dei einskilde balladar og balladetypar har som kjent vore eit omstridt spørsmål. Men dersom det er sterke grunnar til å tru at ein ballade byggjer på den same tradisjonen som skriftlege fornaldarsoger – eventuelt eddadikt – så må balladane og den tradisjonen dei bygde på i ein viss periode ha overlappa i tid anten balladane fekk si form i høg mellomalderen eller i sein mellomalderen.

Men trass i den problematiske kjeldesituasjonen til munnleg dikting i mellomalderen generelt, og den problematiske kjeldesituasjonen vi har der den munnlege tradisjonen først vert synleg i langt yngre skriftlege tekster, så gjev dei samla kjeldene vi har, grunnlag for å dra nokre konklusjonar, og i alle fall grunnlag for å stille ein del spørsmål.

Eit spørsmål sjølv seine skriftlege balladar kan gje svar på, er kva slags motiv/tema som var dei mest populære på det tidspunktet balladane vart til. Som nemnt er det grunn til å tru at ei gruppe norske balladar, dei såkalla trollvisene, byggjer på ein tradisjon av same type som den ein finn i dei skriftlege fornaldarsogene. Fornaldarsogene er i dei fleste tilfella relativt omfattande tekster som er bygde opp av ei heil rad ulike motiv og handlingssekvensar. I motsetning til dei islandske *rímur*, som normalt vil gjengje meir eller mindre heile innhaldet i den sagateksta dei byggjer på, vil balladene konsentrere seg om ein kortare handlingssekvens. Fornaldarsogene gjev eit rimeleg godt bilete av kva som har vore populære motiv i sein mellomalderen, men trollvisene, som berre utviklar nokre få motiv i ein kortare handlingssekvens, skulle ein tru valde ut og spann vidare på dei motiva som var dei aller mest populære. Om ein samanliknar dei norske trollvisene med dei fornaldarsogene som Liestøl meinte balladane hadde henta motiva frå, så ser vi at det er reisa til Trollebotnen eller trollverda og heltens kamp mot trolla balladane fokuserer på. Dette er høgdepunktet i forteljninga. Kampen mot trolla er med få unntak kombinert med eit anna motiv, helten som friar unge kvinner, helst kongsdøtrer, ut or berget. Også i dei trollvisene som ikkje har vore hevda å dele tradisjonsgrunnlag med skriftlege fornaldarsoger, er kampen mot trolla, eller

hopehavet med trolla, det heilt sentrale. I det yngre laget av dei skriftlege fornaldarsogene kan vi observere ei stadig aukande interesse for trollverda. I dei norske trollvisene ser vi det same i endå sterkar grad. Kombinasjonen av reisa til trollverda og helten som friar prinsessa, finst i fornaldarsogene, men denne romantiske vrien er mest typisk for balladene. Vi veit at balladane var i stadig endring, og difor er ikkje dei skriftlege balladane utan vidare gode kjelder til den munnlege mellomaldertradisjonen. Men sjølv om tradisjonen kan endre seg, og endre seg mykje, vil det som er heilt sentrale motiv og sjølv beingrinda i dei handlingssekvensar ein ballade er bygd opp av, vere meir stabile – sjølv om det under traderinga sjølv sagt kan oppstå endringar i kombinasjonen av motiv. Alle trollviser som handlar om heltens kamp mot trolla, er neppe frå mellomalderen, men motiva og handlingssekvensane som desse visene er bygde opp av, har opphav i mellomaldertradisjon. Alt i alt er det derfor grunnlag for å hevde at dei norske trollvisene viser at heltens reise til trollverda og kampen mot trolla i den norske mellomaldertradisjonen var eit svært populært motiv, truleg det mest populære.

Denne populariteten til forteljingar om heltar og troll vert også stadfest av andre kjeldegrupper enn balladane. Runeinnskifta frå Hennøy i Nordfjord som fortel at: “her låg dei mennene som kom frå riseland med skipet lasta med gull og det er i denne steinen”, stadfester biletet av populariteten til forteljingane om ferdene til Riseland eller Trollebotnen. Her ser vi også at ei forteljing av denne typen har fått lokal tilknytning.

Denne populariteten til forteljingar om heltar som kjempa mot trolla, som både unge fornaldarsoger og trollviser indikerer har hatt ein blomstringsperiode i seinmellomalderen, kan også ha vore populære tidlegare. Snorri har i kap. 80 i Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar ein interessant kommentar til tradisjon om kongen som han vel å ikkje bruke i si skriftlege framstilling. Etter at kongen har kristna Hålogaland, fortel han at kongen fer sudover langs landet:

Ok varð í þeirri ferð mart þat, er í frásögn er fært, er tröll ok illar véttir glettusk við menn hans ok stundum við hann sjálfan. En vér viljum heldr rita um þá atburði, er Óláfr konungr kristnaði Nóreg eða önnur þau lönd, er hann kom kristni á.

Når Snorre nemner kampen mellom kongen og trolla *er í frásögn er fært*, så kan han sikte til Oddr munkr som gjengjev ein del tradisjon av dette slaget. Forteljingar om kristningskongane sine kampar mot trolla er jo heller ikkje heilt fråverande hjå Snorri, t.d. er forteljinga om korleis Olav den heilage reinsa setera Grønningar for trollpakk, eit døme på at også Snorri let slikt stoff få innpass. Men særleg mykje av denne typen tradisjonsstoff har ikkje fått plass i dei skriftlege kongesogene. Derimot er det nettopp kampen mot trolla som dominerer i dei seinare folkesegnene om kristningskongen.³ På eit eller anna tidspunkt har kongens kamp mot trolla vorte det heilt dominerande temaet i det munnlege tradisjonsstoffet. Når ein held dette saman med at motivet finst også i kongesogelitteraturen, men Snorri seier at han ikkje vil gjengje det, så kan dette gje grunnlag for nokre interessante spørsmål.

Eit spørsmål er om slike fantastiske motiv kanskje har vore vanlegare og meir dominerande i munnleg tradisjon enn i skriftlege tekster. Snorri gjev jo direkte uttrykk for at han har ei noko sensurerande holdning til denne typen tradisjonsstoff. Eg har i tidlegare arbeid antyda at den munnlege tradisjonen bak ulike sagagenrar kan ha vore meir blanda med omsyn til om den låg innanfor ein realistisk eller fantastisk forteljemåte enn skriftlege tekster (Mundal 2005: 48–51). Forteljingane om Heilag Olavs kamp mot trolla er ei slags blanding av fornaldarsagamotiv og legendemotiv. Kanskje ein også kan tenkje seg at forteljingane om guden Tors kamp mot trolla til ei viss grad har vorte overførte på kristningskongen.

³ Utførleg framstilling av den norske folketradisjonen om Olav den heilage finst i Bø 1955.

Genreblanding av denne typen er etter mitt syn langt meir karakteristisk for munnleg tradisjon enn for skriftlege genrar, sjølv om alt som finst i munnleg tradisjon sjølv sagt kunne slå inn i dei skriftlege genrane. Margaret Clunies Ross har også påpeikt, med full rette, at sagagenrar som islendingesoger og samtidsoger er meir “modally mixed” enn det som gjerne har vore framheva (Clunies Ross 1998: 192).

Beundringa av den såkalla realistiske sagalitteraturen har truleg ført til at vi lenge har oversett eller undervurdert dei ikkje-realistiske elementa i tekstene. Den siterte utsegna frå Snorri kan truleg takast til inntekt for at sagaforfattarane i hans tid, eller i alle fall nokre forfattarar, har hatt ei liknande nedvurderande holdning til den ikkje-realistiske munnlege tradisjonen som sagaforskarar i dei siste generasjonane har hatt til den litteraturen der denne tradisjonen slår tydeleg gjennom.

Det kan vere mange grunnar til at ein tradisjon – eller skriftleg tekst – inneheld lite av fantastiske element. At forteljinga handlar om hendingar i samtida eller i miljøet til forteljaren/forfattaren, er ein slik grunn, genreforventningar eller funksjonen til teksta kan vere andre. Snorri, som gav uttrykk for ein viss uvilje mot å ta med forteljingar om kristningskongen og trolle, skriv nok innanfor ein tradisjon som framleis var merkt av arven frå “dei frode menn”. Kongesogene har eit utgangspunkt i denne tradisjonen som dyrka ei nøktern, faktaorientert framstillingsform, men som påpeikt er ikkje alle kongesogeforfattarar like bundne av denne tradisjonen. Den nøkterne forma i samtidsogene har truleg først og fremst samanheng med at dei fortel om nær fortid. Islendingesogene fortel om relativt fjern fortid, og her skulle tidsavstanden tilbake til hendingane det vert fortalt om, ha opna for at fantastiske element kunne få plass både i tradisjonen og i tekstene som bygde på tradisjonen. Det har også skjedd, men dei skriftlege islendingesogene er trass alt rekna til den såkalla sagarealismen. Eg har tidlegare antydta at det aller eldste laget av islendingesogene kan ha meir av fantastiske element enn sogene som vart skrivne etter at genren “festa seg”, fordi dei i denne tidlege fasen lettare fekk innpass frå den munnlege tradisjonen. I dei yngste islendingesogene slår dei fantastiske elementa inn for fullt, noko som sikkert har samanheng med at vi har fått dei første skriftlege fornaldarsogene. Skriftfestinga av denne genren, med sterke innslag av det fantastiske og overnaturlige, kan igjen kanskje vere inspirert av dei omsette riddarsogene. Desse omsette sogene må også karakteriserast som ikkje-realistiske, og det faktum at dette var ein høgstatuslitteratur, kan til ei viss grad ha endra holdninga til forteljingar og tekster som inkluderte det fantastiske og overnaturlige. Men utsegner som den eg har sitert frå Snorri, det faktum at islendingesogene, trass i den lange avstanden i tid tilbake til hendingane, vart etablert som ein overvegande realistisk skriftleg genre, og like eins det faktum at fornaldarsogene, trass i at vi har sterke indisium på at dei tidleg var populære som munnleg forteljing,⁴ vart skriftfeste seint, kan vere ein klar indikasjon på at sjølve den skriftlege forma – med tradisjonar tilbake til dei frode menn – lenge fungerte som ein sensurerande instans som heldt ute, eller reduserte bruken av, ikkje-realistiske element i skriftlege tekster. Det vil med andre ord seie at det er grunn til å tru at munnleg tradisjon generelt inneheldt meir av fantastiske element enn dei skriftlege tekstene som bygde på denne tradisjonen – sjølv om det sjølv sagt også var ulikskapar mellom ulike typar munnleg tradisjon på dette feltet.

I kva grad kvinner kjem fram i forteljingane og deira interesser og holdningar vert reflekterte, er eit anna område der eg meiner det samla kjeldematerialet gjev grunn til å tru at

⁴ Eit døme på den tidlege populariteten til munnlege fornaldarsoger har vi i forteljinga om underhaldninga i bryllaupet i Reykjaholar som skal ha funne stad i 1119, og som det vert fortalt om i samtidsoga Þorgils saga ok Hafliða som truleg var skriven relativt tidleg på 1200-talet. I alle fall ei av sogne som er nemnd i denne teksten, må ha vore ei munnleg fornaldarsoge, og det vert også nemnt at kong Sverre sette pris på denne typen forteljingar.

det var sterke tendensar til eit skilje mellom munnleg tradisjon og skriftlege tekster. Hemn var framleis eit sentralt tema i norske – og for så vidt i nordiske – ballader, men samanlikna med islendingesogene t.d., som har blodhemn som eit hovudtema, er det i balladane påfallande mange kvinnelege hemningar som sjølve ordnar opp med sverd i hand anten dei hemner overgrep mot seg sjølve eller slektingar. Desse balladane har vore klassifiserte som riddarviser, men klassifiseringa er diskutabel, dei kunne like godt ha vore klassifiserte som kjempeviser med kvinneleg helt. Av sagagenrane sluttar dei seg tematisk nærmast til fornaldarsogene, som i *Hervarar saga* også har eit døme på kvinneleg hovudperson, men elles har denne skriftlege sagagenren, som alle andre skriftlege sagagenrar, mannleg hovudperson. Som påpeikt er heltens reise til trollverda og kampen mot trolla i balladane oftast kombinert med eit anna motiv: helten friar prinsesser ut or berget. Gjennom dette siste motivet får vi ei sterkare fokusering mot kvinner i balladane enn i fornaldarsogene.

At ei tekst fokuserer mot ein kvinneleg hovudperson og dels ser verda gjennom kvinnelege augo – eller i alle fall gjev kvinner plass i forteljinga – er noko ei relativt stor gruppe ballader deler med mange eddadikt. Dette er tekster som på grunn av den bundne forma står betydeleg nærmare den føregåande munnlege tradisjonen enn kva tilfellet er med sagagenrane. Synleggjeringa av kvinnene i desse genrane må ha samanheng med at dei er skapte og traderte i ein tradisjon som også hadde kvinnelege tradisjonsberarar, og at tekstene vender seg til eit blanda publikum.

Også tradisjonen bak dei skriftlege sagagenrane må vi gå ut frå har hatt både mannlege og kvinnelege tradisjonsberarar, og dei munnlege forteljingane har ganske sikkert vendt seg til eit blanda publikum. Om ein tradisjon i vesentleg grad var tradert av menn eller kvinner har truleg variert med emnet for forteljinga, men det vi kan vere temmeleg sikre på, er at kvinnene var sterkare representerte mellom dei munnlege tradisjonsberarane enn mellom dei skrivande forfattarane. Sagagenrane er så vidt vi veit skrivne av menn,⁵ og dersom det på det munnlege stadiet fanst ein tendens til skilje mellom kva emne mannlege og kvinnelege tradisjonsberarar interesserte seg for, så kan vi rekne med at dei mannlege forfattarane hadde dei same preferansar som mannlege tradisjonsberarar, og at når dei har brukt tradisjon frå kvinner, så ville det vere ein tendens til at dei var meir selektive og fjerna eller dempa det dei ville oppfatte som “kvinnestoff”. Men i kva grad ein skrivande forfattar ville omforme eller vrake munnleg tradisjon, ville sjølvstøtt variere, både individuelt frå verk til verk og frå genre til genre. Kongesogene vil naturleg nok fokusere mot kongen, og det varierer i kva grad og i kva samanheng kvinner kjem inn i synsfeltet til forfattaren. Men det finst ulikskapar mellom sogene. Oddr munkr er den kongesogeforfattaren som gjev kvinnene størst rom rundt kongen i og med at det meir enn vanleg vert fokusert mot det vi kan kalle kongens privatsfære. Det er svært freistande å setje dette i samanheng med at forfattaren etter alt å døme bygde på tradisjonsstoff som kvinner hadde vore med å forme. Denne saga var som kjent opphavleg skriven på latin, men i den norrøne omsetjinga er det i siste kapittel av saga nemnt 6 personar som forfattaren seier han har tradisjon etter, heile tre av desse er kvinner. Det er ikkje sikkert at denne passasjen opphavleg skriv seg frå saga til Oddr. Det har vore foreslåtte at lista over heimelsmenn kan skriva seg frå den bortkomne saga til Gunnlaugr munkr. Men anten den opphavleg har stått den eine eller den andre staden, så kan denne lista takast til inntekt for at tradisjonen om Olav Tryggvason, som dei eldste sogene om han bygde på, truleg i høgare grad enn vanleg var forma av kvinnelege tradisjonsberarar.

Også mellom islendingesogene er det store individuelle skilnader i kva grad dei fokuserer mot kvinner, i kva grad dei målber kvinnes synspunkt eller har ein kvinneleg synsvinkel. Det same kan ein for så vidt seie om fornaldarsogene, men her er likevel ein klar tendens til at ein i denne genren møter ein kvinnetype som ein eigentleg ikkje har i dei realistiske

⁵ Laxdøla saga har av fleire forskarar vore peikt på som eit mogeleg unntak frå denne regelen.

sagagenrane: den sterke, handlekraftige, krigerske skjoldmøytypen. Det er grunn til å rekne med at den munnlege tradisjonen bak dei to genrane var ulik – sjølv om den munnlege tradisjonen kan ha vore mindre genredelt enn dei skriftlege sogene. Det er heilt sikkert fleire faktorar som har medverka til at kvinnene kjem fram på ein annan måte i fornaldarsogene enn i islendingesogene, men ein slik faktor kan vere ulik avstand mellom det skriftlege verket og den munnlege tradisjonen. Sjølv om avstanden i litterær kvalitet mellom islendingesogene og fornaldarsogene kan ha vore overvurdert, er det likevel neppe tvil om at forfattarane av islendingesogene normalt har lagt inn ein større kunstnarleg innsats og forma og omarbeidd den bakanforliggjande tradisjonen. At tradisjonen bak fornaldarsogene er mindre forma og omforma av ein mannleg forfattar, kan altså vere ein av grunnane til at kvinner i denne genren kan få rolla som hovedperson – slik som Hervør i *Hervarar saga* – og elles opptre i mannlege roller. Dersom ein reknar med at den mannlege forfattaren også i fornaldarsogene har dempa dei element i forteljningane som i særleg grad har gjenspegla kvinneleg smak, så skulle ein tru at tradisjonen bak fornaldarsogene var endå sterkare merkt av dei kvinnelege tradisjonsberarane enn dei skriftlege sogene. Den *Huldar saga* som Sturla Þórðarson i følgje Sturlu þátrr (overlevert i *Reykjafjarðarbók* av Sturlunga saga) skal ha fortalt på skipet til kong Håkon Håkonsson, er i denne teksta framstilt som ei skriftleg soge, men var helst munnleg, og i dette tilfellet også fortalt av ein mannleg forteljar. Men tittelen indikerer ein kvinneleg hovudperson, Huld, som i følgje teksta var ei trollkjerring. Historia, som kanskje ikkje er av dei aller mest pålitelege, indikerer like fullt at troll og kvinner kan ha hatt ein større plass i den munnlege tradisjonen enn i skriftlege tekster.

Kvinnene sitt synlege nærvær i eddadikt og ballader, som står nær den bakanforliggjande munnlege tradisjonen, og det faktum at sagagenrane som synest å ha størst avstand til tradisjonen, gjev kvinnene mindre plass og mindre roller, er argumenta for at munnleg tradisjon i større grad enn skriftleg tekst har gjeve kvinnene plass.

Dei siste problemstillingane eg vil ta opp, gjeld form og status til munnleg tradisjon. Kor samanhengande eller usamanhengande, kor fast eller open for endringar munnleg tradisjon har vore, er som kjend eit av dei gamle stridsspørsmåla i sagaforskinga. Dette er eit område der ein kanskje skal vere svært varsam med å dra generelle slutningar sidan det kan vere store individuelle skilnader mellom kulturar og mellom munnlege genrar innanfor ein og same kultur. Eg vil derfor her ta utgangspunkt i eit svært avgrensa materiale, i den typen balladar som Knut Liestøl såg som prov på at ein munnleg tradisjon av same typen som den som må ha funnest bak dei skriftlege fornaldarsogene også fanst i Noreg i mellomalderen. Er det i tilfelle mogeleg å utleie noko som helst om form og fastleik i denne tradisjonen frå dei langt yngre skriftlege tekstene?

Liestøl meinte å kunne identifisere ein del fornaldarsoger som balladane bygde på. Men det er ofte høgst diskutabelt om ein kan seie at innhaldet ligg så nær at ein kan seie identifiseringa er sikker, og i alle tilfelle vil balladane gjengje eller byggje på berre ein eller nokre få episodar frå soga. Liestøl nemner *Qrvar-Odds saga* som døme på at den samla norske tradisjonen, dvs. fleire balladar og segntradisjon som Torfæus opplyser i Noregshistoria si han har frå lokal tradisjon, dekkjer størstedelen av innhaldet i ei soge (Liestøl 1915: 88ff.). Det er kanskje av interesse at dette er den einaste fornaldarsoga vi kan fastslå med visse var kjend i Noreg i mellomalderen i skriftleg form, men kor utbreidd kjennskapet til den skriftlege soga var, veit vi jo ikkje. At det elles berre er innhaldet i kortare bolkar i ei soge som der dekt av innhaldet i ein ballade, kan kanskje takast som indisium på at også den munnlege tradisjonen av fornaldarsogatypen i Noreg berre eksisterte som forteljingar om lausrevne episoder.

I mellomalderen kan skriftleg tekst gjengje munnleg tekst (t.d. skalde- og eddadikt), eller ei skriftleg tekst kan byggje på munnleg tradisjon (sagagenrane). Det er også mogeleg at skriftleg tekst kan danne grunnlaget for nye munnlege variantar. Både i munnleg og skriftleg tradering kan vi ha overgang frå ein genre til ein annan, og alle variantar, frå skriftleg til

skriftleg, frå skriftleg til munnleg, frå munnleg til skriftleg og frå munnleg til munnleg, er tenkjelege. Overgangen frå islandsk soge til *rimur*, og kanskje tilbake igjen til soge, synest i dei fleste tilfella å vere overgang frå skriftleg til skriftleg form. Her vil det normalt vere liten avstand mellom dei to tekstene. I tilfelle med dei norske trollvisene, som Liestøl meinte å vise bygde på ein tradisjon av same type som den vi finn bak skriftlege fornaldarsoger, så har vi overgang frå munnleg til munnleg form i samband med skifte av genre. Det kan verke som dette er ei tradisjonsoverlevering som opnar for maksimalt store endringar i tradisjonen. Liestøl meinte rett nok å vise nært slektskap mellom mange ballader og norrøne soger, men det er likevel eit faktum at berre episoder frå sogene er gjengjevne i balladane, og dei motiva som kan tilbakeførast til ei norrøn soge, kan kombinerast med andre motiv som ikkje finst i denne saga. Namna på personane er oftast endra – og kan dertil variere frå ein variant av balladen til ein annan, og ikkje minst dei overleverte variantane vitnar om både diakron og synkron variasjon av betydeleg omfang.

Det skjer endringar både under skriftleg og munnleg tradering, men skriftleg form, om så berre på eitt ledd i traderingsprosessen, eller kanskje berre gjennom eksistensen av ei skriftleg tekst som står på sida av den direkte traderingslina, vil bremse endringsprosessane i ei tradisjonsoverlevering. I det norske mellomaldersamfunnet fanst det ingen eller få skriftlege tekster som bremsa endringsprosessane i den munnlege tradisjonen, og “tekstvandringane” i denne tradisjonen er betydelege. Eit interessant unntak er balladen Tørekallsvisa. Innhaldet i denne balladen står svært nær eddadiktet Þrymskviða. Dette betyr ikkje nødvendigvis at den som forma balladen, kjende eddadiktet i skriftleg form, men om ikkje, vert den nære slektskapen mellom dei to tekstene eit indisium på at den fastare forma i norrøn poesi kan ha hatt evna til å bremse endringsprosessar om lag på same måten som skriftleg form.

Eit spørsmål som melder seg, er om den munnlege tradisjonen kan ha gjeve fyldigare opplysningar enn det dei overleverte balladane kan tyde på. I tilknytning til skaldedikt – og dels i tilknytning til eddadikt – har det vore eit diskusjonstema om dikta medan dei fanst i munnleg tradisjon var traderte saman med ein utfyllande og forklarande prosa. Dette har ikkje vore eit diskusjonstema i tilknytning til balladane, men spørsmålet er om det kan tenkjast i tilknytning t.d. til balladar som synest å ha bevart ei klar tilknytning til det norrøne stoffet ved at dei har bevart namna på dei norrøne heltane eller heltinnene, t.d. visa om Åslaug Kråka. Parallele tradisjonar i to ulike genrar som støtta kvarandre, kan også ha vore eit forhold som bremsa endringsprosessane.

Det har vore ei vanleg oppfatning at skriftleg litteratur hørde til på eit høgre kulturnivå enn munnlege tradisjonar. Eg skal ikkje argumentere mot dette synet, men vil halde fram at dei to kulturane – som i mellomalderen eksisterte parallelt og gjensidig påverka kvarandre, først og fremst er ulike. Den munnlege diktinga hadde, samanlikna med den skriftlege, eit større potensiale til å engasjere og inkludere fleire i den stadige reskapingsprosessen som overføringa av munnlege tradisjonar er. Den munnlege diktinga levde i ein klarare symbiose med det omliggjande samfunnet, og var derfor også ekstremt avhengig av dette samfunnet for å overleve.

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Personar og tilnamn i *Sverresoga*

Nokre diskutable punkt

Gudlaug Nedrelið, Institutt for nordisk og mediefag, Universitetet i Agder, Norway

1. Innleiing

I Claus Krag's bok om kong Sverre blir fleire av kongens fylgjesveinar omtalte, ma. Sigurd frå Saltnes: "En av mennene, som het Sigurd fra Saltnes og formodentlig var fra Færøyene" (Krag 2005:58), og Svina-Stefan: "Én datter ble gift med en mann som kaltes Svina-Stefan, formodentlig fra Svínoy, en av øyene i Færøyene. De to hadde sønnen Peter Støype, som er nevnt i begynnelsen av sagaen. Han var sannsynligvis samme mann som sagaen senere kaller Svina-Peter" (Krag 2005:86). Krag grunnjev ikkje sine formodningar og sannsynlegheiter, men i det siste tilfellet byggjer han truleg på Kohts opplysningar i registeret til omsetjingi av Sverre-soga: "Svina-Stefan, har vel helst hatt tilnamnet sitt etter ei øy eller ein gard med namn samansett med svin, kanskje helst på Færøyane" (Koht 1967:244) og "Peter Støype, systerson til kong Sverre, truleg den same som somtid blir kalla Svina-Peter" (Koht 1967:240). Koht grunnjev heller ikkje den færøyske heimfestingi, men han kan ha det frå P.A. Munch (sjå under).

Tilnamns materialet i Sverre-soga er stort og uvanleg variert, og fleire har interessert seg for det. P.A. Munch diskuterte nokre av tilnamni i *Det norske Folks Historie* (1857). Han blei imøtegådd på somme punkt av Gustav Storm (1884). Fyrste samla oversynet over norske og islandske tilnamn er Rygh 1871, deretter Finnur Jónsson 1907. Evald Liden diskuterer nokre av tilnamni i Sverre-soga i artikkelen frå 1910. Koht har register, med person- og stadnamn samla, i omsetjingi (1967:226–249).¹ Indrebø har gode namneregister med kommentarar i tekstutgåva frå 1921 (fotografisk opptrykk i 1981:197–215). Han har delt inn i personnamn (med undergruppa tilnamn), stadnamn, folkenamn (dvs. innbyggjarnemningar) og andre namn (litteratur, skip og våpen, kyrkjer og messor). Dei fleste tilnamni er med i E.H. Linds standardverk (1920/21). I Oddmund Vestenfors mellomfagsoppgåve (1991) står namnematerialet i sentrum for interessa, medan historikarane heller har brukt det for å prøva å fastslå heimstad og sosial stilling til namneberarane (td. Munch 1857:121).

2. Kva er eit tilnamn?

Termen tilnamn blir brukt på ulike måtar i ulike fagmiljø i Norden (jf. Brylla 1999a:71 f., Nedrelið 1999:96 f.), og kategorien er og blir flytande. Eit tilnamn er eit tillegg til førenamnet (jf. Brylla 1999b), som tener til å identifisera, eller ogso å karakterisera beraren. Tilnamnet eller tillegget (utmerkingsleddet, kjenneleddet) kan stå føre eller etter namnet (*Aura-Páll*, *Einnarr Lygra*, jfr. Andersson 1983:16 ff., Otterbjörk 1983:115 f., Pettersen 1981:89, Nedrelið 1998:197). Tilnamni blir inndelte i underkategoriar etter innhald (jf. ma. Ekbo 1948, Pettersen 1981:73ff., Nedrelið 2002:252 f.).

Disse tilnavne have oftest hensyn til personens legemlige og aandelige egenskaber, ofte ogsaa til en eller anden handling, hvorved han har gjort sig navnkundig, undertiden til hans bopæl eller oprindelige hjemstavn eller ogsaa til hans slektskabsforhold eller stilling, og endelig stundom til mundheld (Rygh 1871:Vf.).

¹ Fyrste utgåva kom i 1913. Her er det vist til femte utgåva frå 1967. "Dei fleste av Kohts merknader, som for stod i fotnotar, er no innarbeidde i namnelista" (Koht 1967:7).

Materialet er her delt i fire underkategoriar:

Type 1) Referanse til personlege eigenskapar, lekamlege eller åndelege, eller handlingar som beraren har vorte namngjeten ved. Ogso utnemne kjem i denne kategorien (døme: *Eiríkr Blindi, Jón Magri, Nikulás Skaufhali*).

Type 2) Referanse til bustad eller heimstad (døme: *Aura-Páll, Einarr Lygra, Sigurður frá Saltnes*).

Type 3) Referanse til familieforhold (døme: *Barður Guthormsson, Cicilia konungsdóttir*) fortel vanlegvis kven beraren er barn av (patronym og metronym).² Men det kan ogso fortelja kven vedkomande er gift med (maritonym,) er bror til, er i svogerskap med (*mágr*), eller generelt i familie eller fosterfamilie med. "Familietilhøyrighet ellers uttrykkes ved leddene – *bróðir, -systir, -kona, -ekkjja, -mágr, -stjúpr, -fóstri*" (Hødnebo 1974:220).

Type 4) Referanse til stilling eller yrke (døme: *Ivarr Áрмаðr, Ásleifr Búandi*).

Alle typane har vorte problematiserte og anfekta, bortsett frå type 1, som er den klassiske tilnamnstypen. Type 2 har vore drøfta av ma. Ekbo (1948:276) og Peterson (1983:126). Type 3, patronymikon, har av somme vorte utdefinert som tilnamn (sjå Peterson 1983, Ekbo 1948, Modéer 1964). Men "Patronymika opptre alt i de eldste skr. kilder og har vært alm. gjennom hele middelalderen" (Hødnebo 1974:319). Type 4 er den mest utsette kategorien, for dette er tvillaust appellativ (sjå td. Ekbo 1948:270). Men slike termar går inn i patronymikon og slektskapsrefererande tilnamn. Slektskapssetterledd "kan også knyttes til opphavspersonens eg.t.: *kotkarlsmágr, ikornakona*, til yrke: *prestsson, ármannsson*" (Hødnebo 1974:320). Det same gjeld for titlar, både i eldre nyare og nyare tid (Nedrelid, under utgjeving).

3. Tilnamn i Sverre-soga

Indrebøs utgåve av Sverris Saga har eit register over tilnamni (1920 [1981]:203 ff.). Dette har vore materialsamling for Vestenfor 1991, og ogso for meg her. Vestenfor har med alle berarar med namn av type 1 (som *Helgi Byggvomb*), og mange, men ikkje alle, av type 4 (som *Ívarr ármaðr*) er med. Av type 2 er berarar med preposisjonsledd som tilnamn ikkje med, men dei som står med snaue stadnamnet er medtekne (*Ívarr Steig, Þjóðólfr Vík*). Av type 3 er alle vanlege patronymikon utelatne i tilnamnsregisteret, medan dei som ber andre slektskaps-termar (som *Árni Byskopsfrændi*) er med. Vestenfor fylgjer Indrebø, so han har utelate berarar med patronymikon og berarar med preposisjonsledd som tilnamn: "Er det ikke et vanlig patronymikon, nevnt etter faren, eller knytta til en gård eller bygd med prep.ledd, regner jeg det som tilnavn" (Vestenfor 1991:2).

Til saman er det 183 namneberarar på tilnamnslista hos Indrebø. Under er tilnamns materialet fordelt på dei fire innhaldstypene (sjå over). Dei er oppsette alfabetisk på tilnamn, utan omsyn til om kjenneleddet kjem før eller etter namnet. Det er teke utgangspunkt i Vestenfors materialsamling og fordeling (Vestenfor 1991: tillegg utan sidetal etter side 19), men innbyrdes fordeling er noko endra, og inventaret i type 2 og type 4 er auka. Eg har lagt til 34 namneberarar i type 2, nemleg dei med ein preposisjonsfrase (som *Sigurður frá Saltnes*). Å skilja mellom stadnamn med og utan preposisjon er ein unødig formalisme som gjer vald på materialet. I vanleg språkbruk er det slik at somme stadnamn krev preposisjon i dagleg talemål, og andre gjer det ikkje (jf. Nedrelid 1998:198). Finn Hødnebo tek med stadnamn, ogso i preposisjonsuttrykk, i si liste over mogelege tilnamnstypar (1974:319). I type 4 er det teke med 22 namneberarar, inkludert *Páll postoli*. Mange av dei er utanlandske fyrstar, andre er folk som reelt utøver yrket dei er kjennemerkte ved, som *Karl Aboti*. Han er utelaten hos Jónsson, Indrebø, Lind og Vestenfor, fordi mannen vitterleg var abbed. Han er medteken her fordi

² Sjå Johannessen 2001.

yrkesnemningi fungerer som kjenneledd i hans namnekompleks (sjå Nedrelid, under utgjeving).

3.1 Tilnamn av type 1, namn som fortel om personlege eigenskapar eller hendingar som har gjort beraren kjend (alle spaltetilvisingar til Lind 1920/21):

Qzurr Balli, Óláfr Beitstokkr, Páll Belti, Magnús Berföttr, Bitá-Kári, Andrés Bjúgi, Brynjólfr Blanda, Eiríkr Blindi, Þórfiðr Blindi, Sigurðr Borgarklettr, Andrés Brasaðr, Hallvarðr Bratti, Þórleifr Breiðskeggr, Sigurðr Brennir, Helgi Bringr, Birgir Brosa, Björn Bukkr, Ámundi Burst, Helgi Byggvomb, Auðun Býleistr, Ívarr Dapi, Þórir Dari, Þórðr Dokka (Jónsson 1907:320), Jón Drumbi, Dura-Jón, Eilífr Eplastong (evt. type 2, sp. 73), Páll Fliða, Sigurðr Fluga (evt. type 2, sp. 86), Ulfr Flý, Björn Furulangr, Gunnarr Galinn, Hákon Galinn, Ívarr Galli, Óttarr Gási, Haraldr Gilli, Guðlaugr Gnitaskor, Magnús inn Góði, Gunnarr Grjónbákr, Hallvarðr Gæla, Ívarr Gæslingr, Birgir Gorn, Sunniva hin Helga, Eiríkr hinn Helgi, Hallvarðr hinn Helgi, Óláfr hinn Helgi, Þórlákr hinn Helgi, Qzurr Hisli, Qnundr Hlunnr (som Hlynr, sp. 150), Ívarr Horti, Þórgrímr Hrossi, Hjarrandi Hviða, Pétr Ilska, Sigurðr Jórsalafari, Jón Ketlingr, Karl Kjotlær, Þórir Knapr, Óttarr Knerra, Jón Kollr, Eysteinn Korpr, Þórir Krákr, Andrés Krista, Jón Kuflungr, Nikulás Kúfungr, Þórsteinn Kúgaðr, Guðbrandr Kúla, Jón Kúla, Jón Kutiza, Hermundr Kváða, Ulfr Kværi, Kyrpinga-Ormr, Bergsveinn Langi, Bengeir Langi, Óláfr Langi, Eiríkr Laukr, Hávarðr Lax, Hallvarðr Leppr, Sæbjörn Limr, Bendikt Lítli, Einarr Lítli, Þórðr Loki, Þrándr Lyrta, Jón Magri, Magnús Mangi, Hallvarðr Marardráp, Nikulás Mondull, Ívarr Nef, Eindriði Rakki, Pétr Rangr, Eilífr Rauði, Þórolfr Rympill, Bárðr Sála, Ívarr Selki/Silki, Jón Sine terra, Árni Skaðareðr, Erlingr Skakki, Atli Skálmí, Nikulás Skauf(h)ali, Símun Skerpla (Skerfla, sp. 322), Jórdan Skinnpeta (Skinnpeita, sp. 326), Bjalfi Skinnstakkr, Einarr Skitinbeini, Ívarr Skjálgi, Sigurðr Skjálgi, Gyrðr Skjómi, Bárðr Skjöldr, Eyvindr Skráfi, Skúðu-Eiríkr, Halldórr Skvaldri, Hallvarðr Skygna, Páll Smáttauga, Óláfr Smjörkollr, Hallsteinn Snákr, Guthormr Snerill, Þórir Spæla (Spola, Spala, sp. 352),³ Eiríkr Stagbrellr, Jón Stáll, Ástriðr Steik, Pétr Steypir, Sigurðr Stikulags, Kolbeinn Strinef, Þórleifr Styrja, Nikulás Súltan, Eiríkr Svagi (Snagi, sp. 369), Pétr Svarti, Ulfr Svarti, Þjóstarr Svarti, Sveinn Sveitarskíttr, Svína-Pétr, Svína-Stefán, Sigurðr Talgi, Jón Trín, Áskell Tyza, Qnundr Úfriðr (Ófriðr, sp. 271), Áslákr Úngi, Guðbrandr Úngi, Jón Vágadraumr (Vágadrumbr?, sp. 395), Qgmundr Vágapungr, Guðlaugr Vali, Páll Várskinn, Víkingr Væfnir (Nefía, wefiu, wefio, sp. 267), Þóraldi Þrymr, Þórgils Þúfuskíttr.

Det er svært mange tilnamn av denne typen i Sverre-soga. Vestenfor skriv om karakteristika etter ytre og indre kjenneteikn, dei fyrste er kroppslege (som Bergsveinn Langi, Bendikt Lítli, Ívarr Skjálgi), dei siste gjeld veremáte og oppførsel (1991:9 f.). Han finn 15–20 dyrenamn (1991:6 f.), og svært mange spottande og ironiske tilnamn. Det trur han har samanheng med det barske miljøet i birkebeinarflokket (1991:4). Dei aller fleste namni er tolka i Lind 1920/21.

Desse manglar i Lind: Bitá-Kári, Dura-Jón, Qzurr Hisli, Ulfr Kværi, Jón Sine terra, Skúðu-Eiríkr, Sigurðr Stikulags, og Áskell Tyza. Kjenneleddet til Bitá-Kári kan tolkast som appellativet *biti*, bjelke, ås, bygningsdel. Sameleis kan kjenneleddet i Dura-Jon vera genitiv av *dyrr*, dør. Den tredje med førestilt kjenneledd er Skúðu-Eiríkr. Koht omset namnet som Skrud-Eirik (1967:60), han byggjer truleg på Finnur Jónsson (1907:240), som ogso har ei alternativ tolking med *skryða* "hoste, opkastning" (same). Både *hisli* og *kværi* er oppsette som tilnamn i Norrøn ordbok (Heggstad 1997), men *hisli* står utan omsetjing eller tolking. Ved *kværi* er det derimot vist til nn. vorte, liktorn, og det er eit tilnamn som ikkje stikk seg ut i dette materialet. Den landlause Jon er den same som Jón Englakonungr i gruppe fire. I tilnamnet åt Sigurðr Stikulags bør fyrsteleddet vera eit svakt hokjønnsord, og *stika* er stikke, stong, stake, lysestake, og ogso lengdemål. Vestenfor tolkar det derfor som ein lang stake av

³ Sjå ogso Finnur Jónson 1907 og Evald Liden 1910 om dette namnet.

ein kar (1991:10). Etterleddet *lag* har 10–12 ulike betydningar, og fyller meir enn fem spaltor i Fritznerns ordbok. Slik får samansetjingi svært mange moglege betydningar. Det kan vera verdt å nemna at ein betydning er ”stikk, hogg”. Den betydningen gjev oss ein klår parallell til tilnamnet *Stangarhogg* (Lind 20/21:357). Tilnamnet *Tyza* står ikkje i Lind, og det er heller ikkje noko appellativ i ordbøkene som passar. Roti kan eventuelt vera *tut-* som i tytebær. Elles kunne det vore freistande å setja det i samband med dansk *tudse*. Det ordet er av ukjent opphav, og belagt med svært mange ulike rotvokalar i store delar av Norden, men diverre ikkje med /y/.⁴ Rygh har han som Askell Kussa (1871: 40).

3.2 Tilnamn av type 2, namn som fortel om bustad eller opphavleg heimstad:

Aura-Pall, Sigurðr Borgarkletr, Sigurðr Dotafinnr (”nutida öknamn på nordlandsfiskare”, sp. 62), Árni Efja, Ívarr Elda, Finnur Færeyski, Ásgeirr Hamarskalli, Gregorius Kíkr, Eindriði Ljoxa, Einar Lygra, Eindriði Slandri, Ívarr Steig, Jón Vágadraumr, Ögmundur Vágapungur, Þjóðólfr Vík, Eindriði Þrónski, Ölrú-Kári.

+ Hallkell ór Angri, Vigleikr á Digrini, Bótolfr ór Fjórðum, Skeggi á Eggju, Ísákr í Fólaskn, Klemet af Grafdal, Ölvir af Goðranni, Páll í Heitu, Hallórr í Hjörðlaksvík, Arnþórr af Hváli, Hrói á Kjarrastöðum, Ragnhildr í Konungahelli, Ulfr af Laufnesi, Hallkell af Lói, Loðinn af Manvíkum, Brynjólfur í Mjòlu, Guthormr í Mjòlu, Sigurðr af Móðastöðum, Helgi á Ryn (rangt for Ryðási), Jón af Randabergi, Serkr af Rjóðum, Sigurðr af Saltnesi, Vilhjalmr af Saltnesi, Hallvarðr af Sástöðum, Símun í Skríksvík, Vilhjalmr af Torgum, Philippus af Vegini, Nikolas af Vestnesi, Þrándr í Vita, Knútr af Þelamörk, Tosti á Ystum, Erlingr í Þjóttu, Símun loğmaðr af Þugn, Gautr af Ænesi.

3.3 Tilnamn av type 3, namn som fortel om familieforhold:

Árni Byskupsfrændi, Þórðr Finngæirsbróðir, Óláfr Jarlsmágr, Ormr Konungsbróðir, Árni Cicilia Konungsdóttir,⁵ Konungsmágr, Einar Konungsmágr, Pétur Lucasbróðir, Eivindr Prestmágr, Sölmundur Systrungur, Ulfr Þorparason (sjá Jónsson 1907: 163 ff. om denne typen).

Heller ikkje eg har teke med berarar med vanlege patronymikon laga med mannsførenamn som føreledd og -son eller -dóttir som etterledd. Det er ikkje fordi eg ikkje reknar dei som tilnamn, men fordi eg ser dei som heilt uproblematisk, og derfor ikkje vil øyda plass og tid på dei her. I ei fullstendig framstilling måtte ein gjort greie for desse òg, ma. for å kunna slege fast innbyrdes fordeling mellom namnetypane.

3.4 Berarar med tilnamn og titlar av type 4:

Ívarr Árnaðr, Ásleifr Búandi (Ásleifr Bónði, sp. 36), Finnur Forræði, Auðbjörn Gestahöfdingi, Únáss Kambari, Sigvaldi Karl, Sigurðr Lavarðr, Sveinn Munki, Hagbarðr Muntari, Sverrir Prestur, Özur Prestur, Eysteinn Ræðismaðr, Hreiðarr Sendimaðr, Kalfr Sendimaðr, Jón Skutilsveinn, Rikarðr Svartameistari,

+ Karl Ábóti, Ingi Baglakonungur, Þórgrímur Bónði, Knútr Danakonungur, Jón Englakonungur, Ríkarð Englakonungur, Absalón Erkibiskop, Eiríkr Erkibyskup, Ásgeirr Féhirðir, Kirjalax Girkiakonungur, Rögnvaldr Jarl, Símun Loğmaðr af Þugn, Celestinus Páfí, Páll Postoli, Petrus Postoli, Arngeirr Prestur, Auti Prestur, Erlendr Prestur, Guzalin Prestur, Guðlaugr Stallari, Knútr Svíakonungur, Benedikt Systumaðr, Sigurðr Sýslumaðr.

4. Kva tilnamnstype?

Det er ofte usikkert korleis eit namn skal klassifiserast. Vestenfor diskuterer ma. om *Hamarskalli* er ein kar frå Hamar eller om det er appellativet hamarskalle (den butte enden på hamaren), som då kan vera eit samanlikningsnamn (1991:8). Det er nok helst toponymet, jf.

⁴ Sjå <http://ordnet.dk/ods/opslag?opslag=tudse&submit=S%F8g>.

⁵ Cicilia konungsdóttir står med berre førenamnet i Indrebos register. Derimot står ho slik i teksten (1920 [1981]:71). Om ulempa ved å bruka tidlegare utarbeidde register som materialsamling, sjå Nedreid under utgjeving.

tilsvarende dømme som Fitiaskalli, Hisingarskalli, Hléseyarskalli og Vikarskalli (Lind 1920/21:81, 147, 149, 402). Vestenfor klassifiserer *Hein* (Jón Hein) som landskapsnamn, frå Heinafylki (1991:6). Tolkingi kan ikkje avvisast, men *hein* er ogso appellativ (f., bryne), og det er eit tilnamn av type 1, jamvel belagt med ein kongeleg berar (Harald Hein, sjå Lind 1920/21:140). Vestenfor har plassert Hagbarðr Muntari under ”Kjennetegn i væremåte og oppførsel”, (dvs type 1 her): ”Noen har vel fått tilnavnet på grunn av veltalenhet (*Talgi, Muntari*)” (1991:11). Seinare skriv han om suffikset -ari at ” en del yrkestilnavn har i denne sagaen fått slik former. 5 stykker er i ei slik latinsk form (*Kambari, Muntari, Stallari*) (Vestenfor 1991:15). Eg les det som *myntari* (m., myntmeister) og plasserer det i type 4 (jf. Jónsson 1907: 279).

4.1 Svina-Stefan og Svina-Peter

Krag skriv, som før nemnt, om ”Svina-Stefan, formodentlig fra Svínoy, en av øyene i Færøyene” (2005:86). Ogso Koht har med dette (Koht 1967:244), og han har tydeleg vidareført P.A. Munchs oppfatning: ”Men dermed er det dog ikke sagt, at Stephan og Peter have været Svinehyrder; rimeligviis have de kun hørt hjemme paa Svino” (Munch 1857:121). Dette opphavet til tilnamnet vart avvist som usannsynleg allereie av Gustav Storm: ”Tilsætningen Svína- i Svína-Peter, Svína-Stephan maa vistnok opfattes som Genitiv i Flertal af *svín* og tør ikke henføres til Svíney” (Storm 1884:271 f.). Korkje Finnur Jónsson eller E. H. Lind nemner toponym som tolking ved dei fire personane som har *Svina-* som tilnamn (Jónsson 1907:304, Lind:1920/21:376). Vestenfor (1991) nemner toponymet som ei av fleire moglege tolkingar, men ogso han meiner det helst kjem av appellativet *svín* (sjå under).

Det er all grunn til å tru at appellativet, ikkje toponymet, er opphavet. Føreleddet *Svina-* står alle stader som *Suina-*, ikkje **Svíneyar-*, ei form ein kunne ha venta om det vore *Svínoy* (norr. *Svíney*) som var utmerkingsledd. I Lind finn me, i tillegg til dei to i Sverresoga, *Svína-Bóðvarr* i Landnáma (stamfar til ein landnámsmann) og *Svína-Grímr* i Heimskringla.⁶ *Svina-Grim* er omtalt i kap. 7 i Soga om Haraldsønene. ”Da Sigurd kom sør til Valsnes, råka han der Svine-Grim og let hogge høgge handa av han” (HK:288). I margen står det at Valsnes er i Fosen. Det er usannsynleg at desse to tilnamni har opphav i stadnamnet på Færøyane. Det er mykje trulegare at dette er personleg tilnamn som refererer til ei hending, no ukjend for oss. Gustav Storm tek det altso som genitiv plural av *svín*. Storm avviser at det har vore nedsetjande, fordi Svina-Peter sjølv gjer ordspel med tilnamnet sitt (1884:272). Vestenfor, derimot, les inn ei dobbelthaldning⁷ i den episoden. Ogso han avviser toponymet og festar det til appellativet. Men han landar på den tolkingi Munch i si tid lanserte, ”både Petr og Stefan kan ha vært grisegetere” (1991:13). Storm meinte at ”om Oprindelsen til dette Tilnavn kan det ikke nytte at fremsætte Gjetninger”. Finnur Jónson trur dei har eigt mange svin (1907: 304). Ei anna tolking er at dette, som so mange andre dyrenemningar, har vore samanlikningsnamn på ein eller annan måte.

4.2 Svina-Peter og Peter Støype

Krag skriv at Peter Støype ”sannsynligvis” er identisk med Svina-Peter (2005:86). Dette står i Kohts omsetjing, og han kan byggja på Finnur Jónson, som hevda denne identiteten utan grunngeving (1907: 304). I Sverris Saga blir det opplyst av Peter Støype er son av Svina-Stefan og dermed Sverres systerson på morssida (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:2). Det felles tilnamnet kan indikera slektskap. Derimot tyder det ikkje eintydig på far-son-forhold. Folk med felles tilnamn kan like godt vera av same generasjon. Dette er Munchs tolking. Han skriv om Peter Støype, ”en Søn af hans Halvsyster og Svina-Stephan, samt *Svina-Peter*, rimeligviis en

⁶ Dei er ikkje nemnde i Williams 2008. Den artikkelen handlar rett nok om førenamn, men andre grise-tilnamn er nemnde (Williams 2008:206).

⁷ Den tolkingi kan ha noko for seg. Det er ikkje uvanleg at folk kan seia ting om seg sjølve som dei ugjerne høyrer frå andre.

Broder af denne” (1857:121). Førenamnet Peter var ikkje eit uvanleg namn i mellomalderen. Det er jamvel eit av dei få kristne namn som har gått inn som føreledd i eit gardsnamn (*Petterød* i Vestfold, NG 6:239). I Sverre-soga er der åtte som kallast Peter, i tillegg til apostelen.

Eit forhold som talar imot at Peter Støype og Svina-Peter er same person, er tidsfaktoren. Peter Støype er son av ei yngre syster til kong Sverre. Sverres alder er svært omstridt, pga. det gamle stridsspørsmålet om han var kongsson eller ikkje (sjå Stefánsson 1984 og tilvisingar der). Men sjølv om Sverre kanskje var eldre enn han gav seg ut for, var han likevel ein ung mann då han kom til Noreg i 1176. Og son til den yngre syster hans må nødvendigvis vera ein generasjon yngre enn han. I 1184 er Svina-Peter ein hovding med kommando over skip og folk (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:87, 92). I kong Magnus’ tale før slaget ved Fimreite blir hans fråver nemnt som eit minus for Sverre (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:97), Peter er mao. ein kjend mann i samtidi. Menn kom tidleg føre seg på den tid, men dersom Svina-Peter var Sverres systerson, må det ha vore ein eksepsjonelt ung hovding som inntok Bergen og heldt sin store tale der (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:102 f.). Seinare høyrer me om han berre ein gong, ved slaget i Oslo i 1200. (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:177). Peter Støype, derimot, blir fyrst introdusert som Sverres systerson (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:2). So blir han ikkje nemnd før i samband med øyskjeggoppstanden i 1193 (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:125). Då er han hovding saman med ungdomane Sigurd Lavard, Philippus Birgerson og Håkon Galen (Sverres systerson på farssida, eller den påstådde farssida). Her er tydeleg ein ny generasjon komen på bana. Seinare er Peter Støype ein sentral deltakar i baglarkrigane, i Nidaros i 1199 (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:163, 168) og i 1201, ved beleiringi i Tunsberg (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:1285). Sjølv om mange av aktørane opererer med fleire tilnamn (td. er Guðlaugr Stallari den same som Guðlaugr Vali som ogso blir kalla Guðlaugr Gnitaskør), er det ikkje noko sikkert grunnlag for å slå saman Svina-Peter og Peter Støype til ein person. Når ein tek omsyn til alderen, er det meir truleg at det er to personar.

5. Heimfesting av stadnamn

I Indrebøs utgåve av Sverris Saga er det eit stadnamnregister. Dei som er oppførde med gardsnamn, med og utan preposisjon, kan dermed geografisk plasserast meir og mindre sikkert (sjå under). Ogso andre tilnamn som opplyser kvar beraren kjem frå, kan vera eintydige, som Finnr Færeyski. og Eindriði Þrønski. Andre gonger kan det vera tvil, td. kan Gregorius Kíkr ha eit tilnamn som betyr ei bøye av skinn (type 1) eller ”hämtat frå et ortnamn, mannens bostad äller hemort” (Lind 1920/21:199).

5.1 Om Sigurd frå Saltnes og brørne hans

Krag skriv at Sigurd fra Saltnes ”formodentlig var fra Færøyene” (2005:58). Det var han ”formodentleg” ikkje, i stadnamnregisteret i Sverris Saga står det at garden Saltnes er i Buvik sokn i Sør-Trøndelag (Indrebø 1920 [1981]:210). Namnet Saltnes finst godt nok ogso på Færøyane (på Eysturoy), men dette er ei nybygd frå 1800-talet.⁸ Som bustadnamn (og mogleg persontilnamn av det) er dette for ungt. Gardsnamnet Saltnes i Trøndelag har derimot fleire mellomalderbelegg (sjå Rygh: Norske Gaardnavne 14:314).⁹ Dessutan er Sigurd frå Saltnes og dei to brørne hans allereie omtalte i Heimskringla, som fylgjesmenn til Øystein Møyla. I Soga om Magnus Erlingsson står det: ”Først på vinteren for dei ut til byen, og da kom Jon Kjetling og Sigurd og Vilhjalm, sønene til Gudrun frå Saltnes, til dei” (HK:354). I margen står ein note om at Saltnes er i Buvik i Sør-Trøndelag. I Sverre-soga i kap. 28 står det at ”Sigurd av Saltnes og Jon Kjetling, bror hans, fall i fjøra. Viljalm, bror deira, heldt med eit skip utmed åsen og framom neset; men bymennene sette etter han, han

⁸ Opplysning stadfest i e-post frå Eivind Weyhe, Føroyamálsdeildin, Tórshavn, 19/5-05.

⁹ Norske Gaardnavne er tilgjengeleg på internett, sjå http://www.dokpro.uio.no/rygh_ng/rygh_felt.html.

sprang i land og fall der i fjøra” (Koht 1967:44). Dei tre brørne er altso nemnde som brør både i Heimskringla og i Sverresoga, og i Heimskringla er jamvel mor deira namngjevi. Dei var med på birkebeinarsida før nokon i den flokken kunne ha høyrte tale om kongsemnet Sverre. Etter dette me må kunna konkludera med at Sigurd frå Saltnes ikkje var frå Færøyene. Alt talar for at han var trønder.¹⁰

5.2 Andre gardsnamn og områdenamn

Trønderar er ogso mange av dei andre med stadnamn som tilnamn. Størstedelen av toponymi i tilnamn av type 2 er nemnde i stadnamnregisteret til Indrebø. Det gjeld alle dei som står med preposisjon, og tre av dei utan preposisjon (Efja, Steig og Vík). To av preposisjonleddi er oppførde utan heimfesting (i Heitu og i Vita). Det finst eit par områdenamn (Bótolfr ór Fjørðum, Knútr af Þelamørk), fleire øynamn (Ísákr í Fólskn, Brynjólfr í Mjòlu, Guthormr í Mjòlu, Vilhjalmr af Torgum og Erlingr í Þjóttu) og eitt bynamn (Ragnhildr í Konungahelli). Elles er det gardsnamn, og dei som er heimfeste, er alle knytte til berarane, bortsett frå Vík. I stadnamnregisteret er det vist til bygdenamnet i Sogn, medan namneberaren Þjóðolfr Vík kan ha tilnamnet sitt frå ein av dei mange Vik-gardane. (Vik er namn på 55 matrikkelgardar i 13 fylke, og på fire sokner i tre fylke.) Av dei 25 gardsnamni i Indrebøs register er sju frå Sør-Trøndelag (á Ryn, af Saltnesi, Efja, á Eggju; á Kjarrastøðum, af Ló, à Ystum), i tillegg til det eine øynamnet (Fólskn er Storfosen i Ørlandet prestegjeld), fire frå Møre og Romsdal (ór Angri, á Digrini, af Rjóðum, af Vestnesi) og to frå Hordaland (af Grafdal, af Ænesi). Tilnamnet til Einarr Lygro står nok ikkje i stadnamnregisteret hos Indrebø, han har det i staden i tilnamnsregisteret (1920 [1981]:204). Vestenfor har det som stadnamn, ”Visstnok øen L.” iflg. Finnur Jónsson (1907: 182), mao. Lygra i Nordhordland (NG 11:409). Då er det tre stadnamn frå Hordaland. Det er to gardsnamn frå Nord-Trøndelag (af Laufnesi, af Móðastøðum), to frå Vestfold (af Goðranni, af Manvíkum) og eitt frå Nordland (í Hjòrlaksvík), i tillegg til dei tre øynamni derfrå (sjå over). Det er eitt gardsnamn (á Hváli) frå Sogn og Fjordane i tillegg til landskapsnamnet Fjordane, eitt frå Båhuslen (í Skríksvík) i tillegg til bynamnet Konghelle. Det er eit gardsnamn frå Oppland (Steig), og i tillegg er der to namneberarar med tilnamn som kan tyda på Vågá (Vágadraumr, Vágapungur).¹¹ Det er eitt gardsnamn frå Rogaland (af Randabergi), eitt frå Buskerud (af Vegini), eitt frå Hedmark (af Sástoðum) og eitt frå Østfold (af Þugn).

Namn som manglar i Indrebøs register eller ikkje er heimfesta i det, er Ívarr Elda, Einarr Lygro (begge manglar), Páll í Heitu, Þrándr í Vita (begge utan heimfesting), og Qlru-Kári. Lind har to av dei, Ívarr Elda og Qlru-Kári. Ívarr Elda heimfester han til ”nuvar. gården Elden i Beitstaden” (1920/21:71). I Norske Gaardnavne er det vist til sagatekster ved dette gardsnamnet, men ikkje til Sverre-soga (NG 15:247). Namneberaren i Sverre-soga bur på Systromd i Sogn (sjå ogso Jónsson 1907: 182f.). Qlru-Kári er ”efter nuvar. Orre socken och gård på Jederen” (Lind 1920/21:413). Appellativet *viti* er brukt som stadnamn mange stader i landet, men *heita* er det verre å finna. Preposisjonen tyder på at det er stadnamn.

6. Avrunding

Desse altfor springande synspunkta viser vonleg at namneforrådet i Sverre-soga er eit stort og forvitneleg materiale, som slett ikkje er ferdigdrøfta. Fleire av namni er enno utolka, eller omstridde. Derfor er siste ordet neppe sagt om namneskatten i soga, like lite som om den vidgjetne hovudpersonen.

¹⁰ Kåre Holt har han som trønder i sin romantrilogi om kong Sverre. På dette punktet er fiksjonen truverdig.

¹¹ Slik i Lind 1920/21: 395. Finnur Jónsson har derimot Vágur, Vågan (1907: 191).

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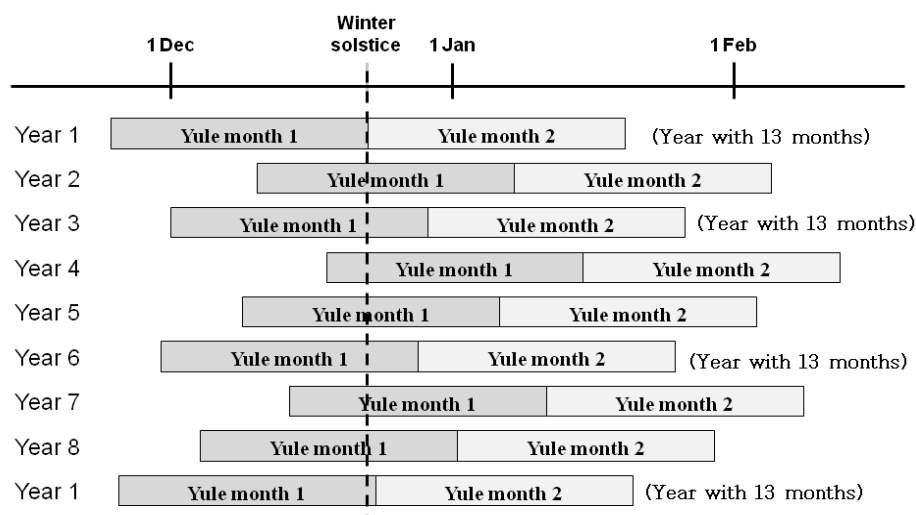
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Time-reckoning, ritual time and the symbolism of numbers in Adam of Bremen's account of the great sacrifice in Old Uppsala.

Andreas Nordberg, Dept. of History of Religions, Stockholm University, Sweden

The calendar we use in the Western world today has its origin in the Roman Empire. It was first introduced by the Emperor Julius Caesar in the year 45 BCE, and, since it became the official calendar of the Roman state, it was later adopted by the emerging Christian Church. The spread of Christianity throughout Europe was thus followed by a new way of reckoning time.

In Scandinavia, before its conversion to Christianity, a very different calendar was in use: a luni-solar calendar based on the cycles of the sun and the moon (for this calendar, see Nordberg 2006). The year was reckoned in accordance to the sun, while the months were lunar months, based on the phases of the moon, most likely from one new moon to the next. A normal year comprised 12 lunar months, but since a lunar month only lasts for about 29.5 days, 12 lunar months cover no more than a period of 354 days, resulting in an annual 11-day shift of the lunar year in relation to the solar year. In practical terms, this means that each year any particular new moon occurs about 11 days earlier than its equivalent of the previous year, and that consequently the lunar month identified with this moon is similarly displaced. But if the months were to begin ever earlier in the year, the winter months would soon appear in the summer, so to compensate for the yearly 11-days shift, a 13th intercalary month was introduced about once every two or three years. The day of departure for the regulations that governed this insertion of an intercalary month was probably the winter solstice. It is also interesting to note that the months that were linked to the winter solstice and which determined when a 13th lunar month would be inserted, seem to have been associated with the pre-Christian Yule-festival (see **fig. 1** below for an approximate visualization).



Several Old Norse sources mention a month called *Jólmánuður*, and according to the calendric book *Rím II*, this month was preceded by a month called *Ýlir* (the name meaning ‘Yule-month’). The shift from *Ýlir* to *Jólmánuður* occurred around the winter solstice (*Rím II*, 78, 169). The names of these two months have survived only in literary sources from the beginning of the 13th century, but it is likely that *Ýlir* and *Jólmánuður* were previously two lunar months in the pre-Christian calendar. Similar pairs of Yule-months are testified among other

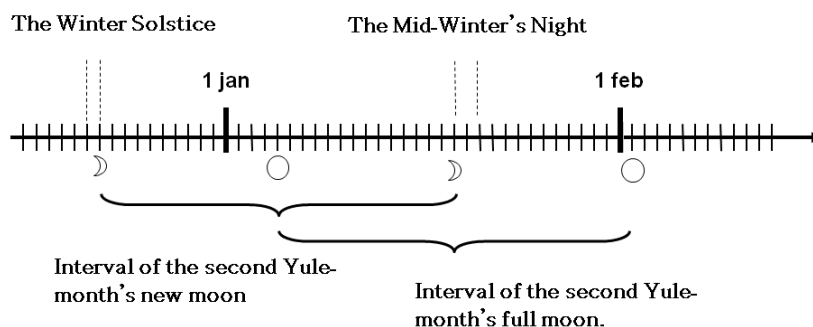
Germanic peoples as well. In his book *De Temporum Ratione* (ch. XV), dated to the year 726 AD, Beda Venerabilis offers some detailed information about the time-reckoning among the heathen Anglo-Saxons. According to Bede, time was reckoned in accordance to the cycles of the sun and the moon. The lunar months were linked to the solar year in such a way that two lunar months with the same name *Giuli* (meaning ‘Yule-month’) were attached to the winter solstice (Beda: *Opera de temporibus*, 1943:211 ff.). In a somewhat later English list of months’ names from about 900 AD, this pair of month is called *ærra Geola* and *æftera Geola*, meaning ‘the month before Yule’, and ‘the month after Yule’. These months are said to be equivalent to December and January (for these and other examples, see Nilsson 1920: 293 f; Bosworth & Toller 1954: 424; Simpson & Weiner 1989: 784.). In the Gothic manuscript Codex Ambrosianus from 350 AD, the month of November is called *fruma Jiuleis*, ‘the month before the Yule-month’, which suggests a second Yule-month **Jiuleis* (Streitberg 1908, red.).

Linguistically, with respect to the variations of Gothic, Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse, *Ýlir*, *Giuli*, *Geola* and *Jiuleis* are the same name, denoting lunar months linked to the winter solstice in a luni-solar calendar. This does not mean, of course, that the calendars were exactly the same among the Goths, Anglo-Saxons and pre-Christian Scandinavians. Seeing, however, that the calendar was based on the cycles of the sun and the moon, we can assume that it had a common basic structure. I have discussed this type of luni-solar calendar at length in another forum (Nordberg 2006), and will not go into it much further here. I will just mention that the lunar year was probably regulated in accordance to the solar year in such a way that the first Yule-month was always to extend *over* the period of the winter solstice, which means that the second Yule-month always started with the subsequent new moon *after* the winter solstice. If this is right, and seeing that the lunar year is 11 days shorter than the solar year, it is further probably that the 13th intercalary month was to be inserted in years when the second Yule-month emerged 11 days or less after the winter solstice. Otherwise the second Yule-month of the following year would start before the winter solstice.

It is probable that a calendar similar to this was common in most part of Scandinavia. There must of course have existed several variations in time and space, but as the foundation of the time-reckoning was based on the cycles of the sun and the moon – which do not fluctuate in time and space – one can assume that the basic structure of the luni-solar year might be old as well as widely spread.

Pre-Christian Calendric Festival Cycles

The luni-solar calendar was the basis for the ritual year in Old Norse society, and in the annual festival cycle, there were at least three, but most probably four festivals connected to the four quarters of the year (de Vries 1956: 447 f., Nordberg 2006: 76 ff). The exact time for these festivals was probably governed by the phases of the moon. For example, the pre-Christian Yule-festival was most likely celebrated at the time of the full moon in the second Yule month – that is, at the full moon of the first lunar month following the winter solstice. As the time of the full moon varied in time from one year to the next, so did the time of the Yule festival. The period of the full moon in the second Yule-month approximately coincide with the month of January. One can compare this with Snorri Sturluson’s statement in *Hákonar saga góða* (ch. 13) from the beginning of the 13th century that the pre-Christian Yule festival was celebrated at Mid-winters’s night (*miðsvetrarnótt*, Íslenzk fornrit XXVI, 1979:166). The Mid-winters’s night is in fact just in the middle of the interval of the second Yule month’s full moon. (**fig. 2**).



Interestingly enough, this also corresponds in detail with the account given by the German monk Thietmar of Merseburg in the beginning of the 11th century, that the heathen Danes arranged great festivals “in the month of January” (*mense ianuario*, Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* I:17, cf. Reuter 1934: 485, Nordberg 2006: 106 f.).

Astronomically, the winter solstice coincides with any given phase of the moon with approximate certainty in an eight year cycle (see **fig. 1**). It is probable that, in at least some parts of pre-Christian Scandinavia, this eight year period was the basis for an eight year long ritual cycle. Some sources concerning Old Norse religion inform us of great sacrifices that occurred once “every nine years”. The German Magister Adam of Bremen, for example, gives an account of some extraordinary festivals which took place in Uppsala “every nine years” (*post novem annos*, Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis* IV:27, 1917:259). Similarly, Thietmar of Merseburg states that the major pre-Christian festival in Lejre was held “every nine years” (*post ix annos*, Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* I:17). According to some semi-mythical traditions retold in *Flateyrbók* and *Historia Norwegiae*, the Swedish king Aun sacrificed one of his sons to the god Othin in a festival held in Uppsala “every nine years”.¹

This expression “every nine years” should not, however, be understood as a period comprising nine years, as we commonly use cardinal numbers today. We use an exclusive way of counting numbers, but the expression “every nine years” is inclusive, and comprises what in modern parlance would be a period of eight years. Until recently, this inclusive method of calculation was used in everyday language as well as in church Latin. For example, in the Church’s liturgical calendar, *Octava* “the eighth day” is celebrated after each major commemoration day. In the inclusive way of counting, the eight-day period also includes the feast day that is the basis for *Octava*. But in the exclusive way we use ordinal numbers today, that first day would be excluded. Instead, we would start with the day after the feast date. Today therefore, *Octava* “the eighth day” can actually be said to be celebrated on the seventh following day.

In Old Norse, the same way of inclusive counting can be found. For example, in the Eddic poem *Skírnismál* (st. 21) it is said that eight new rings drip from Odin’s ring *Draupnir* “every nine nights” (*ina níundo hveria nótt*, Edda 1983: 73). This should be counted as one ring per night in an eight-night cycle, since the last night in one cycle is also counted as the first night in the following cycle (Nordberg 2006:82ff.). Even today, this ambiguous use of ordinal numbers is found in archaic expressions such as the Swedish *om åtta dagar*, the English *in eight days* and the German *um acht Tagen*, all of which refer to a week, in cardinal numbers a period of, not eight, but seven days. One can also mention that in English, Epiphany is also called *Twelfth-Day*, while in Swedish Epiphany it is called *trettondagen* ‘the Thirteenth-day’, the explanation of course being that the Swedish expression is inclusive and the English exclusive.

¹ When this episode is retold in *Ynglingasaga* (ch. 25), Snorri states that the sacrifices appeared in cycles of 10 years (*Íslenzk fornrit* XXVI, 1979: 49 f). However, von Eitrem (1927: 247) has shown that this ten year cycle must originally have been a cycle of nine years. von Eitrem’s conclusions is today widely accepted.

Let us now return to the great sacrifices that were said to be held “every nine years”, which with a great deal of probability should be understood as a cycle comprising eight years. This eight year period was most likely identical with the moon’s eight year cycle. This lunar cycle has been used in calendars in several cultures. In ancient Greece, for example, it was called *oktaëteris* and was associated with great festivals (Nilsson 1920: 362 ff., May & Zumpe 2002: 172). The occurrence of major sacrifices “every nine years” in pre-Christian Scandinavia should probably be understood in the same way. As, for example, the major festival in Uppsala took place once “every nine years”, we can assume that the celebrations were held to mark the end of one eight-year cycle and the start of the subsequent one.

Since the sacrifice in Uppsala was associated with an eight year cycle, the eight-year cycle most probably was identical with the eight-year cycle of the moon, and this lunar cycle was the basis for the reckoning of time – it is probable that the sacrifice in Uppsala was itself in some way connected with the reckoning of time and the luni-solar calendar. Some reminiscences of this might still be found in certain calendric rules from the Middle Ages. According to many Swedish sources, the festival in Uppsala was known under the name *Distingen*, the ‘Dis-things’, that is, the Dis-councils (cf. Beckman 1918). It is also stated that the exact date on which Distingen was to begin should always coincide with a certain full moon, called *Distingsfylle*, ‘the full moon of the Dis councils’. Since the Church did not approve of this regulation and tried to have it abolished, we can assume that it was of pre-Christian origin. The Church didn’t succeed however, and the regulation of Distingen in accordance with the full moon continued throughout the Middle Ages. For example, in the year 1555 Olaus Magnus stated that Distingen was to begin at the first full moon following the first new moon after Epiphany (Olaus Magnus IV, ch. 6). In this calendric rule, the starting point for Distingen was a date in the Christian Julian Calendar. But this is almost certainly a medieval modification of a much more ancient pre-Christian calendric rule, stating that the beginning of Distingen was determined by the occurrence of the full moon of a specific lunar month in the luni-solar calendar.

The sacrifice in Uppsala and the pre-Christian festival cycle

The oldest written source concerning the great festival in Uppsala is Adam of Bremen’s *Gesta Hammaburgensis* (IV, 27), written in or a few years after the year 1070. Adam’s account goes as follows:

It is the practice, every nine years, to hold a communal festival in Uppsala for all the provinces of Sueonia. No exemption from this festival is allowed. The kings and the people, communally and separately, send gifts and, most cruel of all, those who have embraced Christianity buy themselves off from these festivals. The sacrifice is performed thus: nine head of every living male creature are offered [*ex omni animante, quod masculinum est, novem capita offeruntur*], and it is the custom to placate the gods with the blood of these. The bodies are hung up in a grove which stands beside to the temple. This grove is so holy for the heathens that each of the separate trees is believed to be divine because of the death and gore of the objects sacrificed; there dogs and horses hang together with men. One of the Christians told me that he had seen seventy-two [LXXII] bodies hang there together. (Adam of Bremen 1917: 259 f., transl. Turville-Petre 1964: 244.)

In a scholium later added to this text, probably by Adam himself in the year 1080 (Schmeidler 1917: lxvi), it is written:

For nine days [*Novem diebus*] the festivities with sacrifices of this kind are held. Every day they offer one man together with other animals, so that in nine days it makes seventy-two living

things which are sacrificed [*ita ut per IX dies LXXII fiant animalia, quae offeruntur*]. (Adam of Bremen 1917: 260, transl. Turville-Petre 1964: 245).

Much has been written about these paragraphs that will not be rendered here. It should be said, though, that Adam's original manuscript is now lost, but all the passages concerning Uppsala and the festival are found in a transcript from about the year 1100. Many consider this transcript to be a copy of Adam's original manuscript and the text is therefore regarded as more or less representing Adam's own words (Schmeidler 1917: xii f., lii, Jansson 1997: 133 f.). Further, as far as Adam's relevance as a source for the study of pre-Christian religion is concerned, we can say that although Adam never visited Uppsala himself, he most probably got his information from the Danish king Sven Estridsen, who had lived in Uppsala for about 10 years. It is thus probable that Sven Estridsen himself in some way had experienced the festival at least once (Hallencreutz 1984, s. 28).

In the early 13th century, the great festival in Uppsala is again mentioned, this time by the Icelandic Snorri Sturluson, in his *Ólafs saga helga* (ch. 77):

In heathen times in Svithjod, it was an old custom that the most important sacrifice took place at Uppsala in month of Góí [*at góí*]. Then everyone should sacrifice for peace and victory to the king. People from all the lands controlled by the Svear came there. The Thing of all the Svear [*þing allra svía*], was also held there. There was also a major market place and a fair, and the meetings for trading continued for a week [*markaðr ok kaupstefna ok stóð viku*]. After Christianity was introduced into Svithjod, the Law-Things and fairs continued to be held there as before. (Íslensk fornrit XXVII, 1945:109).

Most scholars agree that the two festivals mentioned by Adam and Snorri, are in fact one and the same – the great festival in later sources known as Distingen. But several scholars also have pointed to two peculiar discrepancies in time, in the accounts given by Adam and Snorri. Firstly, according to Adam, the festival was held at the time of the vernal equinox while Snorri places it in the month of Góí. In Iceland, in the 13th Century, the month of Góí approximately began in the middle of February and lasted to the middle of March in the Julian Calendar, that is, ending just before the vernal equinox. But if we consider that the month of Góí was actually a lunar month in the pre-Christian calendar, we find that there actually is no contradiction. In the luni-solar calendar, Góí was the third lunar month after the winter solstice, which means that the full moon of Góí appeared in the beginning of March at the earliest and in the beginning of April at the latest. In Adam's days, the time of the vernal equinox was approximately the 15th of March – that is, just in the middle of the period of Góí's full moon (compare **fig. 2**, Nordberg 2006: 107 ff.).

Secondly, many have pointed to the fact that, according to Adam, the festival in Uppsala was held over a period of nine days, while Snorri states that the market in Uppsala only lasted for seven days – two days less than in Adam's account. How can this be explained? Some clues, I believe, are to be found in the early medieval Swedish sources concerning the Disting's market. In these sources, the gathering is always called *Distingen*, the suffix telling us that the word *ting* 'council' is in its plural form *tingen*, the name thus meaning 'the Dis-councils'. This would mean that there must have been at least two councils linked to Distingen. Parallels to this can be found in other Swedish combined market and council gatherings, such as Samtingen in Strängnäs in the province of Södermanland in Sweden, and Fastingen at Tingvalla in the province of Värmland (Hjärne 1952: 162 ff.). The two days of council at Distingen is further confirmed by a passage in the Swedish provincial law Upplandslagen. Concerning Distingen it is stated that "The Dis-Thing's peace [*distingsfriþer*] begins on Dis-

Thing's Day [*distingsdag*], and stands between two market Things". (Uplands-Lagen, 1834: 274 f.).

The "Dis-Thing's peace" was a sacred and social peace that was to be upheld during the time of the meeting (Palme 1959). The "Dis-Thing's day" was the first day of Distingen, the day of the Disting's full moon. Thus, Distingen was first opened with one introductory council at which the Dis-thing's peace was announced, and on the last day it was closed at a second council, at which the Dis-Thing's peace was revoked (Hjärne 1952: 167 ff., Granlund 1958: 112 f.). An organizing of the councils and market similar to this can be found in, for example, Samtingen in Södermanland (Södermanna-Lagen tingsbalk xi, 1838: 182), and Jamtamot in the province of Jämtland in Sweden. Jamtamot started with an introductory *Motsting*, the name meaning 'meeting council (maybe 'market council')', and ended with a *Lyktarting*, meaning a 'closing council' (Holm 2000: 77 ff.).

In my view, these two days of councils announcing and revoking the market peace can explain the differences of the amount of days in the accounts given by Adam and Snorri. Snorri is describing the actual market that lasted for seven days. But that period was preceded by one council-day and followed by another. This brings the total number of days to $1+7+1$, that is, to nine days as a whole, which is the exact number of days stated by Adam (Nordberg 2006: 90 ff.).

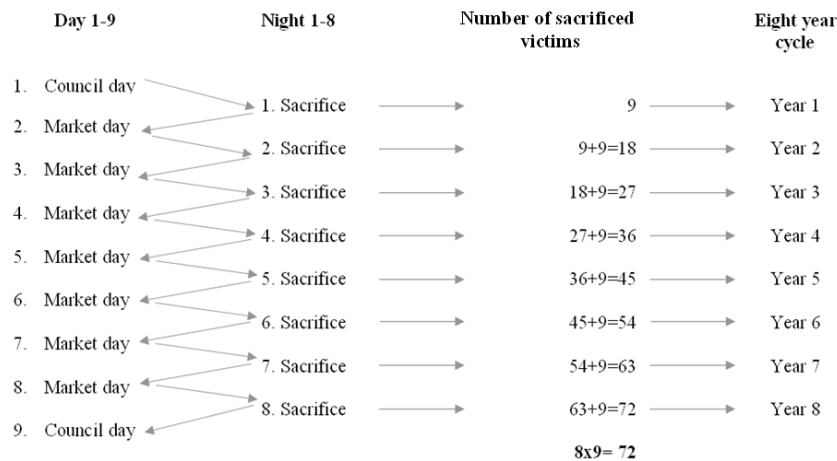
But the enigmas in Adam's account do not end with this. We are faced with yet another conundrum concerning numbers. Adam states that: 1) The gathering lasted for nine days, 2) nine of every species were sacrificed, 3) the numbers sacrificed totalled 72. This, as some researchers suggested, could mean that eight individuals were sacrificed each day for nine days, since 8×9 is 72 (Wagner 1980; Hallencreutz 1984: 253). But this would be somewhat incongruous. From a perspective of comparative religion, as well as from an Old Norse point of view – the number nine being a sacred number – it is much more plausible that nine individuals were sacrificed each day. But nine sacrifices each day for nine days would give a total of 81 sacrifices, not 72 as in Adam's account. This problem has caused certain scholars to conclude that Adam made a miscalculation, that is, that he got 9×9 to equal 72 when in fact 81 individuals were sacrificed over nine days (Wessén 1924: 193 f.). Others have suggested that the number 72 only refers to the amount of sacrificed animals, to which also should be added nine humans (de Vries 1956: 420 n. 4.). And still another theory has been presented, that nine sacrifices were being carried out each day, but that the gathering actually only lasted for eight days (Hultgård 1997: 31, 36, 38; Sundqvist 2002: 133).

I am convinced that the gathering lasted for nine days, but I would postulate that it is not certain that sacrifices were made on *all* of these nine days or, for that matter, that the sacrifices took place during the daytime at all. As a matter of fact, I feel we can reasonably argue that the sacrificial acts were not held in daytime, but in the evening, or at night.

Firstly, many sources of Old Norse religion show that religious gatherings were mainly held in the evening and at night (cf. Nordberg 2006: 94). In the case of Distingen this is further confirmed by the fact that the opening of Distingen coincided with the rising of a full moon. Secondly, Adam states that everyone present at Distingen must take part in the sacrifices. This seems to be a credible statement, since similar regulations concerning other festivals are mentioned in other sources (cf. de Vries 1956: 420 f.). Regarding the sacrifices in Uppsala, this would have been practically impossible if the market was in full swing at the same time as the cultic activities were being held. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that the religious events most likely took place during the evenings and into the night after the daytime market trading was over.

Now, in what way is this important for the issue of numbers of sacrifices in Uppsala? Well, if the sacrifices took place at night, it is actually reasonable to assume that the ceremonies only lasted for eight nights. A sacrifice would be held at night after the first council-day,

when the ceremonial Dis-thing's peace had been announced, and then on seven consecutive nights after each market day. But on the ninth day – the day of the second council – the Dis-thing's peace was revoked, and it is highly unlikely that any extensive religious ceremonies took place in the evening after the official closing of Distingen. This, in my view, strongly indicates that the gathering lasted for a total of nine days, while the sacrifices took place during eight evenings and nights (**fig. 3**).



Now, if this suggestion is right, what about the sacred number nine? Well, actually the religious symbolism of the number nine in accordance to the amount of nights with cultic activities is still present, since we can assume that the religious “results” or “cosmic consequences” of the sacrifices were expected to come into force when the series of rituals was completed – this, of course, being during the ninth night. This also provides us with an explanation for the amount of sacrificial victims in Uppsala. If nine individuals were sacrificed on each of the eight nights, the total number of sacrificial victims would be 72 – which is precisely the number given by Adam.

Further, seeing that the eight-year cycle of Distingen was connected to the reckoning of time, one additional suggestion can be made. It is not unlikely that each one of the eight sacrificial nights represented a year in the moon's eight-year cycle. If so, the eight different species might have been sacrificed for each one of the eight coming years. This would not only link the sacrifice to the reckoning of time, but also to time as such, and the continued renewal of time and the regeneration of the cosmos.

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Imagining the Kalmar union

Nordic politics as viewed from a late 15th-century Icelandic manuscript

Hans Jacob Orning, Historical institute, University college Volda, Norway

The late middle ages have been considered as a period of decay in Icelandic history. Partly this is due to Iceland's loss of independence in 1262/64, and its increasingly peripheral political position as Norway became more oriented towards south-eastern Scandinavian politics after 1319. The decline has also been explained in literary terms, as the writing of Icelandic sagas came to a halt in the 15th century. Now literary production consisted in copying and editing earlier sagas, and in the writing of sagas which have been considered to be of lesser literary value. The *fornaldarsögur* with themes from a mythological Nordic past, and the *fornsögur suðrlanda*, also dealing with a distant – but non-Nordic – past, have not fared well with modern scholars. Finnur Jónsson's sweeping verdict on Haukr Erlendsson – the compiler of *Hauksbók* from the early 14th century – and his contemporaries, have been shared by many others: “disses stærke side var overhovedet hverken kritik eller originalitet, derimod var lysten til at samle alt muligt, afskrive og kompilere desto mere framtrædende.” (Finnur Jónsson: CXXXVII) On the *fornsögur suðrlanda* he hardly commented, because they attested to the backwardness of the Icelanders: “at den slags overhovedet kunde mere, forstås ud fra det kulturstandpunkt, man stod på og det isolerede liv, man førte i det hele.” (Finnur Jónsson 1924: 100; cf. Hermann Pálsson 1968: 14)

In the last decades this skepticism has been countered, and *fornaldarsögur* and *fornsögur suðrlanda* have received more attention as works which must be analysed on their own premises, rather than as signs of a decaying tradition.¹ Moreover, with the rise of “New Philology”, interest has turned away from the quest for originals towards studying the late medieval manuscript culture in its own right.² The 15th century was a golden age for manuscript production in Icelandic history. Finally, the idea of the Icelandic culture as an insulated peasant culture has been challenged, as the saga writing and editing was an aristocratic and clerical endeavor, which testifies to contacts with European milieus (Mitchell 1991: 121 ff; Torfi H. Tulinius 2002: 44 ff). Shaun Hughes sums up the new attitude to the late middle ages succinctly: “the period 1300–1700 was one of literary vigour and innovation” (Hughes 2005: 219). However, there have been relatively few attempts at utilising *fornaldarsögur* and *fornsögur suðrlanda* as historical remnants of late medieval culture. Partly this is a result of lack of interest among historians for these sources, as this movement has been led primarily by philologists and literary historians. Partly it must be regarded as a consequence of the persistent focus on the high middle ages, and a concomitant wish to push the sagas as far back in time as possible.

In the following I shall take one late medieval Icelandic manuscript as a point of departure for analysing the contemporary Nordic political culture. The manuscript I have chosen is AM 343a 4to. It is a voluminous manuscript consisting of nine *fornaldarsögur*, five *fornsögur suðrlanda*, as well as a last “ævintyri”, although the division between the genres is not clear-

¹ *Fornaldarsögur* were the theme at the *Fourth International Saga Conference* in Munich 1979. However, it is only the last ten years that interest has increased markedly, with two big conferences: Á. Jakobsson et al 2003; *Thirteenth International Saga Conference*, Durham and York in 2006.

² Cf. the ongoing project at the University of Oslo: “Translation, Transmission and Transformation. Old Norse Romantic Fiction and Scandinavian Vernacular Literacy 1200–1500”, led by Karl-Gunnar Johansson (<http://www.hf.uio.no/iln/forskning/forskergrupper/norron/prosjekter/TTT/index.html>).

cut.³ It was written by one hand, but it cannot be dated precisely, and its compiler is unknown. Recently, however, Christopher Sanders has argued that AM 343a was produced at Möðruvellir *fram*, a church-farm in Eyjafjörður nearby the Benedictine monastery of Munkaþverá (Sanders 2000: 41 ff). His argument is that one main hand in Holm Perg 7 fol. can be found in parts of – or possibly most of – AM 343a. This hand also appears in a diploma from 1461. To this milieu at Möðruvellir *fram* can also be attributed AM 81a fol. containing the contemporary Norwegian king’s sagas, and AM 243a fol. with *Konungs skuggsiá*. In this paper I shall focus on the manuscript AM 343a, but in the conclusion I will return to this broader historical and literary context at Möðruvellir *fram*.

Using sources as remnants of their context of production is by itself an uncontroversial historical method (Kjeldstadli 1992: 162 ff). Nevertheless, there are several methodological problems connected with using a manuscript like AM 343a this way, such as questions regarding the origins and transmission of the sagas in the manuscript, and whether it was compiled according to a conscious plan or more haphazardly. Here the manuscript will be used as one entity, even if the sagas contained in it have differing pre-histories. Another presupposition is that the compiling of sagas was not arbitrary, although it probably did not follow any deliberate political programme. I will also underline that my interpretation is not intended as excluding other readings. To the contrary, it represents one of many possible ways of interpreting this manuscript. Finally, the focus will not be on authorial intentions or on references to contemporary events, but rather on the largely unconscious “mentality” revealed in the texts. So, what image of Nordic politics does this manuscript give?

The Kalmar union

The Kalmar union between the kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden and Norway forms an important historical backdrop for AM 343a, which can be seen in a variety of ways in the sagas in this manuscript. Firstly, the Nordic orbit was the location of a majority of these sagas. The geography of the sagas cannot be read as accurate descriptions of contemporary geographical ideas, as it is imbued with symbolical and mythological meaning (Sverrir Jakobsson 2005; Radvilavicius 1998). On the other hand, it is not wholly co-incidental where the saga action took place. Many of the sagas centred on the Baltic, which also formed the geographical core of the union. In *Egils saga einhenda*, Russia or Gardaríke (both names are used) was the centre, whereas the two saga protagonists came from Gautland (Götaland) and Hålogaland respectively. Denmark is also mentioned in this saga. Sweden was the centre of action in *Yngvars saga víðförla*, but its neighbouring realm of Gardaríke also played a prominent part. Gardaríke likewise figured prominently in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar*, but here Norway was the other main area, in addition to several other realms, such as Kirjalabotn (Karelia) and Finland. Lastly, Gardaríke was the core area in *Vilmundar saga víðutan*, but here alliances were established with more distant realms such as Galicia and northern areas of more mythological character. Scandinavian countries also provided the centre of action in *Örvar-Odds saga* and *Herrauds saga ok Bósa*. The latter saga had Sweden as centre, but here interaction mostly went northwards, except from plunder expeditions and a single reference to the battle of Brávalla. In *Örvar-Odds saga*, Odd and his companions spent much time in Scandinavia,

³ AM 343a 4to consists of the following sagas: Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns (þb), Samsons saga fagra (SF), Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana (EA), Flóress saga konungs ok sona hans (FK), Vilhjalms saga sjóðs (VS), Yngvars saga víðförla (YV), Ketils saga hæings (KH), Gríms saga loðinkinna (GL), Örvar-Odds saga (OO), Áns saga bogsveigis (AB), Sáluss saga ok Nikanórs (SN), Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar (HE), Herrauds saga ok Bósa (BH), Vilmundar saga víðutan (VV), and lastly Meistara Perus saga (MP). The latter saga is an “ævintýri”. SF, FK, VS, SN and VV are classified as fornsögur suðurlanda, but SF and VV deal with the Nordic and northern areas. The remaining sagas are fornaldarsögur.

and had quarter from the kings of Denmark, Gautland and Sweden. Some sagas deviated from this pattern by focusing either on Norway or parts of it,⁴ or on southern lands – as in the typical fornsögur suðurlanda.⁵

Secondly, the backdrop of the Kalmar union can be deduced from the way in which the Nordic interplay was depicted in the sagas in AM 343a. In these descriptions rivalries between Nordic kingdoms were usually concealed or downgraded. This is characteristic of *Örvar-Odds saga*, where Scandinavia was presented as a battleground for rivalling Viking bands, and it was honour and reputation, and not political rewards, that formed the basis for fighting. Considering that Odd's companions, with Grane/Odin as the only exception, held land of kings, one should expect that there could be some political considerations directing the course of fighting. These realms could possibly constitute rivalling kingdoms using Vikings like Odd's companions in their service in order to gain and secure power. Yet the saga never explores this connection further. If there was more to these fights than honour, the saga hardly gives any clue to this.⁶

The hypothesis that the existence of the Kalmar union put a lid on descriptions of intra-Nordic rivalries is strengthened if we consider the two sagas where such rivalries were most overtly described. *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar* dealt with the implications of the Norwegian king Eysteinn's slaying of the king of Gardaríke and subsequent appropriation of his realm. Although it was never stated outright, this act was not considered legitimate. Firstly, Hálfðan gave up seeking revenge for his father's death when he had the opportunity to do it. Secondly, he then refused to take over as king of Gardaríke, as he did not consider himself a legitimate heir. Finally, the former queen of Gardaríke was forgiven for her involvement in Eysteinn's death, and resumed her dignity when she was married to the former earl of Gardaríke, Skuli – who was also king Eysteinn's murderer. The saga also underlined the fair character of the queen's brother Sigmund. All this served to bolster the view that a regular conquest of neighbouring territories in the Baltic was not legitimate. As such, *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar* sent a strong message that the Nordic kingdoms should respect one another, and that inter-state balance was the guiding principle of this common political sphere. Even if a king had the power to exterminate his rivals, he was not necessarily entitled to do so.

Vilmundar saga víðutan contains a similar message that it was unwise and unfortunate to disregard the balance of power in the Baltic region. Prince Hjarrandi of Gardaríke refused to marry his sister to anyone who could not defeat him in combat, and as he had great military skills, this resulted in that many wooers were badly fared. Yet, instead of praising Hjarrandi's courage and strength, his attitude was condemned as arrogance, demonstrated in the nickname that his watchman earned: “disgust” (uidbiodr). His arrogance was not curbed until he met a stronger opponent in Vilmund. Seen in the perspective of power politics, the reluctance of Gardaríke to marry off princesses attests to an ambitious wish to excel above other kingdoms in the area, but the normative message in the saga was that a too firm refusal of wooers constituted a typical example of arrogance.⁷ The ideal conduct was more modest and less assertive – apparently even of one had sufficient power to back one's arrogance.

⁴ Norway or parts of it constituted the main scene in the three shorter Hrafnista sagas and þb (in SF only the northern areas were mentioned).

⁵ Cf. FK, VS, SN, partly SF and VV. MP is set in an un-named area.

⁶ Once it was acknowledged that the prospect of gaining material resources served a motive for fighting, but the saga never directs the attention towards any political motifs for fighting in Scandinavia. My interpretation of *Örvar-Odds saga* differs markedly from Torfi Tulinius' results (2002: 159 ff). This partly has to do with that Torfi uses the earlier manuscript Holm Perg 7 4to.

⁷ Nothing is specified about the wooers approaching Gullbra in the first part of the saga. Gullbra's sister Soley was wooed by Ulf ilt-eitt and Asgaut from Aldeigjuborg. In the latter part of the saga, Buris from Blaukamanland was turned down, while Gudfrey from Galicia was accepted. Fathers who refused to marry their daugh-

The disapproval of the sagas in AM 343a of kings who tried to disturb or surpass the balance of power can be taken a step further as an indication that the idea of a so-called “state system” had repercussions in these sagas. The principle of the state system gained increasing acceptance as a principle for regulating the relations between European states in the late middle ages. It implied that Europe was viewed as constituting a separate unity, consisting of sovereign states which together formed a system of balances and checks. This unity was based on religious faith, but its foundation was increasingly conceived as a secular one. Moreover, it was characterised by common norms for conducting war and diplomacy, and cross-cutting ties of intermarriage (Jones 1987; Mann 1986; Tilly 1992). The state system formed the basis of the political culture in the Nordic region in the sagas of AM 343a. In fornsögur sudrlanda such as *Flóress saga konungs*, *Vilhjalms saga sjóðs* and *Sáluss saga ok Nikanórs* this principle was refined with the Mediterranean as the focal point. Realms around the Mediterranean could fight fiercely against one another, but if confronted with an external enemy threatening this system they were quick to join forces.

External threats

The compiler of AM 343a was situated in Iceland, at the outskirts of the Nordic sphere, and thus watched the Kalmar union from a distance – or from a peripheral perspective. This might possibly be one reason why it was the relation with the periphery, and not the Nordic interplay, which furnished the main plot in the majority of these sagas. To simplify, sagas of these genres normally started with a hero bringing centre and periphery into contact, which after some conflicts resulted in the establishment of a settlement between the areas, often through intermarriage.⁸ The peripheries were most often situated in the north, in the land of giants or other monsters,⁹ but sometimes they could be situated in the east, although the division between northern and eastern realms is not always very clear-cut.¹⁰

This threat from the periphery can shed additional light on why it was so important to avoid intra-Nordic rivalries. Previously we saw that the slaying of the king of Gardaríke was implicitly denounced in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar* as an illegitimate act. However, an underlying cause for this was that it put the Nordic kingdoms in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis external aggressors. This can be seen from that the first thing that happened afterwards was that internal tension flared within the Norwegian realm, caused by the discontent of king Eysteinn’s supporter Ulfkell. The tension grew into open hostility when Eysteinn died, and his young son Hálfðan took over. Ulfkell’s actions are depicted in an unusually negative tone in the saga, but there is no doubt that he had a wide fund of resources to draw on, which made him a mighty opponent. He had a power base in Norway, and had rightfully obtained an earldom in Gardaríke, and furthermore gained privileged access to the king of Bjarmeland through his brother. The result of this threat was that Norway and Gardaríke joined forces. This was no small matter, as it presupposed that Hálfðan abstained from vengeance by forgiving his father’s murderer. His will to do so attests to the strength of the opponents. The final message of the saga was that the united dynasty of Norway and Gardaríke controlled the Nordic realm, but the sustained determination and strength of the opposition even after the defeat

ters to prosperous wooers were acting too haughtily also appear in YV, OO, FK and SN.

⁸ A structural approach to sagas has been pursued by many scholars, such as Theodore M. Andersson, Joseph Harris, and Marianne E. Kalinke. Concerning these genres, attempts at determining the structure have been undertaken by Matthew Driscoll (2005: 199 ff) for fornsögur suðrlanda, and Hermann Pálsson & Paul Edwards 1971: 38 ff) and Stephen Mitchell (1991: 25 ff) for fornaldarsögur.

⁹ This is the case in þb, SF, EA, KH, GL, OO, HE, BH and VV.

¹⁰ The periphery was situated in the east in YV, OO and HE. Particularly in HE and OO the boundaries between the north and the east was blurred. In fornsögur sudrlanda peripheries were mostly situated in the south or east.

of Ulfkell and his allies should make us cautious about accepting this hegemony as undisputed.

This largely non-mentioned or under-communicated threat from the peripheral realms against the Nordic realms is a common feature in several other sagas in AM 343a. In *Egils saga einhenda* the vulnerability of the centre was initially acknowledged quite frankly, as king Tryggve invested heavily in defence, and his two daughters were abducted by monsters from the periphery. However, the threat of the periphery gradually diminished after Egil and Asmund managed to make an alliance with the giant Arinnevja, which secured them influence in Jotunheimen. In the final settlement, Arinnevja was integrated through being present and receiving gifts, but not as an equal part, as her kin were evidently not considered worthy marriage partners. Nevertheless, this inferior position is brought into doubt by the grand alliance being formed between Russia and most of the other realms mentioned in the saga, including Tartaria, Gautland and Hålogaland. One might speculate why all these kingdoms should suddenly need such a comprehensive alliance, if it were not as a counter-measure to threats from the periphery. Hence, the settlement of the saga reveals a Nordic strategy directed against the giants, who were for the moment pacified, but who had the potential to create more trouble. However, the saga was unable or unwilling to admit openly this Nordic dependency on the periphery, and the corresponding strength of the periphery.¹¹ In this, the Icelandic compiler shared a bias favouring the centre, a tendency which has been convincingly demonstrated by Margaret Clunies Ross in Old Norse mythology. In her view, the explicit superiority of the gods compared to the giants conceals a more reciprocal relationship, as attested in the numerous intermarriages between gods and giants. She advocates an interactional model instead of a binary one, on grounds that “pressures, imbalances and inequalities of the system were as important as mediated oppositions.” (Clunies Ross 1994: 82)

The Nordic proclivity towards allying and avoiding internal fighting in the sagas of AM 343a can therefore be interpreted as a largely defensive strategy aimed at countering mighty opponents from the periphery. In line with the literary conventions of these sagas, such threats were described as coming from marauding Vikings or monsters and giants of diverse types. However, if we dare take the leap to contemporary historical realities, these figures from the periphery might be viewed as symbolising the external forces that were challenging the Scandinavian kingdoms in the 15th century. Foremost amongst these were the Hanseatic cities, from 1356 organised in the Hanseatic League, which held a virtually monopoly on long-distance trade, and was able to influence and disturb Scandinavian politics to a large degree throughout the late middle ages.¹² However, a more immediate threat in the later 15th century came from the Russian grand dukes, who conquered Novgorod in 1478, making the Baltic an area of outermost strategical significance (Gustavsson 2007: 78). The literary transformation of such contemporary historical problems is maybe most evident in the case of *Yngvars saga víðförla*. Here most scholarly effort has been directed at demonstrating the historical roots of Yngvar’s journey eastwards (Glazyrina 2002; Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2002). However, the saga can also be read as an account of the troubled relations between the Nordic countries and their rivals in the Baltic region, transformed into a hero’s fight with monsters for no other motives than showing individual honour and courage.

¹¹ The vulnerability of the centre was also exposed in the case of Tartaria, which was threatened both from within – in the form of the king’s berserk brothers, and from outside – in the form of two leaders from Blakumannaland.

¹² Other German forces also made their presence felt. The Mecklenburg dynasty was a major player in Nordic dynastic politics in the late 14th century, and the counts of Holstein held leading positions at the royal court for most of the period, partly due to the kings’ indebtedness to them.

Internal threats

Scandinavian unity was not only challenged by external threats, but it was also under stress from internal tensions. For one thing, the king could be evil, as was the case in *Áns saga bogsveigis* and *Meistara Perus saga*, and partly in *Flóress saga konungs* and *Vilmundar saga víðutan*. This did not imply that the sagas took a principal stance against monarchy – the political entities in these sagas were almost without exception kingdoms. Rather, it implied that royal power should be circumscribed and not allowed uncontested hegemony. The main counter-balance in this system was the aristocracy. This is most explicit in the first part of *Yngvars saga víðförla*, which evolved around the latent conflict between Swedish kings and the leading magnate family of the realm. The conflict was sparked off when the Swedish king preferred to marry off his daughter to a king of Gardaríke rather than to the Swedish magnate Áke. Áke then killed the groom and abducted the princess, but the king had his revenge. The king tried to mend the relationship by fostering Áke's son, but in the end the latter rebelled and was outlawed. However, he managed to form an alliance with the daughter of the Swedish king and received a prominent position at court in Gardaríke. A similar pattern developed in the next generation, when Yngvar departed for Gardaríke because he was discontent with the Swedish king, and the same possibly happened to his son Svein.¹³ The implication in the saga was that a king should treat his leading magnates with great care.

Such “anti-royalist” viewpoints could normally not be formulated directly in a genre like the fornaldarsögur, which after all dealt with kings and kingdoms. The result was that tense relations between kings and magnates were often described rather vaguely. This is above all the case in *Örvar-Odds saga*, where Odd's Viking fellows held land from Scandinavian kings, so-called “friðlönd”. The arrangement was probably that the Vikings in return for the land promised to protect the kingdom from other Vikings, though this mercenary aspect is not mentioned.¹⁴ This mechanism can be studied in greater detail in the east and in the British isles. Here Odd and his companions served in both functions, both as plunderers and as guardians of the land. It also emerges clearly in *Egils saga einhenda*, where the two saga protagonists enrolled as mercenaries for the Russian king. One possible reason why such appointments are not mentioned in Scandinavia in *Örvar-Odds saga* is that this would introduce an incompatible frame of reference from which to interpret the struggles in this area. As described in the saga, the Viking bands sought one another out in order to compete for honour in a separate aristocratic public sphere. If the activity of these bands had been related to the efforts of kings to pacify their territories, it would have introduced quite another way of understanding these fights than that which the saga conveyed. One can speculate whether this would have destroyed the essential saga spirit of individual Vikings rivalling for honour. At least *Örvar-Odds saga* had no problems in depicting rivalry among kingdoms in other parts of the world.

Magnates of the 15th century were certainly not fighting in the Viking mode of Örvar-Odd and his companions, but the contemporary audience nonetheless had a fascination for these figures that demands an explanation. Considering the aristocratic milieu in which these sagas

¹³ Svein returned to Sweden, only to depart after two years. The reason for this remains obscure, as he was offered good conditions by the people, but refused on grounds that he had better lands elsewhere – maybe in Gardaríke, whereto he travelled and died shortly afterwards. Svein may have tried to force the Swedish king into accepting him as a co-ruler, as his father earlier had tried in vain.

¹⁴ Odd's companions Hjalmar and Tord were friends/warriors of the Swedish king Lodve, holding land (friðlönd) of him during winter when they were not fighting. Their alliance secured Odd a high position with king Lodve, who gave him five farms. However, with Hjalmar's death, Sweden disappears as a centre, and was replaced by Denmark and Götaland through Odd's new sworn brothers: Gardar and Sirne. Odd stayed one winter with Gardar in Denmark, and after Gardar had been killed he went “home to Götaland” with his only surviving sworn brother Sirne, but he soon became very depressed and left shortly thereafter.

were produced, it is tempting to view this fascination as a sublimation of the wishes of the nobility. The nobles did not oppose the monarchy per se, but as in *Örvar-Odds saga*, they preferred to keep it at an arm's length, and as in *Yngvars saga víðförla* they insisted that the king should treat his magnates honourably. If not – and here the saga definitely took a step towards wishful thinking – the king would suffer the destiny of king Ingjald of Namdalen, who was burnt to death because he would not tolerate that magnates would not obey him blindly. It is tempting to interpret these independent and proud magnates as a literary expression of the “regimen politicum” of the late middle ages – the aristocratic ideal that the king should be kept in check by the Council of the Realm, and that he should employ the indigenous nobility, and not his own – often foreign – favourites, in key positions (Lönnroth 1934). The urge to limit royal power was particularly strong among the Swedish nobles, as they were largely excluded from the royal court in Copenhagen. This resulted in a series of outbreaks from the union, starting with the election of Karl Knutsson Bonde in 1448. According to Erik Opsahl, Karl's campaign in Norway aimed at mobilising the common people throughout the realm (Opsahl 2008: 165). This could possibly have had reverberations in Iceland, due to the contacts with Norway. Yet it is not possible to detect any marked pro-Swedish or anti-Danish attitudes in AM 343a, apart from that Sweden on the whole played a more central role than Denmark in the sagas.

Conclusion

Historians have usually shied away from using fornaldarsögur and fornsögur suðrlanda as sources due to their unhistorical content and adventure-like form. However, as interest in saga studies the last decades has shifted from using sagas as historical accounts towards analysing them as remnants, this objection should no longer be a valid one. The genre requirements of these sagas prevented them from mirroring contemporary conflicts and tensions in a transparent manner. Still, classifying them as escapist literature or pure adventure do not mean that they have no bearing on their contemporary historical context. As I have tried to demonstrate, also wishes and dreams can reveal something about reality, and the adventurous form of the sagas does not preclude that these narratives can be interpreted more politically. Compared to Icelandic sagas and king's sagas, these genres moreover offer some advantages. First, their topic was so distant that it gave their writers full freedom in how to present the past – whereas writing on recent history could put constraints on what to present due to the audience's historical memory (Mundal 2003; Hall 2005). Second, these legendary sagas are mostly free of the “proto-nationalistic” bias which characterise many Icelandic and king's sagas. Only in *Gríms saga loðinkinna* and *Áns saga bogsveigis* do we find traces of an imminent “master narrative” leading up to Icelandic settlement viz. Norwegian unification.¹⁵ Otherwise, the fornaldarsögur seem to focus on a shared Nordic identity, and their main message was that a regional balance of power should prevail, and that it was inappropriate to engage in intra-Nordic fighting. This indicates that Iceland's loss of independence in 1262/64 was not such a catastrophic blow as modern historians are prone to think. Rather, it implied the substitution of one identity with another. The new identity was a Nordic one – and partly even a European one, as evidenced in the combination in the fornsögur suðrlanda of indigenous form (resembling fornaldarsögur) and foreign content (from the European world of chivalry and legend).

However, the establishment of the Kalmar union did not put an end to Nordic rivalry, but it should rather be viewed as a fragile compromise. The sagas in AM 343a – despite their core

¹⁵ GL traced the lineage of Icelanders back to the Hrafnista men, while in AB the imminent Norwegian unification was forecasted. In OO, to the contrary, we find no traces of posterior visions, and here Norway is usually referred to as a location of battles. The intense activity along the coast from eastern Norway to Zealand could be read as a symbolic parallel to the struggle for influence going on in the late middle ages in this area.

bias – shed light on this precariousness. In the idiom of the *fornaldarsögur* the external threats had the form of monsters and giants, whereas the internal tensions were aroused by independent warring chieftains. If we take the liberty – which we should do as historians, but which nevertheless implies a leap from the domain of truth to the one of probabilities – to “translate” the monsters and warriors of the *fornaldarsögur* into contemporary figures, these figures can be viewed as symbols of German and Russian forces, and noble fractions respectively. Accordingly, the sagas in AM 343a can be read as an interpretation of how the Kalmar union was ridden by internal tensions created by the effort of the nobility to maintain decentralisation and a politics of exclusion towards foreigners and newcomers in important offices, as well as by the external threats formed by the Hanseatic League and other powers. I do not claim that this image of the Nordic interplay in is any kind of direct reflection of contemporary political reality, but it represents one interpretation of it.

My final point is that analyses of Icelandic saga manuscripts as remnants can help counteracting the notion that Iceland was a remote island at the outskirts of Scandinavia, where cultural impulses hardly reached, and where the saga production reflected an insular spirit which grew progressively more isolated. 15th-century Iceland was experiencing a boom in fish exports, and in the latter part of the century Hanseatic and English merchants clashed violently with one another, as well as with the representatives of the Danish crown (Gunnar Karlsson 2000: 118 ff). Echoes of such rivalries can be viewed in AM 343a, and if we expand the horizon to include other manuscripts produced at Möðruvellir *fram* in the same period, this picture becomes even more nuanced and complicated. Maybe we can see traces in this place of a cultural and even political tug-of-war between a “Norwegian” camp (AM 81a and 243 fol. with king’s sagas and mirrors), a European one (Holm Perg 7 with *riddarasögur* and *fornsögur suðrlanda*), and an intermediate Nordic one (AM 343a)? These compilations should definitely be read as interpretations of contemporary political conditions produced by a well-informed elite, which thematised political issues of the day through lenses which were surely not transparent, but by no means impenetrable.

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Runic Literacy and Viking-age Orality

Rune Palm, Dept. of Scandinavian Languages, Stockholm University, Sweden

The Viking-age society is considered to be basically an oral one. In this oral setting, however, the rune stone appears as a written source. The oral parts of an inscription can e.g. be quotes, direct addresses to the reader, and reference to the 1st person. The whet stone of slate, found in Sigtuna (U Fv1984;257) carries an inscription that begins: *Þa hœyrir þu hrafnna gialla* [...] “Then you hear the ravens shriek [...]”.¹ It has been dated 1050–1200, so it is from the late Viking age or the early Middle ages. In Cleasby & Vigfusson (1957) there are two meanings of *heyra*, ‘hear’ and ‘hearken’, and the inscription supposes an oral setting. You can raise objections to this inscription, partly because it has been considered as a fake (Strid 1993), and partly because it is a charm of sorts. Another inscription with the verb *heyra* is on an object of horn dated to the beginning of the 12th century, possibly a tuning-key (U NOR2000;27A), *Hœyrr þu hværr þetta giærði* “Hear you who made this”. A completely different context has the verb *raða* as in *Rað þu* “Read” in Hovgården, Uppland (U 11) or *Hværr sum runum raðr* [...] “Whoever reads runes ...” In Hammarby church (U Fv1959;196). Here the written text is focused.

But there may be other ways to trace Viking-age orality, such as poetry, stories and magical incantations. The focus of my contribution to the conference is whether it is possible to trace orality in the written text of the period and how this can be done. However, I shall not go into the intricacies of the debate on orality and literacy (see e.g. Goody 1977).

The runic inscription (U 175) in Lagnö, Aspö parish in Uppland, has a final addition: **sant iaR * þet * sum sakat uaR * nuk * sum * huat * uaR * þet**, *Sant iar þæt sum sagat var ok sum hugat var þæt* “It is true that which was said and which was intended”. The phrase *satt er þat* “that is true” occurs in many Íslendinga sögur, as in Fljótsdœla when a woman says a sentence to provoke Gunnar “*Satt er þat er mælt er at eigi má mann sjá, hver hvergi er.*” That is true as it is said that you cannot see a man, where there is not one.” *Þet er sant* finishes a late medieval inscription (G 331) in the plaster of the tower chamber in the church at Bunge, Gotland. The truth is that *Guð, hann ier goðer* “God, he is good”.

The first riddle of the stone at Rök in Östergötland (Ög 136), after the initial commemorative text, is started with the phrase *Sagum mogminni* “Let us say the tale of the son”, or *mugminni* “people’s tale”. The other three are started with *sagum annart*, *tolfta*, and *þrettanda* respectively. Finally the carver probably states *Nú’k minni með öllu segi* “Now I say the tales in full”. According to Cleasby & Vigfusson, the verb *segja* has several meanings I. *to tell, report*; II. *to say, pronounce, declare*; III. *to speak, talk*, and IV. *to signify, mean*. Whether this is to be considered an oral riddle can be seriously debated. Regardless of the meaning of **mukmini**, the fact that several of the *minni*’s have been carved in different ciphers suggests that they were not everyday communication (see for instance Ralph 2007, Lönnroth 2009). It is therefore safer to look closer at the more common or normal formulæ, the sponsor formula, the prayer, the biographical addition, and the carver’s signature.

The sponsor formula

An almost obligatory text of the Viking-age inscription is the formula in which the sponsor or sponsors stated the fact that he, she or they erected or had the stone erected or the inscription carved in memory of someone. A typical example can be given by the inscription at Vårdsberg church, Östergötland (Ög 11): *Øystæinn resti sten þenna æftir Þori, faður sinn*. It is, in

¹ For easy reference the signs of the inscriptions are given as in Samnordisk runtextdatabas.

fact, a deictic text meant to be read on the rune stone. This fact is stressed further by the stones that were erected by people still alive, as *Jarlabanki*, as in the beginning of the text on the rune stone now at Danderyd church, Uppland (U 127), but probably originally situated at Täby tä, the bridge that Jarlabanki states that he built north of Täby church: *Jarlabanki let ræisa stæina þessa at sik kvikvan* “Jarlabanki had these stones erected in memory of himself still alive”. When Jarlabanki decided on the wording of the inscription, he must have had a future *reader* in mind. It is thus a text meant for reading. Despite the fact that it is not impossible that someone said such a formula aloud, the sponsor formula belongs in a literate society.

The prayer

The prayers of the runic inscriptions come in several varieties. The inscription at Frustuna church, Södermanland (Sö 10), is carved in memory of *Iarl*, the father of three sons. The text ends: *Guð hialpi and hans* “May God help his spirit”. This formula can be prolonged by different additions, for instance *auk salu* “and soul” and *auk Guðs moðir* “and God’s mother”. The fact that God is Christ is stressed by inscriptions where *Kristr*, Christ, was used instead of *Goð*, as in the inscription in Axala in Södermanland (Sö 2): *Hialpi Kristr and hans*. Regardless of the wording, the different prayers were not read by the Vikings, they were spoken out and heard. The runic prayers belong to the oral society, despite the fact that they were carved.

The biographical addition

In *Hákonar saga góða* there is an interesting passage giving information of king Hákon Haraldsson’s burial:

Vinir hans fluttu lík hans norðr á Sæheim á Norðr-Hörðaland ok urpu þar haug mikinn ok lögðu þar í konung með alvæpni sitt ok inn besta búnað sinn, en ekki fé annat. Mæltu þeir svá fyrir grefti hans sem heiðinna manna siðr var til, vísuðu honum til Valhallar. [Chapter 32]

His friends moved his body north to Sæm in North Hordaland and threw up a big mound and laid the king in his full weapon and his best garment, but no other goods. They spoke in front of his grave as the tradition of heathen men was and showed him to Valhall.

Even if Snorri made up this story, it is likely that Viking-age people said something at a funeral, just as today. I think that we can find oral texts written down in the biographical additions in the runic inscriptions. Phrases like *Hann var manna mestr oniðingr* “He was the most unvillainous of men” in the inscription in Transjö, Småland (Sm 5), and *Hann var mildr matar auk malsrisinn* “He was generous with food and eloquent” in the inscription in Gådi, Uppland (U 739), were most likely uttered at funerals. Phrases like *harða goðan dræng* “a very good man” and *boandi bæztr* “the best farmer” have the ring of spoken language. But all biographical additions may not be oral texts. The inscription in Vålsta, Södermanland (Sö 47) has the addition *Hann es grafinn a Gu[tlandi]* “He is buried in Gotland” should be regarded in the same way as the prayer.

The carver’s signature

The signatures like *Þorir hio* in Tjuvstigen, Södermanland (Sö 35) *Øpir risti* in Ed church, Uppland, now Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (U 104), and *En Asmundr Kara sunn markaði* in Järvsta, Gästrikland (Gs 11) definitely belong to the written texts.

Discussion

On the one hand, in all likelihood the sponsor formula and particularly the carver's signature belong in a written discourse, and on the other hand, the prayer and the biographical addition have their origins in an oral discourse. The commemorative inscriptions of the Viking Age, thus, appear as a hybrid of these two. The Inscription of Rök (Ög 136) depicts an oral situation, the reading of riddles, but the commemorative inscription says *Æft Væmoð/Vamoð standa runar þar* "In memory of Væmoð/Vamoð stand these runes." This fact sets the telling of riddles in a written discourse.

The sponsor formula's deictic qualities suggest that it is a text that was meant to be read, and directs us towards another written culture. This written discourse integrates oral discourse, so that the oral discourse is ranged under the written discourse. This is particularly obvious with the prayer. A prayer is something that is said, but if it were a direct copy from oral discourse, the inscription would probably say *Guð hialpi and Iarls*. Through the personal pronoun *hans*, the phrase may be ranged under the written discourse that the sponsor formula establishes, and the same is true for the biographical additions. But this would hold true even in an oral discourse, when a name was introduced, people would refer to that person with a personal pronoun.

The commemorative inscriptions of the Viking Age thus integrate oral discourse into a written discourse. This was not done to represent that something was said, but as a hybrid between the two discourses, where oral phenomena were used, but subordinate to the written discourse. Perhaps there is a difference between the common formulæ and curses or maledictions. The inscription at Glavendrup, Fyn in Denmark (Dr 209) ends *At rati sa værði es stæin þansi ælti eða æft annan dragi*. "May he be a **rati** who damages this stone or drags it (to stand) in memory of another." One way to approach the question of literacy and orality, is to find out what is superordinate and what is subordinate.

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West Slavic toponyms in *Knýtlinga saga*: orthographic adaptations or orthographic mistakes?

Aleksandra Petrulevich, Dept. of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

1. General introduction

The chief shortcoming of Old Icelandic sagas as source material is the enormous time gaps, which divide their creation and the first and survived records. It is never superfluous to repeat that the sagas have survived in copies of copies of copies and there is not a single autograph preserved. This preservation problem, which, to a certain degree, affects any research in the field, has been much discussed especially in historical contexts.

The present paper is based on one of the strata of “foreign” onomastic material preserved in *Knýtlinga saga*, which makes the work closely related to both contact onomastics and saga research. From this interdisciplinary perspective it seems possible to suggest such an approach of working with the name material attested in sagas, which would turn their key disadvantage into their plus.

As it comes from the title, the paper is preoccupied with one of the aspects of contact onomastics – name adaptation, for details see 1.3. This phenomenon, which is rather complex in nature, can be either initial or non-initial. Since in the present context the whole era lies between the assumed time of the name replication and first manuscript attestations, for details see 1.1, and it is obviously not possible to fix this principal “drawback”, one can only hypothesize about what sort of initial adaptations there could have taken place. However since the name material in question is preserved, and preserved in Old Icelandic sagas, i.e. in copies of copies of copies, it provides a good opportunity to study orthographic adaptation of proper names, for details see 2, i.e. to turn to the variety of actual manuscript forms and try to understand the key mechanisms behind the changes of the name forms in sagas.

1.1 *Knýtlinga saga* and relevant mss

Due to structural and stylistic parallels, *Knýtlinga saga* (ca 1260–70) can be called an analogue of *Heimskringla* based on Danish material. It is, therefore, exclusively devoted to the lives of Danish monarchs, from Harald I Gormson to Valdemar II Valdemarsson, as *Heimskringla* – to the lives of Norwegian kings.

According to the traditional philological analysis, the mss containing *Knýtlinga saga* form two distinct traditions, *A* and *B*. The principal difference between the two is that the former contains the “full version” of the saga as we know it, i.e. starting from Harald I Gormson, while the latter starts from chapter 22, i.e. Sven I Haraldsson (SD 1919–1925:ixff.). The *A*-redaction includes 7 complete mss and a number of fragments, while the *B*-redaction comprises 13 complete – from the point of view of the *B*-redaction – mss and some fragments (op. cit.). Among the survived mss, AM 18 fol^x (ca 1700) or *M*, a late copy of the lost Codex Academicus (ca 1300) or *A*, is considered to be the best representative of the *A*-tradition, while AM 180 b fol (ca 1400) or *B*, has the highest level of textual authority in the *B*-tradition (SD 1919–1925:xxif.).

For the purposes of the present paper, I surveyed the relevant mss of *Knýtlinga saga* held by the National library of Sweden, i.e. Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x (1687) and Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x (1682–87), and one more late ms written about the same time, Lbs 222 fol^x (1695–98), which is available on the internet.

The paper ms Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x (124 sheets, *fljótaskript*) or *M^a*, was written by Jón Eggertsson, who worked for Antikvitetskollegium in Stockholm (SD 1919–1925:xix). The ms in question is a combination of *A*- and *B*-traditions and can, thus, be divided into two parts: (1) chap. 1–22 copied from a ms belonging to the *A*-group, and (2) chap. 22–the end copied from some *B*-ms. There is a note on the ms’s third end sheet saying the ms is a copy of a “very old membrane fragment” made in Copenhagen in 1687. The comparative analysis showed however that the note refers exclusively to the second part of the ms, i.e. from chap. 22, which with all certainty is a copy of AM 1005 4to^x (ca 1600–1650) or *W*, rather than some membrane (SD 1919–1925:xixf.). The first part of the ms is in all probability copied from *M* (op. cit.).

Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x (258 sheets, *halvfraktur*) contains the full text of *Knýtlinga saga* in *B*-redaction; it was written by Helgi Ólafsson, who worked as a scribe and a translator of Icelandic mss for Antikvitetskollegium in Stockholm. The ms is a copy of another – now lost – copy of *W* (SD 1919–1925:xxiiiif.).

Lbs 222 fol^x (348 sheets, *halvfraktur*), written by Jón Þórðarson, earlier a priest in Sandar, contains the full *B*-tradition text of the saga (Páll Eggert Ólason 1918:77f.). Judging by textual parallels, the ms is apparently an indirect copy of *W*.

1.2 West Slavic toponyms in *Knýtlinga saga*

In the present paper I am focusing on West Slavic place-names, which represent a relatively thin onomastic layer in *Knýtlinga saga* – only 42 (*A*-redaction) or 40 (*B*-redaction) toponyms in total. The name “West Slavic” does not have anything to do with etymology in the present context. The geographical criterion is chosen to single out the name material in question: although the territories occupied by West Slavic tribes in the early Middle Ages were extremely vast, the contact area between Scandinavians and West Slavs, according to the evidence of *Knýtlinga saga*, was in most cases limited by the southern shores of the Baltic coast, i.e. Pomerania. Thus, the toponyms mentioned in the source in appropriate contexts are considered to be West Slavic.

It is necessary to mention that the problem of the etymology of the place-names in question is quite complex. In the situation of – although now extinct – language contact, the name’s form as a more or less traditional point of departure does not seem sufficient in the sense that a replicated toponym can appear in sources as linguistically completely integrated, i.e. as a place-name coined by the speakers of the target language. E.g. although the toponyms *Burstaborg* (Szczecin), where *bursta* is pl. gen. from *burst*, f., “bristle”, and *Steinsborg* (Kamień Pomorski), where *steins* “stone” is sg. gen. from *steinn*, m., “stone”, seem to be of Old Norse origin, their etymology cannot be established with certainty. In the early German sources the towns in question are called *Stettin* and *Cammin* (in many orthographic variants), i.e. they represent phonological adaptations of Slavic names; the former according to one of the versions comes from *szczęć* “bristly reed-like grass” (Rospond 1984:380), the latter – from *kamień* “a stone” (Rzetelska-Feleszko 1991:13f.). One is, thus, left with at least three possibilities: either the Slavic names were translated in Old Norse, or the Old Norse names were translated in Pomeranian, or the ethnic groups in question coined the corresponding names independently from each other embarking on the prominent landscape features.

1.3 Name adaptation

Name adaptation is the change of the replicated name in the target language both at the replication stage and during its lifetime in the target language onomasticon, on all language levels including both the addition and the omission of the name elements, which occurs in accordance with the rules of the target language system (and the target language onomasticon in

particular) and can be attested either in speech or script. It is a highly subjective individual process at the synchronic level, which implies that any individual can adapt the name to its needs or wishes either in accordance with the rules imposed by the abstract onomasticon or not (on the individuality of name adaptation see e.g. Sandnes 2003:71ff.).

It is necessary to take into account a principal change which happens at the replication stage: when a name is replicated, it becomes a part of target language onomasticon and joins other names available to the name user. From this point on, there is technically no difference between replicated and indigenous names – the question of their origin, which naturally belongs to the “jurisdiction” of etymology, is of no importance or interest when considering the process of further name change. The concept of name adaptation can be, thus, extended to embrace all cases of name change: in this “adaptation to new circumstances” linguistic and extra-linguistic factors play their role, but it is the name-using individual who makes the choice.

West Slavic place-names in Knýtlinga saga is a relatively small group of toponyms, which came into existence, e.g. were replicated into Old Norse or coined anew by Scandinavians, under the influence of the same language contact situation¹. Since the difference between replicated and indigenous names becomes irrelevant after the name has entered the onomasticon of the target language, it is possible to ignore to a certain degree the question of name’s etymology when speaking of name adaptation. Instead I choose to speak of synchronically transparent (a total of 13) and non-transparent names (23) for a name user or a scribe. E.g. toponyms *Ásund* (Jasmund), *á*, f. sg. nom., “river” + *sund*, n. sg. nom. “a strait, narrow passage, channel”; *Burstaborg* (Szczecin), *bursta*, f. pl. gen. from *burst* “bristle”, + *borg*, f. sg. nom. “a wall, fortification, castle”; *Plazminni* (Świnoujście), possibly *pláz*, n. sg. nom. “a place, spot”, + *minni*, n. sg. nom. “the mouth”; *Kotskógr* (Gützkow), *kot*, n. sg. nom. “a cottage, hut, small farm”, + *skógr*, m. sg. nom. “a shaw, wood”; *Rauðstokk(r)* (Rostock), possibly *rauðr*, adj. m. sg. nom. “red”, + *stokkr*, m. sg. nom. “a stock, trunk, block, log of wood”; etc. are transparent, while place-names *Dimin* (Demmin), *Dubbin*, *Stolp* (Stolpe), *Usna* (Usedom), *Voztustu* etc. are non-transparent for an Icelandic scribe in the late 17th c. One can also speak of semi-transparent names (4), i.e. the names, some elements of which are transparent (in the present material – only generics), e.g. *Jóms-borg*, *borg*, f. sg. nom. “a wall, fortification, castle”; *Dimars-brú*, *brú*, f. sg. nom. “a bridge”; *Pólónía-land*, *land*, n. sg. nom. “land, a country”; *Vizmars-höfn*, *höfn*, f. sg. nom. “a harbour”.

2. Orthographic adaptation

The name change, which a researcher can witness, is usually attested in written sources; however the possible individuality of this written change is not always taken into account. At the same time it can in some cases be only a construct of a single scribe, which does not have anything to do with the real change or the change of the name by its authentic users, i.e. those who know both the name and its referent and use the name relatively often, e.g. a person who lives in the neighborhood, where the name referent is situated. Those individuals, who do not have such close bonds with the names in question, e.g. scribes copying strange names as a part of a document, have the opportunity to adapt as well. One can probably say that in the first case the name is a part of the “active onomasticon” of the name user, while in the second case the name belongs to the user’s “passive onomasticon”. Although obviously affected by the same factors, the adaptation in the first and in the second case has different points of de-

¹ There are, of course, exceptions, when the name attested in Knýtlinga – although geographically West Slavic – might be much older than the aforementioned language contact between West Slavs and Scandinavians, e.g. *Ré* (Rügen).

parture: authentic name users, as a rule, embark on the phonological form² of the name, while scribes are limited by the name's orthographic form. Naturally, these groups of name users are destined to use different adaptation types in most cases.

In this respect it can be useful to draw a line between two major situations of interplay between the written sources and the reality. (1) In the first case, which is what most of researchers believe the written sources represent, name material exist in parallel in written and oral tradition. These traditions obviously affect each other, e.g. the change of orthographic form is believed to be motivated by the real change of the name. It should be pointed out here that the concept of oral tradition in this case represents the oral existence of the name in the area the referent of that name is situated. Obviously, even if the name has not preserved the connection with this type of oral tradition, as in (2), see further, it naturally can become a part of oral tradition in the target language/culture. (2) In the second case, the name, which once appears in the written sources, then loses the connection with its oral counterpart in the area the name referent is situated in. Since this name then continues to live its independent written life, its changes do not usually reflect the real changes and are a result of scribe's orthographic adaptations³. I would like to emphasize that orthographic adaptation is typical for, but not limited to the second scenario: the unmotivated name changes can naturally occur even in the situation, when the written sources are supposed to reflect the real change of the name.

I want to underline that although I use the expression "real change", I do not claim that the orthographic adaptation is somewhat less legitimate. Name adaptation is of extremely individual nature; that is why each and every innovation of the name irrespective if it is based on orthography or phonology, is of interest, since it casts new light on the phenomenon in general. From this visual angle, the high variability of Icelandic sagas mentioned above is, therefore, a big plus rather than a minus. It allows one to have a look at individual adaptations in writing.

The main reason behind the choice of West Slavic toponyms in *Knýtlinga* saga as the material is that they suit quite well the purposes of the present paper, i.e. studying late orthographic adaptation. Whatever the origin of the place-names in question might be, they have lost the connection with their oral counterparts long ago. The Icelanders, whose task was to copy the saga in the end of the 17th c. were hardly bilingual, in this case – hardly spoke or understood Pomeranian, and hardly knew any of the toponyms they were working with, which makes the name "transformations" performed by them engendered and at the same time limited by their mental onomasticon, see 2.1.

2.1 Original form

It is quite obvious that an original name from etymological point of view and an original name from the point of view of name adaptation are two different things. The difference lies in the interpretation of the term due to different points of departure. In the first case, there is – in most cases – only one original form, which all other forms descend from, irrespective of the changes the name has undergone during its lifetime, e.g. Pom. **Joma* > O.N. *at Jómi* (Petrulevich 2009). In the second case, the original form is the form, which undergoes adaptation, i.e. the original form can be different for each and every new adaptation. In orthographic adaptation this would mean that the forms in the ms the scribe is copying are the originals he can in principle adapt. E.g. Helgi Ólafsson, the author of *Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x* (*Knýt.*), copied the text from a now lost copy of AM 1005 4to^x (*W*); thus, this lost copy of *W* is his original.

² Obviously, this does not mean that adaptation is limited to the phonological level. The two types of adaptation outlined here can affect different language levels depending on the circumstances.

³ As opposed to oral adaptation.

It should be added that the original – from the point of view of name adaptation – forms are not always preserved, as in the example above. In this case, the only resort a researcher has is to refer to the ms, which is the closest “relative” to the lost one, the copy of which is being studied, i.e. one has to rely on the results of the traditional philological analysis, e.g. in the case with Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, I have to accept the forms attested in *W* as originals for Helgi Ólafsson’s ms. All the adaptations of the name material discovered in the copy are, thus, considered to be the result of the work of the scribe in question, although, obviously, the possibility that the adaptations could have been copied from the lost ms should be taken into account. It should be also added that in principle, names can enter written sources in different forms, which might reflect some oral fluctuations, thus, the relations between different name forms attested in written sources can be far more complex than those outlined above, and the situation needs investigation in each and every case.

2.2 Orthographic adaptation criterion

It is necessary to draw a border between what one can call an example of orthographic adaptation of a name and an example of an orthographic mistake. One can probably suggest the involvement of the name user, in this case – a scribe, into the process as a possible criterion: mistakes are usually made unconsciously, while adaptation implies to a certain degree somewhat conscious efforts. At the same time, name adaptation does not necessarily imply the involvement of the name user’s will, e.g. initial automatic phonological adaptation, which occurs irrespective if the name user wants it or not (Sandnes 2003:329f.). In case of orthographic adaptation the criterion in question does not seem to be sufficient, since the scribe’s “ultimate goal” is not always clear: he could aim either at copying the text as close to the original as possible or at “improving” the original text in his “copy” or, as it is often the case, at combining both of the strategies. It can be, thus, argued that although this type of adaptation does imply the “active” involvement of the scribe, it can sometimes occur as a “byproduct” of copying, when the copyist’s conscious efforts are at their minimum. E.g. as a result of “overgeneralizing”, when a place-name, unknown to the scribe, is replaced with a known one, which resembles the original in its orthographic form: in Lbs 222 fol^x, 84r, Dimin (*W*) appears as Dimun (cf. the names of two Faroe Islands – *Stóra* and *Lítla Dímun*), Parez (*M*) appears as Paris (*W*).

From my point of view, one should consider another criterion when it comes to distinguishing between orthographic adaptation and mistakes, namely the relative synchronic transparency of the adaptation from the point of view of onomasticon and language system in general. In accordance with this criterion, even the name change, which is made by the scribe somewhat unconsciously, is considered to be a case of orthographic adaptation. At the same time, when it comes to name corrections, i.e. undoubtedly conscious acts of name change, which sometimes occur in copies, one should distinguish between those aimed at “improving” the original name within the frames of onomasticon and the language system (in this case in accordance with the criterion in question, i.e. adaptation transparency) and those aimed at bringing the copy into the agreement with the form already used in the ms or with the original document. The second category is not covered by my understanding of orthographic adaptation, since it has another point of departure, e.g. in Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, 234v, Helgi Ólafsson corrected Arkús, the original form in *W*, to Arkún, apparently, in accordance with the forms of the name which he has seen earlier in the text. As for the first one, the following example can be seen as a correction of an original place-name in accordance with the aforementioned criterion: the place-name Tripipen (*M*), Tilbipen in *W*, is interpreted as *til Bipen*⁴ in all the sur-

⁴ It should be added that declension of non-transparent and even transparent names perceived as foreign, can be problematic. The preposition *til* takes only gen. and, thus, *Bipen* could be perceived as a genitive form, although

veyed mss, cf. Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x, [122v] 138v, til bipenn, Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, 255v, til(-)Bipen, Lbs 222 fol^x, 88r, til Bipen.

Thus, the deviations from the original form, which are transparent from the point of view of onomasticon and the language system, are considered to be examples of orthographic adaptation, e.g. til Steinborgar (*W*) – Lbs 222 fol^x, 86r, til Steins borgar; Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, 244v, til Steins [line shift] Borgar, where the compound name changed its model from specific in nom. + generic to specific in gen. + generic; til Svøllands (*W*) – Lbs 222 fol^x, 85r, til Svanlandz, where the non-transparent generic *Svøl-* appeared as *Svan-* from *svanr*, m., “a swan”; Vinborg (*W*) – Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, 248v, Winberg, where the toponym changed its generic to *berg*, n., “a rock, elevated rocky ground”⁵; á Gásnin (*W*) – Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x, [119v] 135v, ä Gäfúm, Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, 248v, ä Gäfúm, where the non-transparent toponym *Gásnin* appears in the form *á Gásun*, pl. dat., from *gás*, f., “a goose”⁶; til Jónsborgar (*M*) – til Jónsborgar (*W*), where the non-transparent generic *Jóns-* is perceived as an anthroponym *Jóns-* in gen. sg.; af Valagust (*W*) – Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, 236v, af Wala wóxt, where the transparent generic for some reason is changed to *vöxtr*, m., “growth, increase”. The deviations from the original form, which are not transparent from the point of view of onomasticon and the language system, are seen as examples of orthographic mistakes, e.g. til Dubrin (*W*) – Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x, [94r] 110r, til Dúbim; í Knaus (*W*) – Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x, [110v] 126v, j Knúnú, Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, 235v, i knaúr; Valmig (*W*) – Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x, [109r] 125r, Walning, Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, 233v, Walng. It is thinkable that name users can break all the rules to adapt the name in the way they like; however, in the case of orthographic adaptation, it would be quite hard to prove that the case of completely “unmotivated” name change is not an orthographic mistake.

2.3 Name identification.

As regards name identification, orthographic adaptation can provide one with unique opportunity to establish what name users or scribes in the present context consider to be a name in a diachronic perspective. Proper names are more or less regularly marked with an initial capital letter only in later mss⁷, where one can trace the “thinking process” of the scribe when he had to make a decision if this or that “candidate” is a proper name or not. The key factors in the process of name identification seem to be either the influence of onomasticon, if the name in question already belongs to the onomasticon of the name user, or the context or, most plausible, the combination of both. E.g.:

(1) according to the *A*-group of mss, “[...] þeir hófðu mikinn her ok fóru til Valagust ok brendu tveim megin árinna ok fóru svá fram til Steinborgar [...]”⁸, while according to a part of the *B*-group, e.g. *W*, *E*, “[...] brendu tveim megin árinna Rína ok fóru svá fram til Steinborgar [...]” (SD 1919–25 p. 291). In the major editions of *Knýtlinga* the *A*-version is preferred, while the attitude towards the other variant differs: it is passed over in silence by Bjarni Guðnason in *ÍF* (DS 1982), mentioned in a short note in *Fornmanna sögur* edition (Knýt. 1828) and is a legitimate “member” of the variant apparatus in the edition of Carl af Petersens and Emil Olson (SD 1919–25), where it acquired even the reference in the register. Since all the studied mss are copies of *W* (even if indirect ones), *árinna Rína* is attested in

it does not agree with the declension system of Old Norse, cf. til Valaguft (*M*), a transparent name, where the generic, *gustr*, m. sg. “a gust, blast”, is in acc. even in combination with the preposition *til*; in some cases the form is adapted to *til Valagufts* e.g. Lbs 222 fol^x, 83v, Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x, [119v] 135v.

⁵ Helgi Ólafsson probably misinterpreted the abbreviation *bg* in the original ms.

⁶ Although *gás*, f., takes the form *gæsir* in pl. nom. and keeps the *æ* through all cases in pl., in proper names *á* seems to be legitimate even in pl. cf. *Gásir*, pl. nom., the local name of a harbor in Iceland (Cleasby 1874:193).

⁷ Among the surveyed mss, proper names are consistently marked in Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x written by Helgi Ólafsson.

all of them: Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x (1682–87), 255v “arinnar (-) Rinar”; Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x (1687), [123r] 139r “áre=nnar Rynar”; Lbs 222 fol^x (1695–98), 88r “arinnar Rynar”.

It is obvious that several variants are thinkable in the present context: e.g. the place-name in the *B*-tradition can be a result of a misinterpretation of an earlier dittographic mistake, as the editors of *Knýtlinga* seem to assume; or it could reflect another oral variant of the passage. However in the second case, the appearance of this particular name, *Rín*, f., (Rhine) in the context, where the troops of Canute VI of Denmark first burn everything on the both banks of the Rhine, which flows into the North Sea, and then proceed to Steinborg (Kamień Pomorski), which is close to Kamień Bay (Zalew Kamieński), is rather doubtful, unless the speaker had a rather vague idea of European geography.

Apparently, at some point in the chain of copying a dittographic – or rather partially dittographic – mistake occurred: *ár-innar* (a sg. gen. from *á*, f., “river”, + a sg. gen. from a postfixed article *-en*, f.) was possibly perceived by a scribe as *á-rinnar* (e.g. the letter *á* and the rest of the word appeared on different sides of the sheet/sheets and, thus, got separated), where the double *nn* could be contracted, and the last bit – *rinar* – was then mistakenly copied. This mistake then acquired a much more prominent role and became a proper name in its own right, or, put in other words, a dittography has become a – in a way – legitimate addition to the text, because the later copyists treated this mistake as a name, *Rinar*, f. sg. gen. It is obvious that the reasons for that first dittographic mistake (if that was a mistake) will hardly ever be established; however onomasticon and the context definitely played their role, if not in the appearance of the mistake, then in its acceptance by other copyists. The river-name *Rín*, f., (Rhine) must be well known by the scribes as well as the context it appeared in, cf. e.g. *Sögubrot ok þættir viðkomandi Danmerkr sögu*: “[...] þeir [Danir ok Norðmenn] fóru upp eptir ánni Rín, ok brendu þar allar borgir ok kyrkjur [...]“ where *ánni* is a sg. dat. from *á*, f., “river”, + a sg. dat. from a postfixed article *-en*, f., and *Rín* is f. sg. dat. (*Sögubrot* 1828 p. 407). It is possible to argue that the first copyist of *Knýtlinga* who made the mistake, as well as all other copyists who accepted it, were influenced by their onomastic competence and the context, since they associated the mistake with the river *Rín*, although it is situated rather far from the area where the events took place.

(2) Helgi Ólafsson interpreted the appellative *byr*, acc. sg., from *byrr*, m., “a fair wind”, as a place-name *Byr*, cf. “[...] lágu þeir [Kristóförús hertogi ok Absalón biskup] XX nætr veðrfastir í ánni Svöldr í óveðrani miklu ok fengu síðan byr ok fóru heim.” (SD 1919–25:273) and Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x, 240v, “feingú síðann Byr og forú heim.” In this case, as in the previous example, the reason for such interpretation lies both in the onomastic competence of the scribe (the toponym *Byr* was mentioned earlier in the text: “konungr lagðiz þá við Byr” (SD 1919–25:264)) as well as the context (which allows the interpretation *fengu Byr ok fóru heim* “captured Byr and sailed home”, although *fengu byr ok fóru heim* “got a favorable wind and sailed home” seems more appropriate taking into account Duke Kristoforus and Bishop Absalon had been weather-bound for twenty days before that).

2.4 Orthographic adaptation of West Slavic toponyms in *Knýtlinga* saga

In the surveyed mss only a relatively small amount of place-names were orthographically adapted, see table 1. Although the material studied is obviously not enough to draw more or less general conclusions, I would still like to outline the main tendencies, which occurred in it. Orthographic adaptation as an individual phenomenon seems to be unpredictable, i.e. it is not possible to determine which place-names will undoubtedly undergo adaptation. It is possible to assume that all names have some adaptation potential; however this potential is not realized

in each and every case. The name user or the scribe in the present context is responsible for the realization of adaptation potential, even if his will is not actively involved in the process.

The mechanisms of orthographic adaptation are somewhat clearer. Although both non-transparent and transparent names can be subjected to orthographic adaptation, it is plausible to assume that ambiguous, non-transparent names are more likely to undergo orthographic adaptation, see table 2. Basing on the studied material, I would like to single out three main types of orthographic adaptation: (1) formal adaptation, when the form of the place-name or its part is adapted, e.g. *Steinborg* – *Steinsborg*, *Dimarsbrú* – *Dimarsbrúr* etc.; (2) semantic adaptation, when the semantic content of the place-name or its part is adapted, e.g. *á Gásnin* – *á Gásum*, *Svøllands* – *Svanlandz* etc.; (3) place-name replacement, when the original name, unknown to the scribe, is replaced with another toponym resembling the original in its orthographic form, *Dimin* – *Dímun* etc.

Table 1. Orthographic alterations of West Slavic toponyms in Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x, Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x and Lbs 222 fol^x.

Ms	Total (percentage of orthographic alterations in the material)	Orthographic mistakes (percentage of alterations)	Orthographic adaptations (percentage of adaptations in alterations)
Cod. Holm. 41 4to ^x	8 (20%)	4 (10%)	4 (10%)
Cod. Holm. 55 fol ^x	8 (20%)	2 (5%)	6 (15%)
Lbs 222 fol ^x	10 (25%)	3 (7.5%)	7 (17.5%)

Table 2. Orthographic adaptation of West Slavic toponyms in Cod. Holm. 41 4to^x, Cod. Holm. 55 fol^x and Lbs 222 fol^x.

Ms	Total	Transparent names	Non-transparent names	Semi-transparent names
Cod. Holm. 41 4to ^x	4	–	4	–
Cod. Holm. 55 fol ^x	6	3	2	1
Lbs 222 fol ^x	7	1	4	2
Total	17	4	10	3

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The East as a Model for the West: Translation Method and Aims in Alexanders saga

Jonatan Pettersson, Dept. of Scandinavian Languages, Stockholm university, Sweden

There seems to be general agreement among scholars that the translator of Alexanders saga, as well as his readers, must have recognised the symbolic parallel between the negotiations in chapter 8 between Alexander and the Scythians and the political situation in the North Atlantic at that time, in the 13th century, when the Norwegian kings tried to incorporate Iceland in the Norwegian realm (Helgason 1966:28, Pálsson 1992, Ashurst 1997, Würth 1996:309–312, 1998:113f).¹ In one of his final campaigns, Alexander prepares to invade Scythia but is approached at the border by a peace-seeking embassy from the threatened nation. One of the Scythians delivers a speech, which is one of three very long speeches in the text, being almost twice as long as the fourth longest.² Yet even though scholars agree about the symbolic links between the speech and the situation at the time, there are completely different interpretations of what kind of model of reality the Scythian negotiations were intended to expose. Is it an expression of Icelandic opposition to the Norwegian king, or a pro-monarchical, pro-Norwegian portrait of a blunt, simple and proud people, ignorant of its own best interest? There are good reasons for both of these interpretations, but the discussion still lacks what in my opinion is crucial to an understanding of the intention of the translation, namely a thorough investigation of the translation method and a comparison between the treatment of this particular speech and other speeches. In the following article, I will investigate some aspects of the translation method in Alexanders saga to shed some light on what kind of model the translator intended to provide his audience.³ I will begin with an analysis of views of the speech presented previously.

Interpretations of the Scythian Ambassador's speech in previous research

Several scholars have conceived the Scythian Ambassador's speech as in some way giving voice to Icelandic opposition to the Norwegian king.⁴ This interpretation focusses on the simi-

¹ Alexanders saga is a translation of *Alexandreis*, an epical hexametre poem based on Quintus Curtius Rufus' *Historiæ Alexandri Magni*, written by the French clerk and poet Gauthier de Châtillon probably in the 1170s (Christensen 1905:4–13, 102–164, Colker 1978:11–18, but cf. Jolly 1968:16–20). The Latin poem was one of the most successful medieval, secular narrative works, and spread rapidly and widely as early as the 13th century. It became part of the standard curriculum at schools and was translated or reworked into several languages (Colker 18–20). The oldest manuscript of the Old Norse translation, AM 519a 4to, is dated to c. 1280 (Helgason 1966:11). In this paper, all references to the saga are to the edition in Jónsson (1925), and the references to the epic are to Colker (1978).

² The Scythian Ambassador's speech (epic 8.375–476; saga 126.12–128.31) is 102 verses long, Aristotle's speech to Alexander (epic 1.82–183; saga 4.13–7.26) is 102 verses long, and Philotas' defence speech (epic 8.193–301; saga 121.27–124.13) is 109 verses long. The fourth longest is a speech by Alexander (epic 7.469–533; saga 113.34–115.31), which is 65 verses long.

³ In my forthcoming PhD thesis (Pettersson in print) I analyse the translation method of Alexanders saga. The analysis of the translation method in a medieval target text is always complicated by the fact that we do not know what the translator was responsible for and what later copyists have changed. By several reasons, which I discuss in my thesis, I believe that the patterns we can observe when we compare Alexanders saga with its source text, are the traces of the translation process, even if individual deviations from the source text might originate from the transmission of the text. I use the word "translator" to denote the one who was responsible for the process of translation, even if it is likely that there were several persons involved in the process.

⁴ Helgason (1966:28), Pálsson (1992) and Würth (1996:309f, 1998:112–114) state that the Icelandic audience must have recognised the relevance of the speech for their own situation. They do not, however, explicitly discuss the intention of the translator, but rather possible interpretations and readings of the target text. Würth

larity between the text and the reality, but also similarities between the line of argument in the Ambassador's speech and a speech by the Icelander Einar Þveræingur in *Ólafs saga helga* (Pálsson 1992:10). In Würth (1996:309, 1998:112), there is also a discussion of the translator's treatment of this particular speech, based on a premise that in my opinion is fundamental in analyses of free translations like the one in *Alexanders saga*.⁵

Im Hinblick auf die Neigung zur Kürzung und Zusammenfassung der Vorlage erhalten Abschnitte, die genauso ausführlich wie in der Vorlage wiedergegeben werden, für die Interpretation besonderes Gewicht. (Würth 1998:112)⁶

In the study of modern translations, fidelity to the source is generally the unmarked case, and translation shifts (deviations from the source text) are often studied to explore the aims of the translator.⁷ But when dealing with the free translations of the Middle Ages, the parts that are rendered faithfully are equally important for understanding what the translator was up to.⁸ The level of faithfulness varies in *Alexanders saga*, some parts being more faithful to the source than others; according to Würth (1998:112), the Scythian Ambassador's speech is more completely rendered than other parts. However, the investigations of the translation method of *Alexanders saga* in my PhD thesis have not confirmed this (Pettersson in print). There were clearly different principles of translation for different text types, e.g. the parts in direct speech are generally rendered more fully than narrative or descriptive parts. But compared with other speeches, the Scythian Ambassador's speech actually seems to be one of the most manipulated speeches. It is not possible to go into the investigation method and results in any detail here, but I will demonstrate some of the results in the analysis below.

The second interpretation of the speech – that it instead is intended to ridicule a blunt and proud people – is proposed in Ashurst (1997). Ashurst agrees with the first interpretation that the description of the Scythians is adjusted to facilitate an identification between them and the Icelanders, e.g. manipulating the epic's description of the economy of Scythia to resemble the situation in medieval Iceland (1997:24). But he claims that the Scythian Ambassador is portrayed as a savage with as little talent in oratory as in diplomacy, and that the speech should be interpreted ironically in its textual context, i.e. in light of what happens after the speech was delivered. The Ambassador's oratorical and diplomatic skill is certainly not to the benefit of his cause, but his objections to Alexander are not unfair. On the contrary, the speech is rather, as Ashurst himself puts it, “tantamount to a conspectus of the moral themes standardly used against Alexander in the Middle Ages”, namely his “supposed greed, insatiable love of conquest and unceasing restlessness” (Ashurst 1997:30). Hence, the warnings and objections were just, even if they were uttered by a not very eloquent character from a remote part of the world. But, according to Ashurst, there is an irony in that the objections and warnings made by the Ambassador are more relevant to his own imminent fate than to the King's. For example, the Ambassador warns Alexander, by means of a simile, that the presumptuous man should consider the tree, that while it might seem steady may yet fall from a storm. But a couple of pages later, the Ambassador's country is itself swept through and broken by the storm

stresses that *Alexanders saga* also presented a royal ideology, which I will return to in my conclusion below. In this article I focus on the intention of the translator.

⁵ The translation is described by several scholars as free, and, according to Helgason (1966:30), it “fluctuates between considerable closeness and a freedom which at times gives it the character of a new version.”

⁶ ‘Given the preference for abbreviation and summarising, those parts that are rendered as fully as in the original receive particular significance for the interpretation.’

⁷ Shifts are not emphasized in the Descriptive Translation Studies approach of Toury (1995), but as Chesterman (2005:27) observes, the terminology of differences between source texts and target texts is very developed in contrast to the terminology of similarities, which indicates the importance of the concept.

⁸ This is also noted and discussed by Ingólfsson (2002:218).

wind of Alexander and his forces (1997:26). Almost everything in the speech, Ashurst concludes, is at the expense of the Scythians and not of Alexander.

Even though Ashurst's line of argument is convincing, there is a problem in that it says more about the source text by Gauthier de Châtillon than the translation. If the translator had wanted to avoid the kind of reading Ashurst claims, a radical rewriting of the speech would have been needed. But there are no examples of such a complete reworking of speeches in Alexanders saga; the translator instead follows the source text clause complex by clause complex, making alterations here and there, but he does not rework the basic structure of complete passages. Still, Ashurst's interpretation is interesting as it represents a possible way to read the text with a very clear intended reader – the Norwegian king; I will return to this below.

Keeping the virtues of earlier interpretations in mind along with their problems, we will proceed to examine the translation method of the Old Norse version of the Scythian's speech, comparing it with the translation method in the rest of the saga.

Analysis of the translation method

In my PhD thesis, I analyse the relation between finite clauses in the source text and the target text through a typology of solution types (Pettersson in print, ch. 2). I will not go into all the categories of this typology here but will only discuss some cases of addition and omission, which do not need any extensive theoretical explanation here. Addition is simply when the core semantic content of a finite clause in the target text has no counterpart in the source text.⁹ Omission is when the core semantic content of a finite clause in the source text is not present in the target text. Due to the aims of the method, a large part of the content of each clause is not considered in the analysis, which will be apparent from examples below.¹⁰

To demonstrate the rather high degree of manipulation in the rendering of the Scythian Ambassador's speech, some statistics on the category of omission will be presented.¹¹ In the parts in direct speech that consist of more than 20 clauses in the source text, the rate of omission varies between 0 and 32%, with an average of 16%.¹² In the Scythian Ambassador's speech, the figure is 26%, thus in the upper part of the range of distribution. As I mentioned before, this speech is one of three extremely long speeches, but a high figure of omission is not an exclusive feature of the long speeches. Judging by the omissions alone, the Ambassador's speech seems to be manipulated to a larger extent than most of the others.

Addition is a more complicated category than omission, but also more informative, offering clues to how the translator imagined that the target text had to be adjusted or compensated to function in the intended target context. The analysis in my PhD thesis has revealed several functionally defined types of additions. The most important type is an addition that is de-

⁹ The analytical model uses the framework of Systemic-Functional Linguistics as presented in Halliday & Matthiessen (1999, 2005). The core semantic content is understood as the minimal semantic qualities of the verb process and the "first" participant (from which a process emanates, cf. Holmberg & Karlsson (2006:75–76)) for a positive indication that the source text clause and the target text clause could represent the same reality. That is, when the translation renders the circumscriptural *totius malleus orbis* ("the hammer of the whole world") simply with *Alexander konungr*, this is interpreted in the analytical model as identity between the source text and target text. The semantic content is thus mainly delimited to the deictic qualities of the two central semantic elements of the clause.

¹⁰ The model is designed to investigate the very existence of a translation norm in the free translation of Alexanders saga, or whether the rendering in the translation is marked by idiosyncrasy. For the sake of a systematic treatment, a lot of details have to be left out.

¹¹ The statistics refer to my database, in which every part in direct speech is analysed, as well as other parts in the narrative, clause by clause. Questions concerning the statistics should be directed to <jonatan.pettersson@nordiska.su.se>.

¹² In one of the speeches (epic 9.514–543, saga 143.3–17), delivered by the duke Craterus, 47% of the clauses are omitted but this figure is an isolated extreme.

signed to support the understanding of the source text, e.g. in the form of an explanation of a clause or explicitation of content that is implicit in the source text.¹³ As for the rest of the additions, in nearly every case they are in harmony with the source text, merely filling in gaps or intensifying expressions already present in the source text. Only in a few rare cases does the translator manipulate the text according to aims that seem foreign to the source text. For example, there seems to be a negative attitude to wine-drinking and intoxication inscribed in the translation not present in the original.¹⁴ But in the vast majority of cases no attempt to change the intentions and meanings of the source text has been traced.

There is, however, one sub-category of additions that has special relevance for understanding the translation of the Scythian Ambassador's speech. The function of these additions seems to be to support the speaker in achieving his rhetorical goal. These additions can appear in many forms, but the common pattern is that the translator seems to have been dissatisfied with the source text and created new, rhetorically efficient target text material in complete loyalty to the speaker. The translator never makes the speeches worse, but only improves them. This holds true even for the worst character in the story, Narbazanes, the Persian traitor who tries to fool the Persian King Darius out of his crown and into giving it to Narbazanes' friend and conspirator, Bessus. In a speech, Narbazanes tries to persuade Darius to hand over the crown. In the presentation below, the source text and target texts are on either side and the translations of each text are in the middle. Each line consists of one finite clause, and the numbers refer to lines in my database.

Alexandreis 6.402–403			Alexanders saga 96.15–17
		263	Now, this would be my suggestion,
Omnibus est temptanda modis fortuna,	Fortune must be tried by every means,	264	that you should seek her [Fortune] in many ways
nouisque / Est opus omnibus.	and there is need of new omens.*	265	
		266	and drink from smaller vessels for a while.**
			oc dryckir ur smęrom kerom vm stundar sakir.

* Translation from Jolly (1968:172).

** The translation is my own.

In the rendering, the translator not only uses an efficient metaphorical expression in line 266 instead of the rather abstract “there is need of new omens” in line 265, but he also stresses that the change of government should only be temporary through the addition of the *um stundar sakir* “for a while”, making the proposal easier to accept for the unwilling target of the speech. Quite clearly, the translator supports the speaker rhetorically in a rather creative way.

The symptoms of this supporting strategy have been observed by others, who have noted the use of Old Norse idioms, indigenous proverbs and alliterative expressions in Alexanders saga (Jónsson 1925:16, Würth 1998:115–116). But this has only been seen as a strategy of adaptation to the target language and target text norms. Far more interesting, I think, is the question of what function these additions carry in their textual context. In the example above, the translator seems to have identified himself fully with Narbazanes' rhetorical task to persuade Darius, and supported the speech with idiomatic and efficient expressions. Moreover, the addition was not demanded by any obscurity in the source text, which otherwise is the most important reason for the translator to add material. It is true that the clause in line 265 is

¹³ This kind of addition is also a very common manipulation in modern translations, cf. Baker (1998).

¹⁴ The negative attitude to wine-drinking is manifested in several ways, compare saga 7.3–5 with epic 1.164–165, saga 63.1–2 with epic 4.202, saga 85.2–10 with epic 6.21–27.

abstract and perhaps difficult to translate, but the line of argument would not have lost any of its intelligibility had it just been omitted without the addition of the clause in line 266.

Rhetorical reinforcements of the speaker's cause can be found in several parts of direct speech in Alexanders saga, and the translator does not seem to distinguish between the characters in this regard. It seems as if the translator is loyal to both high and low, evil and good as this kind of addition can be found in speeches by Alexander but also by his enemy, the Persian King Darius, and by the traitor Narbazanes as well as an insignificant messenger.¹⁵ It seems to be an integral part of the translation method to take sides with the speaker and not make his speech worse but rather improve it from the perspective of the speaker.¹⁶

It is thus not surprising that we find this kind of addition in the Scythian Ambassador's speech. What is surprising, though, is the extent to which the translator uses this manipulative solution in this particular speech. Six different additions have been placed in this subcategory of additions in the Ambassador's speech, and this is an unparalleled high number. One should not rely too much on statistics in this case, as the categorisation to a large extent is build upon interpretations, but the picture is anyway that this kind of addition is far more common in this speech than elsewhere. I will instead turn to a qualitative analysis of the the additions of this kind in the Ambassador's speech to elucidate the strategy of the translator.

The first example is derived from a part of the speech where the Ambassador warns Alexander about the unpredictability of fortune, which might turn away from the most fortunate man.

Alexandreis 8.400–403		Alexanders saga 126.26–29	
sub cardine Phebi / Tam firmum nichil est	There is nothing under the sun so strong	321	What is so powerful or strong in the world
cui non metus esse ruinae / Possit ab inualido.	that it can be without fear of destruction from the weak.	322	that it need not fear for itself?
quis non, dum nauigat orbem, /	Who is not to fear ruin and a deadly storm	323	
Debeat occursum mor- tisque timere procellam?	while he sails over the world?*	324	
		325	[a proverb, literally:] Often a small tuft tips over a large loaded cart.
		326	No one can be safe be- fore death.
		327	It brings all to their knees.**

* Translation from Jolly (1968:214).

** The translation is partly my own, partly from Ashurst (1997:26).

For some reason, the translator was displeased with the example of seafaring in lines 323–324, and instead replaced these clauses with a proverb in 325 and two clauses with alliterative expressions in 326–327. The omission of lines 323–324 could easily be explained by the re-

¹⁵ Compare e.g. saga 5.17–18 with epic 1.116 (Aristotle), saga 105.12–13 with epic 7.141–143 (messenger), saga 109.1–2 with 7.272–273 (Darius) saga 115.24–25 with epic 7.526 (Alexander).

¹⁶ In many cases, what is called an “addition” here is actually a substitution for clauses in the source text. In Narbazanes' speech, the clause in line 267 in the target text “does approximately the same job” as the source text clause in line 266, but still in a completely new fashion, and with completely different semantic elements. I interpret these substitutions as an alternative version of the source text clauses, and in the analytical model, alternative versions are classified as omission in the source text plus addition in the target text (Pettersson in print). The boundaries between categories are often a matter of interpretation.

curring pattern of “omission of repetitions” in the translation as these two clauses only repeat the warning of 321–322, albeit with a new theme. Instead, the translator uses his rhetorical creativity to stress the Ambassador’s warning through a series of added clauses.

In the lines following the example above, the Ambassador tries to delegitimise Alexander’s aggression.

Alexandreis 8.404–405		Alexanders saga 126.29–32		
		328	Tell me, Alexander,	Seg mer Alexander
Quid nobis tecum?	What have we to do with you?	329	what crimes have we Scythians committed against you?	hvat hovum ver Scithe til saka gort við þec.
non infestauimus armis /	We have not attacked you with arms,	330	We have not fought against you,	Ecke hovom vér barz ímote þér.
Attigimusue tuam facturi prelia terram.	nor have we invaded your land to make war.	331		
		332	and therefore let us be at peace.**	oc af þvi lattv oss ífriðe vera.

* Translation from Jolly (1968:214).

** The translation is from Ashurst (1997:27).

In line 331, a rhetorical repetition is again omitted, but instead the translator inserts an exhortation to Alexander in line 332, putting more emphasis on the argument and making the point of the preceding rhetorical clauses clearer. This could be seen as an explicitation of something implicit in the source text, which is how Ashurst (1997:27) interprets it, but the question is why the translator bothered about clarifying and stressing the point of the Ambassador. Ashurst argues that the protest by the Scythians should have appeared as irrelevant to the readers as Alexander was destined by God to become the ruler of the world. But even if the translator had agreed with this, he must have seen his task as making the speaker’s request seem relevant. Otherwise, it is very strange that he, through the addition of line 332, supplements what is already fully understandable.

After a few lines, the speech turns to a description of the “virtuous poverty” of the Scythians. The Scythians are said to want nothing except the gifts of Mother Nature.

Alexandreis 8.409–410		Alexanders saga 126.33–127.2		
/ Libera gens Scitiae nichil appetit ulterius	The free nation of Scythia seeks nothing beyond	339	and we let it be enough	oc latom oss þorf vinna þat
quam / Prima parens Natura dedit, de munere cuius	what nature, the first parent, has provided*	340	what Nature herself, our first mother, want to have given.	er natturan sialf en fyrsta moðer vár vill hafa gefet.
		341	This people does not yearn for more than to keep the freedom	girnez þessi þioð ecke meira. en hallda þvi frelsi
		342	that she gives.**	er hon gefr.

* Translation from Jolly (1968:214).

** The translation is my own.

In lines 341–342, the translator makes the curious choice to repeat what he just said with a slight variation through the development of the freedom theme partly present in the expression *Libera gens Scitiae* “The free nation of Scythia” in line 339. It is very unusual that the

translator introduces a repetition by variation in this way, and here it serves to underline the justness of the Scythians' demands.

Later on, the Ambassador describes what will happen if Alexander invades Scythia, but in the translation, this description is turned into a warning where the military determination of the Scythians is stressed in an addition.

Alexandreis 8.435–437		Alexanders saga 127.21–25	
Tanaim transibis	You will be crossing the Tanais	388	Now you are crossing the river Tanais.
ut hostes / Invenias	to find an enemy	389	
		390	It might happen
		391	that you will find out then,
Scitiamque tibi, que libera semper, / Subicias.	and to subjugate Scythia, which always has been free.	392	before you succeed in conquering Scythia,
		393	that always until now has kept its freedom,
		394	that they rather want to defend their belongings with honor than loose [it] without trying with shame and disgrace.**

* Translation from Jolly (1968:215).

** The translation is my own.

This part is followed by a description of the differences in military tactics of the Scythians' guerrilla warfare and Alexander's army, but the addition in line 394 must have been motivated by a desire to stress what Alexander risked in a campaign against Scythia, i.e. facing resistance from a very determined enemy.

But the most remarkable example of an addition of this kind appears in a part where the poverty of the Scythians is described.

Alexandreis 8.446–447		Alexanders saga 127.31–128.6	
		410	You will not need to fight against cities and castles here,
hoc hominum genus oppida spernit et urbes	This nation of men spurns towns and cities	411	because this people has neither of them for protection.
/ Et deserta colit, humani nescia cultus.	and inhabits desert places, ignorant of human luxury.*	412	It lives in desolate places here and there,
		413	where it seems rather impossible to live for other men.
		414	It would moreover seem unworthy to you to deal with us
		415	who have the least of
		416	which you could strive for

	417	as we do not desire to own anything but	at ver gironmz ecke at eiga nema þat eíns
	418	what we might live from.**	er vér megem liva við.

* Translation from Jolly (1968:216).

** The translation is my own.

The description of the Scythians' poverty is connected in the source text to their military ability. The Ambassador argues that, without possessions, their forces are mobile and their attacks will be as quick as their withdrawals, making it impossible for Alexander to face the enemy in open combat: *nostra tuis uelocior alis Paupertas* "Our poverty is swifter than your [military] wings" (epic 8.437–438). But in the translation the description of the Scythians' poverty is also linked to a question of ethics through the addition in 414–418, and especially the moral evaluation in line 414, noting what is unethical in Alexander's ambition to try to obtain the few things the Scythians need to live. It is an invocation of justice similar to several examples above, but of an almost exceptional length. Very few additions are as long as five continuous clauses.

The last example of an addition with the function to support the speaker's rhetorical goal comes from one of the concluding passages, where the Ambassador exhorts Alexander to put an end to his fighting.

Alexandreis 8.451–455			Alexanders saga 128.9–13
Consilium ergo salubre sequens	Therefore, follow the sound advice	427	
quod temporis offert / Gratia presentis,	which the favor of the present offers,	428	Take advantage of the support of the hamingja
dum prospera luditur a te / Alea,	and while you are playing a winning game	429	fer nv þa sva ínyt þér hamingionnar hollostv.
dum celeris Fortunae munera nondum / Accusas,	and have no fault to find with the gifts of swift fortune,	430	
imponere modum felicibus armis /	apply moderation to your successful campaign,	431	so that you make an end to the state of war,
		432	at þu gerir enda nockorn áufriðednom.
		433	takir hvíllð eptir langt erveðe.
Ne rota forte tuos euertat uersa labores.	lest perchance her turning wheel may thwart your efforts.	434	[and] bring yourself into proportion before she lets the wheel turn under you.
			fyr en hon late vellta hvelet vndir þer.

* Translation from Jolly (1968:216).

** The translation is partly from Ashurst (1997:28), partly my own.

Nothing is unclear in the target text by line 431, so the addition of the clauses in lines 432–433 must have been motivated by a desire to give greater emphasis to the suggestion. The repetition of exhortations (in the hortative conjunctive) is certainly a reinforcement of the speaker's efforts to convince his listener to act in the way he wants.

Conclusion

From the analysis above, it seems difficult to maintain the view that the Scythian Ambassador's speech was less manipulated than other speeches. It is also dubious that the translator wanted the Scythian to appear as a clumsy savage, even if the source text presented him as

such. The speech is translated with the same method as the rest of Alexanders saga, but the translator uses omissions and rhetorically reinforcing additions as solutions to a greater extent in this speech than elsewhere. My conclusion is thus that the translator actively gives voice to the protests against the Norwegian King through the Scythian Ambassador's speech, and it is perhaps most clearly outspoken in the addition in the lines 414–418 cited above.

At the same time, there are no traces of any intention to increase negative attitudes towards the King outside this speech. On the contrary, the translator changes several details, especially in the narrative parts, to make Alexander appear in a more favorable light than in the source text.¹⁷ And as has been noted by both Würth (1998:114) and Ashurst (1997:28), Alexander turns out to be a merciful ruler once Scythia is subjugated, implicitly showing readers that the Scythians were wrong. In the end of the chapter, Alexander's motive for the campaign is discussed, and in the source text he is said to have been driven *non ex iræ stimulus [...] sed de virtutum motu* "not by the incitement of anger but by the motion of virtue" (8.512–513). The translation is slightly, but not insignificantly, changed:

at eige geck honom grimleicr til [...] helldr þviat íollom heiminom. villde hann øngan vera lata. sva at millde sem at rike sinn iafningia. [that it was not on account of cruelty [...] rather because he wanted no one in all the world be his equal, in mercy as in power.] (saga 129.25–28)

The translation thus presents how ambition for power can be combined with an equal ambition for mercy, satisfying the different interests of rulers and subjects. The text demonstrates that the Scythians were wrong, but at the same time it works as an imperative to the royal audience to be mild and forgiving, exposing a multifaceted rather than a one-sided intention. The fact that Alexander is made into an ideal is discussed by Würth (1998:118), and her conclusion is close to the conclusion of this paper.

Vor dem Hintergrund der Unterwerfung Islands durch Norwegen kann die *Alexanders saga* somit gleichermaßen als Mahnung für die isländische Bevölkerung gelesen werden wie als erbauliche Lektüre für den norwegischen König. (Würth 1998:118)¹⁸

But what is apparent from the analysis above is that this multiplicity of possible readings is not only a feature in the source text that happens to be transferred to the translation. It is in fact something that the translator indeed seems to reinforce. The polyphonic strategy opens the text to different reading positions, making the model of reality it proposes into a complex one, perhaps, one could say, in agreement with the complexity of the real political situation.

Through his translation method, the translator seems to take a stand with both sides in the Icelandic-Norwegian conflict – or rather with all the perspectives in the tale. Such a polyphonic structure is rare in medieval literature, where didactic, edifying strategies and an unambiguous ideological agenda are much more common features. It can, however, be compared to the literary technique in the Icelandic saga literature, in which a relativistic tendency can be found, giving voice to different perspectives without condemning them outright. Even if Lönnroth (1970) shows that the impartiality of the sagas often is deceptive – that there is an agenda under a seemingly objective and neutral facade, carried out in discrete ways – the

¹⁷ One example is the description of Alexander's illness from a bath in a cold river (epic 2.170–171, saga 24.7–8). In the original he is struck numb by the coldness of water and dragged out of it by his comrades, but in the translation he swims ashore by himself. In another passage (epic 2.229–244, saga 26.10–29) where Alexander is offered a potion which he suspects is poisoned, he surprisingly drinks it before he questions the physician who delivered it, but in the translation he first questions the physician and drinks it only when he is sure that it is not poisoned. There are several other examples (cf. Pettersson in print).

¹⁸ [In light of the submission of Iceland to Norway, Alexanders saga might be read equally as an exhortation to the Icelandic people and as edifying literature for the Norwegian king.]

translator of Alexanders saga seems to have used a strategy of impartiality in this case. Perhaps it was a political necessity in the troubled times of the 13th century, when it must have been safer to present a complex situation of different opinions rather than making a unequivocal statement for one side or the other.

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Hair Loss, the Tonsure, and Masculinity in Medieval Iceland

Carl Phelpstead, School of English, Cardiff University, Wales

This paper continues work begun in my article ‘Size Matters: Penile Problems in Sagas of Icelanders’, published in *Exemplaria* in 2007. In that article I examined the way that the penis – a physical part of the human body – was endowed with meaning within culture, specifically how it was constructed as a marker of gendered identity. Other human body parts are similarly constructed and in this paper I turn to a different part of human anatomy: hair.¹

When looking at the penis in medieval Icelandic texts it seemed to me impossible to ignore psychoanalytic theory, and I attempted in my article to evaluate whether it had anything of value to contribute. I suggested that there might be advantages in developing an approach that is sensitive both to history and to psychoanalytic theory’s account of the relationship between biology and culture. I further suggested that the seeds of such an approach might most appropriately be found, not in the work of Sigmund Freud, but in that of Jacques Lacan.

Lacan uses the term ‘phallus’ to refer not to the anatomical organ but to a transcendental signifier which the organ symbolizes. As Robert Mills formulates it, this signifier represents ‘what male subjects (think they) have and what female subjects (are considered, culturally speaking, to) lack’ (Mills 2004:110). The Lacanian phallus is not necessarily symbolised by the penis, and so might in certain historical periods be symbolised by another part of the physical organism; Mills accordingly sets out to read the medieval tonsure as a ‘loose analogue’ of the Lacanian phallus. Without claiming that the tonsure was a purely phallic signifier, he argues that among other symbolic functions, tonsures ‘potentially positioned subjects within a gendered social geography’ and ‘set against a wider backdrop of capillary symbolism in the medieval period, they also had the capacity to meet needs related to the construction of manhood’ (Mills 2004:111). In this paper I want to take Mills’s Lacanian-influenced reading of the medieval tonsure as the starting point for an investigation of the relationship between hair and masculinity in medieval Iceland, a culture Mills does not discuss.

Hair Loss as Emasculation

Lacan’s account of the ‘signification of the phallus’ develops from Freud’s thinking on castration and penis envy. The analogy which Mills perceives between the phallus and the medieval tonsure hinges on the loss involved in each case: of the sexual organs or of the hair. In addition to the tonsure, I shall also in this paper consider some other forms of hair loss, voluntary and involuntary, and their relation to masculinity in medieval Iceland.

Jenny Jochens notes that in medieval Icelandic texts ‘In contrast to women [who wear their hair long], men cut their hair. Outside poetry the term “hair-cut” (*skör*) refers only to male hair styles’ (Jochens 1991:13). It is therefore ironic that in some medieval Icelandic texts the cutting or removal of hair is an emasculating act. Extreme haircuts have long been associated with humiliation (Mills 2004:114), and an example of this occurs in the legendary *Hrólfs saga kraka*. Early in that saga, the Danish king Helgi surprises Queen Ólof of Saxland by arriving at her court with a large army. Though Ólof has no intention of marrying a man, Helgi is determined to make her his wife (or at least sexual partner). After much drinking Helgi is brought to Ólof’s bed:

¹ Versions of this paper have previously been given at the University of Nottingham and the Masculinity and the Medieval North Workshop, University of Gothenburg, October 2008. There are plans to publish a fuller, more extensively documented version in a collection arising from the Gothenburg workshop.

Konungur hafði drukkit svá fast, at hann fell þegar sofandi niðr í hvíluna. Drottningin neytir nú þessa ok stingr honum svefnþorn.

Ok sem allir menn eru í burtu gengnir, þá stendr drottning upp. Hún rakaði þá af honum hárit allt ok neri í tjöru. (Hrólfs saga 16–17)

She then stuffs Helgi in a sack, and has him carried back to his ship. As I have suggested elsewhere (Phelpstead 2003:6), the man who sought to impose appropriate gendered behaviour on the woman (forcing her to submit to a man) is humiliated in a way which calls into question his own masculinity: Ólof humiliates the would-be rapist by penetrating one of *his* bodily orifices with a (phallic) sleep-thorn. More significantly for the present paper, she also shaves off all his hair, a humiliation suffered by other characters in Icelandic literature including, for example, Tristram in the Icelandic saga of Tristram and Ísodd, who has his hair shaved off and tar spread on his head by a group of pirates (and then becomes the butt of a joke by the narrator, who remarks when he swims ashore after being released ‘at honum væri lítit verk, at vinda hár sitt, þvíat þat var ekki til’ (Tristrams saga 260)).

In *Hrólfs saga kraka* the hair shaving has particular resonance because *Hrólfr* is a king. There is plenty of evidence that in much of medieval Europe, especially in Merovingian Francia, removal of hair could be imposed in order to disqualify a man from kingship (see e.g. James 1984:89–90; Sayers 1991:176, Mills 2004:115), and Ármann Jakobsson has suggested that in this episode in *Hrólfs saga* ‘Since long hair is symbolically important to kings, having all the hair shaved off his head represents a figurative castration and consequently a severe loss of pride’ (1999:154). Tonsuring a king signifies in relation to class and social hierarchy as well as gender, so tonsuring is not simply equivalent to castration, but, to quote Mills, ‘it is evident that head shaving could be deployed, in certain contexts, as a kind of figurative castration’ (Mills 2004:115).

Baldness

One can draw an analogy between the cutting or shaving of hair and castration, but what about involuntary hair loss? For many men hair loss is a natural accompaniment to aging. In a culture with much lower life expectancy it would presumably have been a less visible phenomenon than today, but baldness is not unknown in medieval Icelandic narratives.

Indeed, the sagas remind us that baldness is not necessarily associated with old age. Chapter 25 of *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* records that Egill’s father Grímr becomes known as *Skalla-Grímr* (Bald-Grímr) after becoming bald at the age of just twenty-five. His more famous son also becomes bald, but loses his hair in old age. In my article in *Exemplaria* I discussed an episode in Chapter 85 of *Egils saga* in which the elderly Egill refers in a verse to his impotence; the same verse also mentions his baldness. By this point in the saga Egill is living with his niece Þórdís and her husband Grímr. In his old age he has become an object of amusement, particularly to the women of the household:

Egill Skalla-Grímsson varð maðr gamall, en í elli hans gerðisk hann þungfærr, ok glapnaði honum bæði heyrn ok sýn; hann gerðisk ok fótstirðr. Egill var þá at Mosfelli með Grími ok Þórdísi. Þat var einn dag, er Egill gekk úti með vegg ok drap fæti ok fell; konur nökkurar sá þat ok hlógu at ok mæltu: ‘Farinn ertu nú, Egill, með öllu, er þú fellr einn saman.’ (*Egils saga*, 294)

Grímr comments ‘Miðr hæddu konur at okkr, þá er vit várum yngri’ (*Egils saga*, 294; ‘Women mocked us less when we were both younger’), and Egill then speaks a verse in which he reflects on his physical deterioration in terms which relate directly to Grímr’s gendered view of their situation:

Vals hefk váfur helsis; / váfallr em ek skalla; / blautr erum bergis fôtar / borrh, en hlust es þorrin.
(Egils saga, 294)

In these passages Egill's baldness is inextricably linked with his other losses in old age: of mobility, hearing, sight, and sexual potency. He becomes the subject for mockery by women and the fact that he spends much of his time in the last part of the saga in the company of women reinforces the sense that the losses of old age – including that of his hair – are emasculating.

Another character in Old Icelandic narrative who is mocked for, among other things, his loss of hair is the eponymous hero of *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka*. After making a gift of a polar bear to the King of Denmark, Auðunn goes to Rome on pilgrimage; by the time he comes back he has become very ill and thin:

Gengr þá upp allt féit, þat er konungr hafði gefit honum til ferðarinnar, tekr síðan upp stafkarls stíg ok biðr sér matar; hann er þá kollóttur ok heldr ósælligr. (*Auðunar þáttur* 364)

When he arrives back in Denmark he is reluctant to present himself before King Sveinn, but the king calls him forward:

Ok er hirðin sá hann, hlógu þeir at honum, en konungr sagði: 'Eigi þurfu þér at honum at hlæja, því at betr hefir hann sét fyrir sinni sál heldr en ér.' (*Auðunar þáttur* 365)

It is clear that his being bald is one of the things that makes Auðunn a figure of fun to King Sveinn's court (his emaciation is another). The king, however, declares that the religious blessings accruing to Auðunn from his pilgrimage more than make up for his hair loss, so that Auðunn's baldness, like a clerical tonsure, can be described, using Mills's phrase, as 'holy hair loss' (Mills 2004:120): the negative or shameful meanings attributed to hair loss are mitigated by its loss in the service of the Christian religion.

Perhaps the most significant thing about these examples of involuntary hair loss from Egils saga and *Auðunar þáttur* is the way they draw attention to the fact that identity and masculinity are not fixed for life by anatomical make-up, but may be lost: as a social construction rather than an anatomical phenomenon, gender is not immutable.

The Tonsure and Clerical Effeminacy

Mills demonstrates that the tonsure signified ambivalently in medieval Europe: although it communicated positive meanings associated with piety and learning, it also at times shared negative associations with other forms of hair loss. Indeed, Mills feels the need to ask how head shaving could have shifted from 'being a sign communicating abasement, impotence and even emasculation to an attribute signifying clerical privilege and power' (Mills 2004:122). This ambivalence is neatly captured in an influential medieval account of the origins of tonsuration, that in *Jacobus de Voragine's Legenda aurea*: in that text the tonsure is described as a mark of contempt imposed on St Peter by pagans at Antioch, a 'badge of shame' which he adopted as a 'mark of honour' (Mills 2004:109). In his study of hair in early Irish literature, Sayers similarly notes that 'aside from clerical tonsure, the chief other social use of this procedure seems to have been to punish criminals' (Sayers 1991:176 n. 56). In medieval Europe generally the tonsure seems to have been seen as inappropriate for all men except priests and criminals, men at opposite extremes of society. The tonsure's ambivalent signification is reflected, too, in medieval Icelandic texts.

Rather surprisingly, a verse in which the clerical tonsure is unambiguously viewed as emasculating and explicitly linked with effeminacy is by a saint, though admittedly not a very

conventional saint: St Rögnvaldr Kali Kolsson, Earl of Orkney. Orkneyinga saga Chapter 72 records how Rögnvaldr and his men attend Mass one Sunday on the Orkney island of We-stray:

Þá sá þeir, hvar gengu sextán menn, slyppir ok kollóttir; þeim þóttu þeir undarliga búnir. Jarls-menn ræddu um, hverir vera myndi. Þá kvað jarl vísu:

Sextán hefik sénar / senn ok topp í enni / jarðar elli firrðar / ormvangs saman ganga. / Þat bárum vér vitni, / vestr at hér sé flestar, / sjá liggur út við élum / ey, kollóttar meyjjar.

Feminine plural adjectives in the verse suggest the figures are women, but they are in fact tonsured monks. Throughout medieval western Christendom tonsuring, as here, involved partial or full removal of facial hair as well as shaving of hair on the top of the head (Sayers 1991:181). Rögnvaldr's kenning *elli jarðar ormvangs* 'old age of the earth of the serpent-field' may be explained as follows: the 'serpent-field' is gold; the earth of gold is a woman, and the 'old age' of women is facial hair, 'of which these monks are shaven. The kenning therefore means "clean-shaven", but in no complimentary way' (Bibire 1988:227 cf. Orkneyinga saga, 163–64). Rögnvaldr's kenning cleverly describes the (effeminate) men as clean-shaven by referring to the facial hair that afflicts women in old age. By introducing into the kenning the link between hair and the blurring of gender boundaries in old age for women, Rögnvaldr implies a connection between the monks' clean-shaven and tonsured appearance and that of bald old men (like Egill Skallagrímsson), whose baldness is indicative of their loss of virility. The saga prose also stresses that these men are unarmed: real men, it implies, are warriors, not monks.

The standard view, as exemplified by Finnbogi Guðmundsson and Paul Bibire, has been that this verse describes monks tonsured in the Celtic manner, which according to Bibire, 'gave a bald crown but left a forelock [Bibire's translation of *topp*] at the front of the head' (Bibire 1988:227 cf. Orkneyinga saga 164n.). William Sayers supports a 'Celtic-tonsure' reading of Rögnvaldr's verse by arguing that the earl and his men would not have had any cause to mock normal Roman tonsures with which they would have been perfectly familiar. It is, however, extremely unlikely that Celtic-style tonsuring would have survived anywhere as late as the twelfth-century. Moreover, a recent re-examination of evidence for the Celtic or Insular tonsure by Daniel Mc Carthy (2003) concludes that it was triangular in shape, like a Greek letter delta, and not a shaven front half of the crown with fringe from ear to ear as, for example, Maud Joynt had influentially argued in 1928. The most recent editor of Rögnvaldr's stanza, Judith Jesch, accordingly concludes that the verse must 'describe the standard Western coronal tonsure (which leaves the hair in a ring on the head), rather than the insular tonsure' (Jesch forthcoming). One does not, in fact, need to posit the unfamiliarity of the tonsure style as an explanation for Rögnvaldr's mockery in the way that Sayers does. Accusations of effeminacy are levelled against clerics in other medieval Icelandic texts, and the gendered reading of hair removal in this episode from Orkneyinga saga makes perfect sense when read in this wider context – whichever form of tonsure the monks were wearing.

Several sources record that a charge of effeminacy was leveled against the early missionary to Iceland, Þangbrandr. In verses about him preserved in Brennu-Njáls saga (261–64) and Kristni saga (ch. 9) he is described as *argr goðvargr*, a 'cowardly she-wolf'. A libel against another early missionary, Bishop Friðrekr, is recorded in two narrative accounts of the conversion of Iceland, Þorvalds þáttur víðförla in the Greatest Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason and Kristni saga (ch. 4). In this episode, pagans opposed to Bishop Friðrekr and his missionary assistant Þorvaldr commission an insulting verse about them:

Hefr börn borit / byskup níu, / þeira er allra / Þorvaldr faðir. (Þorvalds þátr víðförla I, 79; cf. Kristni saga 11)

When the bishop asks Þorvaldr why he killed the two men who composed this poem he replies that 'Ek þolða eigi at þeir kölluðu okkr raga' (Þorvalds þátr 80). The bishop suggests the verb *borit* ('borne') could be understood as meaning only that he had carried Þorvaldr's children and says that 'Eigi skyldi kristinn maðr sjálf leita at hefna sín, þó at hann væri hatrliga smáðr, heldr þola fyrir Guðs sakir brigzli ok meingørðir'. The bishop's passive acceptance of suffering arguably confirms the poet's charge of effeminacy (if not that of buggery), whereas Þorvaldr saw a display of masculine aggression as more appropriate. A tension between different understandings of what constitutes appropriate masculine behaviour is, then, demonstrated not only by the insulting verse, but also by the differing responses of those insulted. Christianity realigns the gender system in a way that would indeed be seen as emasculating by those wedded to existing constructions of appropriate masculine behaviour.

It was presumably the bishop's clean-shaven face and/or tonsure which distinguished him as the 'female' half of this pairing. The mockery to which missionaries and monks are subjected in the sagas has a modern analogue in jokes referring to priests as 'men in dresses', which similarly cast doubt on clerical masculinity. In the early medieval period layman and cleric were more visibly distinguished by hair style than by dress and it is characteristic that medieval mockery should focus on the tonsure where modern jokes refer to distinctively clerical clothing.

Rögvaldr's verse signifies within this context of accusations of clerical effeminacy. Edward James writes that in the early medieval period 'it is hardly conceivable that the clerical tonsure could have been entirely divorced in the minds of laymen from the shameful connotations that it retained' in secular contexts at the time (James 1994:93). This episode in *Orkneyinga saga* suggests that such shameful connotations were still present in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Orkney and Iceland.

Conclusions

In his discussion of the tonsure question in Bede, James writes that 'the cutting of hair was able to carry a whole bundle of meanings to an early medieval mind' (James 1984:87). It clearly also did so in medieval Iceland (and Orkney), where involuntary hair loss similarly conveyed a variety of different meanings. Gender is one of several fields in which the cutting or loss of hair could be significant. One may say that in general to be bald or to have one's hair cut off is taken as symbolic of a lack of masculinity and to that extent is comparable to the emasculating effects of castration; insofar as the Lacanian phallus is implicated in the construction of gender, then, hair may be seen as 'loosely analogous' to it. Nevertheless, the detailed picture is more complex and more ambivalent than this.

The clerical tonsure exemplifies these ambiguities at their most extreme. What may be perceived by pagans or even by Christian laypeople as shameful or effeminate is the primary identifying mark of the clerical elite. James refers in his article on the tonsure in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* to the 'voluntary acceptance of shame, this self-imposed humiliation' (James 1984:95). The situation in the Christian North is comparable to that described by Nagy in his account of pagan Irish tonsuration: 'It is ironic that one of the most prestigious figures in pagan Irish society, the druid, is *mael* [bald/shorn]; he is distinguished by an outward sign also borne by inferior or liminal members of society' (Nagy 1981:10).

Liminality is in fact a common theme in many of the episodes I have examined. The loss or removal of hair symbolizes or is associated with a setting apart or consecration: it becomes a *rite de passage* marking transition from one state to another, whether between virile and im-

potent man, or between adequate and inadequate candidate for kingship, or between layman and cleric. Lacan maintains that the phallus (in his sense) performs a symbolic role in transitions between stages of psychological development, and hair might be said to function analogously in the way it marks transitions from one status or identity to another.

I ended my article on penile problems with a mixed verdict on psychoanalytic theory and here too I offer something short of a ringing endorsement. Mills set out in his article to construct a ‘loose analogy between the tonsure and the phallus’ (Mills 2004:110; my emphasis), and he concludes that it would be overstating the case to claim that ‘the tonsure operated as a signifier possessing the same sort of gendered privileges as the phallus in psychoanalytic discourse’; instead, he concludes that one can say only that the cutting of hair

was able to carry a whole bundle of significations within the medieval mind, some of them gendered, some of them not. [. . .] The tonsure was an ambivalent symbol in the Middle Ages (Mills 2004:123).

The evidence I have considered suggests this is also true of the tonsure (and other forms of hair loss) in medieval Iceland. But although voluntary and involuntary hair loss, including tonsuration, can signify in various ways in medieval Icelandic texts, there are analogies with the Lacanian phallus: hair and its loss can (even if not always) signify as marking gender within a network of symbolic exchange. Equating the Lacanian phallus with hair or the tonsure is too simplistic. Nevertheless, noting a loose analogy may draw attention to symbolic functions of hair one might otherwise miss.

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The Thidrekssaga and the birth of the first Russian state

Alessio Piccinini, Department of Slavonic Studies, University of Rome, La Sapienza, Italy

Norse sagas are an instrument of vital importance for the study of the ancient history of northern Europe, a region which had been only partially touched upon by classical historiography and the geographers of the Ancient World, whose heritage was the only reliable evidence for any scientific discussion up to modern times.

In the 19th century, the inquiries of Scandinavian and Russian scholars on the folk-lore of the isolated and conservative societies of northern and eastern Europe had the aim of using the local oral tradition as a source of historical investigation since it was widely believed that pre-literate compositions could retain information of a distant past otherwise inaccessible to human knowledge. Russian scholars looking for reliable sources for the study of the origins of the Russian state began to study the sagas which dealt with ancient *Rus'*, the eastern Slavic state founded in the 9th c. around the mercantile stations of Holmgard and Aldejguborg.

This subject had been studied up to that time only through old Russian chronicles that were written in the monasteries of Kiev and Novgorod since the 11th c. The so-called *Povest vremennykh let*, the most important old Russian chronicle written in 1116 and based on previous annalistic sources, placed the birth of the Russian state in the year 862, contemporarily with the so called Call of the Varangians, the tale in which three Norsemen were invited by the Slavs to come to their lands and be their kings. In Russian historiography that year had always represented a chronological boundary beyond which it was impossible to think of any other political organization for the Slavs besides the tribal and primitive one described by the classical sources of Jordanes and Procopius of Caesarea, who dealt with the *Veneti*, *Sclaveni* and *Anti* in the 6th c., when they appeared in European history.

The study of Scandinavian sources would have helped Russian scholars to improve their knowledge of 10th and 11th c. Russia when the name of Vladimir the Saint, first Christian king of Russia, enters Scandinavian history, occupying an important role in the saga of Olaf Tryggvason. But for Russian historiography not only the *Konungasögur* were worth attention; one of the so-called *Fornaldarsögur* particularly drew the attention of Russian scholars in the second half of the 19th c. since it seemed to preserve a memory of the wars between Slavs and Goths that occurred in the 4th and 5th c. A. D. This is the *Piðriks saga af Bern*, also known as Thidrekssaga, written in Norway around 1250 and based on the Saxon and low-German epical tradition brought to Bergen by merchants from Münster and Bremen, who held at the time stable commercial stations in all northern Europe, from the Norwegian fjords to the Russian cities of Novgorod and Polotsk.

Thidrek, whose historical prototype is Theoderic the Great, king of the Ostrogothic reign of Italy, is here presented as a vassal of Attila engaged in a war against the people of the Vilcins (*Vilcinamenn*) for the conquest of the Russian strongholds of Holmgard, Polotsk and Smolensk. Various scholars in the second half of the 19th c. believed that the tale of a war between Goths and another people of the North could be the reflection of some historical event that the oral tradition had elaborated into an epic.

Russian academic A. A. Shachmatov had pointed out how in a passage of the 13th c. Russian epic poem *Slovo o polku Igoreve* there is an explicit reference to the wars between Ostrogoths and Anti in the northern provinces of the Black Sea, one of several wars that opposed the European barbarian tribes, the Asian nomads and the Western and Eastern Roman Empires. In a passage, the arrows of the Peceneghs, enemies of the Russians, are called Hunnish and the maidens of the Goths who live by the Black Sea, rejoicing at the defeat of the army of Igor', chant the age of the ancient king *Bus*. Jordanes in his *Getica* told the story of the war between the Goth Vinitarius and the king of the *Anti Boz* who was overthrown and crucified

with 60 members of his family. Shachmatov believed that the memory of this defeat had survived in the oral tradition until the 13th c. and that it was so well known that the author of the poem could use it as a paradigmatic example.

Russian scholars, noticing what had happened to their epic after the Mongolian Conquest, an epoch of decadence in which the national culture experienced deep changes and completely reorganized its traditional narrative heritage, were very inclined to think of the existence of an older heroic cycle related to the deeds of the Slavs in the Age of the Great Migrations that could have been partially forgotten following some crucial historical event. The discussion dealt with the ethnical name *Vilcinamenn*, which in the 17th c. Icelandic redactions of the saga appears in the form *Viltinamenn*, and with their possible identification with one of the historical peoples of the eastern Baltic, thus identifying the historical core lying at the base of the epical theme.

Another important feature of the Thidrekssaga is the presence of two main characters of the Russian epical cycle, Vladimir king of Kiev and Il'ya Muramets the *bogatyř*'. The cycle of ballads called *byliny*, which had begun to be written down only in the 18th c., was considered by Russian scholars to be a source of information for the investigation of Russian history preceding the Mongolian conquest of 1240 and the subsequent destruction of Kievan Rus'. Russian academic A. Veselovskij, considering the conclusions of his contemporaries regarding the possibility of using the Thidrekssaga as a historical source, believed that the research of an absolute historical truth beyond every place and people named in a literary composition was rather misleading because the epical matter and its characters cannot pass through historical and cultural changes without being deeply altered. According to Veselovskij's theory, in creating his art, a poet drew upon a varied matter made up of all the impressions and representations that had followed one upon the other through the generations inside a particular community. This is one of the reasons why even though in his two articles on the Thidrekssaga he examined the discussion about the historical identification of its main characters, he did not come to any definite conclusion, leaving the problem unsolved.

In more recent times, the studies of A. Veselovskij on the Thidrekssaga have been used by V. N. Azbelev to prove the existence of an eastern Slavic kingdom in the regions where the events of the Thidrekssaga take place: the provinces of Novgorod, Polotsk and Smolensk. Comparing the Thidrekssaga to a late Russian chronicle, which though is not unanimously recognized as authentic, he also asserts that Valldemar-Vladimir and Jlias-Il'ya were historical figures who fought against the Goths of Theoderic, becoming by the 5th c. the main characters of the epical cycle transmitted orally down to modern times.

In spite of the variety of literary evidences produced by the author, it is difficult to compare them with the evidence of the archaeological research carried out in the last century on the whole discussed area, especially regarding dwelling settlements of the 5th–9th c. that very rarely had defensive walls and in any case with the features of the strongholds described in the saga, which appeared only in the 10th c. The towns of *Holmgarđr*, *Pallteskja*, *Smalenzkja*, *Kænugarđr* (Kiev) were familiar to the Vikings who every year sailed on Russian rivers heading to Byzantium; these four cities are named in Icelandic geographical texts of the 13th–14th c. since they represented the main economic and political centres of Russia, whose urban history had begun in fact on the riverways of the Volchov and the Dnieper.

In the Thidrekssaga, the scene of the struggle between Goths and Vilcins is set in north-eastern Europe whereas Jordanes and Procopius say that the wars between Ostrogoths and *Anti* took place in the Ukrainian plateau between the mouth of the Dnepr and the Southern Bug.

This geographical translation does not involve only the Vilcins; Attila's court as well is displaced in the Saxon town of Soest while we know that the Hunnish king had his capital at Etzelburg in Pannonia. The shifting toward North-West is clear also when Attila appears to be

in Friesland and to move eastwards to seize the Hunnish Kingdom of king Melias, whose daughter had been abducted by the Vilcin king Ozantrix, Valldemar's brother. The compiler of the saga reverses the direction along which the Hunnish invasion had moved, which is from the East westwards, from the marshes around the Azov Sea across the Scythian plains into central Europe; in the saga, Attila moves instead from the West eastwards.

This historically incoherent geographical framework raises serious doubts as well about the reliability of the descriptions of *Vilcinaland* and the kingdoms of the brothers Ozantrix, Valldemar and Jlias, the latter of which is assigned a vaguely defined Kingdom of Greece that extends as far as the Black Sea. The saga says about Vilcinus that:

hernaði þat lande er kallað var Villcinaland. En þat heitir Suiðioð oc Gautland oc allt Svíakonungs uelldi. Skanœy. Sealand. Jvtland. Vinland oc all þau ríki er þar til hallda¹ (Unger, C. R., 1853:c.21)

When Vilcinus invades Pulinaland (Poland), Hertnit moves against him:

Thar kemr i gegn honum hertnið konungr er i þann tíma styrði Ruzciland. Oc mikít af Grielandi oc Ungaerlandi oc nalega allt austríki haeuir hann undir ser.² (Unger, C. R., 1853:c.22)

The war is victorious for Vilcinus who:

flytr hann her sinn upp i Ruziland oc vinnr þar margar stórar borgir. [Smalenzkiv oc Pallteskiv. Oc aðr letti riðr hann inn i Holmgardr er hofuðstaðr er [firir borgum Hertnit konungs.³ (Unger, C. R., 1853:c.22)

Not long after Vilcinus' death, however, Hertnit conquers back his lands and by defeating the heir of Vilcinus Nordian, he wins the whole Vilcinaland, unifying therefore all the countries of the Baltic; the capital of this Kingdom is Holmgard.

Before dying, king Hertnit divides his kingdom among his sons:

Þa setr hann sinn son Ozantrix hofðingia oc gefr honum allt ríki Villcina manna oc konungs nafn[...] Litilli stundu síðarr setr hertnit konungr sinn son[hoefðingia yvir ut i Greka. En sa heitir Jlias. Oc giefr honum iarllom [...]Þa gefr hann konungs nafn Valldimar syni sinum oc sætr hann konung yvir allt Ruzciland oc Pulinaland ac allar austrhalfvr rikiss sins.⁴ (Unger, C. R., 1853:c.26)

The Vilcins that Thidrek has to face are not Scandinavians but a people that once was tributary and then had become suzerain.

The geographical descriptions of the Thidrekssaga are those which characterize the *Fornaldarsögur* and the *Víkingasögur* which do not pretend to be reliable in a historical sense like the *Konungasögur* since they tell about a subject that is far in time and space. However, the names employed in these descriptions belong to the geographical conceptions of the 13th–

¹ "He ruled that land that was called Villcinaland. The one that is now called Sweden and Gotland and all the possessions of the Swedish king. Skåne, Sjælland, Jutland, Vinland and all the properties they hold".

² "Then came against him king Hertnit who at that time ruled over Russia (Ruziland) and had under himself much of Greece and Hungary and almost all the Kingdom of the East (Austríki)".

³ "Drives his army up to Russia seizing many big towns, Polotsk and Smolensk and before the end he rides into Holmgard which is the capital among the cities of king Hertnit".

⁴ "Then he put his son Ozantrix in charge and gave him all the kingdom of the Vilcins and the name of king; a little time afterwards king Hertnit puts his son Jlias in charge over Greece and gives him the title of jarl. Then he gave the name of king to his son Valldemar and gave him all Russia, Poland and all the eastern half of his kingdom".

14th cc. when the national Kingdom of Poland had emerged, as well as the principalities of Polotsk and Smolensk, with which the Icelandic geographical treatises revealed to be well acquainted.

As Stieblin-Kamenskij has pointed out, the need for reliability of the Scandinavian people depended on how distant the events told in the saga were from the listeners; this is why the *Islendingasögur* are so rich in place-names and genealogical lists, which had to be unanimously recognizable whereas the *Fornaldarsögur*, placing their story in the heroic age distant in time and space, widely used stereotyped descriptions that belonged to the indefinite category of myth since they were not required to represent an empirically definable world.

A clear witness of how people referred to these sagas is found in the *Sturlungasaga* where king Sverrir, after hearing the saga of Hromund Gripsson, says that the *Lygisögur* (lying sagas) are the funniest among them all. However, there was a people that could trace their descent back to Hromund Gripsson. These sagas do not pretend to tell a completely historical truth; nevertheless, they are not a product of autonomous invention since their characters hold a definite place in socially recognized genealogies. The *Thidrekssaga* appears as a synthesis of tales of various origin interlacing themselves around the figure of Thidrek, the main character in old German literature of an epical cycle to which the poems *Wolfdietrich* of 1225 and *Dietrichs Flucht* written after 1282 belong; in the prologue, the Norwegian compiler makes a statement about how he created his work saying:

Þessi saga er samansett eptir sogn þyðeskra manna. En sumt af [þeira kvæðum er skemta skal rikum monnum ok fornort voru þegar eptir tíðindum sem segir í þessari sögu. Ok þo at þu takir einn mann or hverri borg um allt Saxland. Þa munu þessa sögu allir a eina leið segia. en þui vallda þeirra hin fornu kvæði.⁵ (Unger, C. R., 1853: Prologus)

The prologue affirms the great diffusion of this saga among the Saxons and at the same time, it lays stress on the entertaining and amusing character of this literary work allowing it to be associated with the *Lygisögur* of which king Sverrir spoke enthusiastically, as he defined them *skemmtligaste*, “the most amusing”; the author of the prologue employs the verb *skemta*, “to amuse”, confirming that the social function of these tales was the same. Having the long gone past as its subject and countries outside Scandinavia as its setting, it is likely that the *Thidrekssaga* belonged to the genre of the *Fornaldarsögur* and in particular to the *Lygisögur* for the audiences of the time. In this case, the inquiries of Russian scholars, aiming to extrapolate and isolate a core of historical truth from the narrative matter belonging to an epoch badly documented in their sources, turn out to be rather difficult since they pretend to use a work that the Scandinavians of the 13th c. considered to be outside their concept of history as reliable evidence.

This way of treating literary sources derived from the Russian academic world’s faith in the historical reliability of the oral heritage of folk ballads and from the lack of information regarding the subject of the birth of the Russian state, which made Russia’s past rather unknown when compared to other European nations of the North.

⁵ “This saga has been written according to the tales of German people and on their songs which are amusement for wealthy men, composed not much time after the events that are told in this saga. And if you take a man from every city of Saxony, they will tell this saga all in the same way; the reason for that is the antiquity of their songs”.

The problem of the historicity of the Vilcins.

The manuscripts in which the Thidrekssaga has come to us appear fragmentary and discordant in several points, showing contradictions in the plot and frequent confusion with the names of the characters, elements that point out the compilation feature of the work, for which sources not always in accordance among themselves have been used. This is the case of the names *Vilcinus* and *Vilcinaland* that drew the attention of scholars from the beginning; these forms are found in the two Norwegian redactions of the 13th c. and with the graphical variant *Wilkinus* in the Swedish translation of the 15th c. The two Icelandic manuscripts of the 17th c. have instead the forms *Viltinus* and *Viltinaland* which have been considered by the majority of 19th c. scholars to be an older form of the name; this is a crucial point of the discussion because these scholars, among whom Veselovskij, chose to focus on a name that had appeared only in a late redaction of the saga, putting aside the name of the older version, simply because this better suited their needs for a historical identification of the peoples of the saga.

Veselovskij sees in the *Viltinamenn* of the saga one of the peoples that dwelt on the Baltic coasts as early as the 2nd c. A.D. when the Greek geographer Ptolemy records the presence of a tribe called *Ouéltaï*. Between 798 and 1157, the people of the *Veleti* or *Veletabi* stably occupy the regions between the middle reaches of the Oder and the Elbe and the isle of Rügen. This is the area the Scandinavians called *Vendland*, probably from the Slavic *Veneti*, a collective name for the *Sclaveni* and *Anti*, a further division of the Slavic people, the *Anti* being its most eastern and Iranic-featured part, which disappeared from history, defeated by the Avars in the early 7th c. The name *Sclaveni* developed into the ethnic name Slav-Slovenian whereas *Veneti* led to Norse *Vendland* and German *Windisch*, used for the Slavonic speaking peoples of modern Germany, the Sorabs.

But if the history of the name *Vendland* is well known, it is not clear how the form *Veleti* eventually came to refer to the *Veneti*. The Russian scholar F. Braun assumed that the name *Veneti* comprised all Baltic and Slavic tribes of the southern coast of the Baltic and that the form *Ouéltaï* in Ptolemy was a mistaken transcription; around the name *Veleti* arose a great confusion of interpretations: Safarik, Niederle and Gil'ferding believed them to be Slavs; Müllenhoff on the other hand thought they must be Estonians. A Germanic etymology was given to them by Much who proposed that their name came from the root **Welthai*, **Welthos*, "fierce, wild" as Gothic *wiltheis*.

This gives the idea of the kind of discussion that had arisen among scholars, who pretended to assign all the concreteness of historical evidence to the characters of an epic work. Veselovskij tried to bring the discussion into the field of folk oral tradition, which he thought to be nearer to a literary work like the Thidrekssaga than the strictly historical investigation of his contemporaries (which appeared also quite conjectural to him). He thought that the name *Veleti* must be somehow associated with the eastern-Slavic peoples because the same name with the variant *Voloti* is found in Belorussian folklore. There it refers to supernatural creatures who live under the earth, being the heirs of the ancient pre-Christian inhabitants of Russia, who fled the new faith and concealed themselves from mankind. Veselovskij cites an Old-Russian gloss that translates the Greek *gigas*, "giant" with *Volot* and observes that these *Voloti-Veleti* were in fact described as enormous creatures, often dangerous for the peasants who came across them.

There are many place-names like *Volotovo*, *Veletov*, *Volotovo Pole*, also the site of the grave of Gostomysl', the last king of Novgorod before the call of the Varangians, which recall the name of this mythical, maybe once historical people. Further evidence for the Slavic identity of the *Veleti-Veletabi* is Einhard, who in the *Vita Karoli Magni* names some of their kings, with undoubtedly Slavonic names like *Dragovit*, *Ljubij*, *Milogost* and *Tselograd*; thus, by the early 9th c., the *Veleti* appear to be a true Slavic people, one of the main enemies of the

Carolingians and subsequently of the Emperors of Saxony in the wars for the conquest of the Baltic Lands and central Europe.

It is in fact the struggle between Germans and Baltic Slavs that may have constituted the historical model of the epic theme of the Thidrekssaga. Some events that occurred in north-east Germany at the end of the 10th c. have similar counterparts in the plot of the Thidreks-saga; this is the case of the wars between the Saxons and the Slavic *Vilzi* (here the name *Vilzi* is the high-German pronunciation of the name *Velti*) that ended with the siege of the city of Brandenburg carried out in 983 by the *Vilzi* who after an initial victory were defeated and slaughtered by the army of the margrave Dietrich. In the Thidrekssaga, the king of the Vilcins Ozantrix is killed precisely under the walls of Brandenburg after having attempted to lay siege to the city, defended by Thidrek.

The Vends were often allies of the Danes and together with them represented a continual threat along the northern and eastern borders for the Emperors of Saxony; in 975, Otto II moved against Harald Bluetooth in order to stop Viking raids on the coastal regions. In the Thidrekssaga, king Ozantrix, in his long war against Attila and Thidrek, as well as in his previous war against the Hunnish king Melias, is supported by the four sons of Nordian, the former ruler of Vilcinaland who had been defeated by Hertnit; these chieftains rule in Denmark and Sweden and are tributaries and friends of Ozantrix, ready to send their armies every time he needs their help.

This Danish-Slavic alliance against the Germans described in the saga and in the medieval annalistic sources has been pointed out by Müllenhoff who thought that the elaboration of the epic and the fusion with the southern Germanic theme of Wieland, Siegfried and the Burgunds was carried out in Saxony, as is in fact reported in the prologue of the saga.

Veselovskij sees how this adaptation of historical events to a national epic frame, set up before hand by the poetical tradition, is similar to what had happened in the Russian epical cycle, that continued to employ the same characters, Vladimir, Il'ya Muromets, Dobrynja Nikitic, Mikula Seljanovic and others, adapting them to the new historical changes, which involved society, religion, national consciousness and political expectations.

This is how the traditional figures of Thidrek and Attila, who historically acted in different places and conditions, could eventually represent events which had occurred in a more recent past. In this case, the facts that occurred between the 10th and the 13th c. could have influenced the poets of northern Germany driving them to inscribe new contents in an more archaic thematic matter, that of the mythological heroes Volund and Sigurd which belonged to the whole Germanic world.

The action of the part of the Thidrekssaga that deals with the Vilcins is concentrated in fact in north-eastern Europe, a region perceived by the Saxons as the main land where they led their commercial expansion, placing stable bases in the principal urban centres; it was also the area that the Germans constantly looked at as a territory to conquer at the beginning of the historical Drang nach Osten that characterized the Middle-Ages and later times.

Valldemar and the search for a Slavic kingdom in the 5th c. A. D.

As has been pointed out, Veselovskij never openly asserted the possibility of the existence of a Slavic kingdom in north-eastern Europe as early as the 5th c., believing that the reminiscences of single tribal struggles between Goths and Slavs could have been transplanted in an epic tale with geographical features which were familiar to the compiler of the 13th c.

Recently, however, S. N. Azbelev has proposed the real existence of such a kingdom, using as evidence a tale contained in the Russian chronicle called *Novgorodskaja Ioakimovskaja letopis'* (Novgorod Chronicle of Ioakim), discovered by V. N. Tatischev in the 17th c. Here

there is mention of a genealogy of Russian kings preceding Gostomysl' which arrived up to the 5th c.

The chronicle mentions a king Vladimir who had ruled in Novgorod 14 generations before Gostomysl' (mid 9th c.); adopting the system of computation used by Jordanes to calculate the length of the Gothic dynasty of the Amals, which assigned the average length of 25 years to every reign, Tatischev infers that there must have been 350 years between Gostomysl' and Vladimir. The first Slavic kingdom would have therefore belonged to the mid 5th c. in full accord with the Thidrekssaga.

Azbelev lays stress on the conservative character of the tradition of Novgorod which was spared by Mongolian rule and is therefore the only one to mention an older dynasty of Slavic kings, preceding the coming of Rjurik. The Chronicle of Ioakim is not unanimously considered an authentic work since Tatischev never produced the original manuscript, saying that it was lost right after he had copied it. But a king called Gostomysl' is known to western sources, The Bertinian Annals and the Annals of Fulda, which say that he was the leader of a confederation of Slavic tribes of the Baltic, extending as far as the lakes Il'men and Ladoga, defeated by Ludwig Germanic in 844 and forced to return to Holmgard, the eastern capital of the confederation.

V. Janin sees in the strong economic and political development enjoyed by Novgorod in the 9th c. the contribution of incomers from the regions of the Oder who having lived very close to the Carolingians, the Saxons and the Danes were already organized in a feudal-featured kingdom.

The archaeological evidence shows that until the 9th c. in the forest region of the north, and on the medium reaches of the Pripyat and the Dnieper, settlements were small and scattered far from each other, without fortifications, resulting very different from the description of Polotsk, Smolensk and Holmgard in the Thidrekssaga, which better suit the fortified mercantile stations that gave Russia the Norse name of *Garðariki*.

The surveys made by Janin, Tret'jakov and Sedov on the areas of the cultures of Praga-Korcak, Pen'kovka and Cernjakhov confirm that until the 9th-10th c. there were no real cities and that urban life appeared as a consequence of the need for protection that arose after the establishment of permanent commercial routes between the Baltic and the Black Sea.

This commercial corridor along the Volchov and the Dnieper was not yet established at the time of the Great Migrations as proved by the extremely poor and primitive cultural level of the sites north of the Cernjakhov culture, where the heirs of the Starobincy culture lived, that had not enjoyed the economic and technological progress of the cities of the coast, close to the northern boundary of the Greek world.

It seems at the time of the arrival of the Huns these peoples, settled along the tributary streams of the Pripyat, Dnieper and Dniester lived according to a social organization based on the small familial units described by the *Povest vremennyh let*.

The Hunnish invasion destroyed the Gothic kingdom of Ermanaric, which we know had relations with the Slavs; Jordanes says that Ermanaric subjected the *Veneti* and other peoples of the North: the *Thuidos*, *Merens* and *Mordensimnis*. Veselovskij had pointed out that these ethnical names coincide with those of the *Cudi*, *Merja* and *Mrdva* that the *Povest vremennyh let* gives in the same order, when referring to the tribes that inhabited Russia before the call of the Varangians.

These Finnish tribes had lived close to the Slavs by the age of Ermanaric having fallen together under the rule of the Gothic kingdom of the Black Sea, but the fact that they were subjected to the Goths in the late 4th c. does not implicate that they had a political organization as complex as that described in the Thidrekssaga for the reigns of Ozantrix and Vladimir.

In the 7th c., the peoples settled in the upper Dnieper, on the Prypiat and around the lake Il'men still lived in villages made of 7–10 houses, close to rivers or protected by marshes,

very rarely showing any sign of fortification. An exception is the site of Zimno, on the Luga river, a tributary of the western Bug, which appears as a temporary fortified settlement that was used in case of enemy aggression. There are no signs of the typical pits for food storage, which were found in every village associated with the early Slavic culture but there were tools for craftsmanship, a sign that there were wares that had to be protected; the site was destroyed and burned in the 7th c. and the recovery of arrow-heads typical of the nomadic steppe peoples allows to point at the Avars, who were active in the area at the time, as the probable plunderers of the site.

This kind of settlement is however very rare until the 9th c. when Russian fortresses begin to appear. The evidence given by the archaeology reveals that in the regions where Polotsk, Smolensk and Holmgard subsequently appeared, a slow process of ethnical and cultural integration was taking place between Baltic, Finnish and Slavic tribes, who gradually migrated along the many rivers and marshes which crossed the Russian plain up into the forest regions, eventually merging into new peoples. Therefore, the evidence for a Slavonic kingdom, ethnically homogeneous and politically structured in the age of the Great Migrations, appears in the end rather scanty.

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Suffering a sea-change: poetic justice in Egill's *Sonatorrek*

Debbie Potts, Dept. of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, University of Cambridge, England

The rather unusual and unexpected image of the tongue-tied skald in the opening stanzas of *Sonatorrek* provides a marked contrast to the poem's popular reception in modern scholarship.¹ There is always more to be said about *Sonatorrek*. The construction of Egill's poetic voice strikes us as personal, confessional, lyrical. Kate Heslop asserts that the prioritisation of *Sonatorrek* within the skaldic corpus is prompted by the 'romantic interests' of twentieth-century scholars, who favour the kind of 'lyric' poetry that is amenable to the methods of close practical criticism and values of literary appreciation propagated by the New Critical movement (2000: 158–9). Yet most of the recent scholarship surrounding *Sonatorrek* has focused on the patterns of myth and ritual, religious ideas, and the traditional elegiac and gnomic tropes which underlie the structure and rhetoric of the poem (for example: Harris 1994, 2005, 2006, 2007; Jón Aðalsteinsson 2003; North 1990).² My approach here will address the poet's manipulation of metaphor, a subject which is often touched on by critics when applying various other methodologies, but not to the extent the poem's complexity demands.

Peter Orton's article on Snorri's mead of poetry myth and related poetry-kennings highlights the force of conceptual blending within the traditions and innovative adaptations of skalds in their use of metaphor (2007). Conceptual blending constitutes a network of associations rather than basic one-to-one mapping between the source concept and the target concept of a metaphor. The associative networks developed in *Sonatorrek* do not simply function within individual kennings but permeate the larger rhetorical development of the poem. Yet the apparent simplicity of *Sonatorrek*'s poetic utterance seems to separate it from the complexity of diction and syntax we expect from tenth-century skaldic verse. The poem is composed in *kviðuhátt*, a far less demanding metrical form than the *dróttkvætt*, and its shorter syllable count leaves less spatial manoeuvre for the crafting of complex imagery or intricate syntactical arrangements. John Lindow equates the kenning, skaldic poetry's most distinctive stylistic feature, with the structural and cognitive patterns involved in riddles. He distinguishes *Sonatorrek* as an example to the contrary of skaldic diction's riddling complexity:

the *Sonatorrek* of Egill Skallagrímsson has nothing to do with the court but is a rather genuine outpouring of grief. The diction and metre employed are therefore quite simple and dissimilar from both *dróttkvætt* and riddles in every way (1975: 320).

I intend to demonstrate that the emotional power of *Sonatorrek* does not emerge from its lyrical simplicity, but rather the very complex matrix of symbolic correspondences developed by Egill through his manipulation of the imaginative resonance of the cognitive categories within skaldic diction. We are told in the narrative of *Egils saga* that Bǫðvarr, one of the lost sons of *Sonatorrek*, perished in a ship-wreck. The sea-change he suffers is one which converts him not into coral or pearls but into the language of poetry. Just as, in myth, the constituent parts of the primordial giant Ymir are converted into the land and seascape of the Norse cosmos,

¹ All skaldic quotations are taken from the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages website unless otherwise indicated and my referencing system for the verse follows the website's abbreviations: <<http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au>>.

² A notable exception is Carolyne Larrington's article, which explores the stylistic features of *Arinbjarnarkviða* and *Sonatorrek* with a view towards aesthetic valuation. This paper is partly indebted to Larrington's suggestion that '*Sonatorrek* achieves a therapeutic distancing of grief through the defamiliarisation inherent in the making of metaphors' (1992: 63).

the workings of metaphor transform Egill's son into both *mæðar timbr / máli laufgat* ('praise-timbre, leafed in language') [Egill *St* 5/7–8] and the surging onrush of poetic liquid.

Sonatorrek, as we have it, exists as an (almost) complete, unified poem. But it is only preserved in this state in one compendium of the *Íslendingasögur* (Ketilsbók), in two almost identical seventeenth-century manuscripts.³ The earliest redaction of *Egils saga*, the fourteenth-century Möðruvallabók, quotes only the first stanza of *Sonatorrek*. Stanza 23 and the first *helmingr* of 24 are also preserved in versions of *Skáldskaparmál*. This renders the process of aesthetic appreciation somewhat problematic as we cannot assume the autonomy or the authenticity of the poem as we have received it. But this does suggest that the compilers of Ketilsbók considered *Sonatorrek* to be a whole poem, and one that merited (or required) substantial quotation. The obscurity of diction in certain stanzas (particularly 3 and 8, which are explored below) has proved problematic for modern scholars and is thus seen as corrupt (Bjarni Einarsson 2003: 146). This paper's examination of the poem's associative networks yields interpretations which require very little alteration to the manuscript evidence.

For the post-Freudian audience, the prose frame in *Egils saga* encourages us to view *Sonatorrek* as a kind of talking cure, a form of creative compensation for the loss of Egill's sons. Devastated by the death of his favourite son, Egill dramatically shuts himself away and refuses food and drink, having lost his appetite for life. His bout of melancholy is thwarted by the machinations of his daughter, who tricks him into drinking milk and prompts the cathartic composition of *Sonatorrek*. The poem operates as a replacement for Egill's lost love-object, drawing him out of a state of personal melancholia into the normative social process of mourning: *Egill tók at hressask svá sem fram leið at yrkja kvæðit[...]* *Síðan lét Egill erfa sonu sína eptir fornri siðvenju* ('Egill recovered his good spirit as he composed verse[...] then Egill arranged a funeral feast for his son after the ancient custom') (Bjarni Einarsson 2003: ch. 80).

However, in the first stanza of *Sonatorrek*, the subject matter is not so much a lament for the loss of a son as a lament for the loss of poetic language:

Mjök erum tregt
tungu at hræra
ór⁴ loptvætt
ljóðpundara;
esa nú vænligt
of Viðurs þýfi,
né hógdrægt
ór hugar fylgsni [Egill *St* 1].

I am very reluctant to move my tongue through the weight of the air on my {steelyard of poetry} [TONGUE]; now the {theft of Viðurr <=Óðinn>} [POETRY] is not expected, nor easily dragged from the {hiding place of thought} [MIND/BREAST].

Rather than an image of the poetic mead surging forth from the poet's mouth in a performative reproduction of poetry's divine and mythic origin (Clover 1978), Egill has writer's, or rather, composer's block. He cannot move his tongue because the weight of his subject matter is too heavy. The kenning *ljóðpundari* ('the steelyard of poetry') evokes the image of the tongue as a set of scales, measuring out language into the structure of poetic metre. This metaphor sets a precedent for Egill's creative technique and thematic concerns throughout

³ AM 453 4to and AM 462 4to.

⁴ I follow the reading *ór* from Möðruvallabók (Finnur Jónsson 1913–15: AI 40), though the *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages* edition currently takes it as *með*, in line with Finnur's emended text (Finnur Jónsson 1913–15: BI 34).

Sonatorrek. The poem is structured around the process of balancing out, of the attempt to attain emotional, intellectual and creative equilibrium. The poetic voice's creative doubt at the beginning is measured against the revitalised poetic assertion of the closing stanzas, where the poet's *íþrótt* ('skill') is acknowledged as beyond reproach [Egill *St* 24/1–4] and is recognised as a possible form of compensation for the loss of the poet's sons [Egill *St* 23/5–8]. Egill's use of language and imagery creates a framework of symbolic associations between disparate elements of nature, myth, the psyche, poetry, the metaphorical and the literal, in order to produce a kind of imaginative balance: to create, as it were, a sense of poetic justice out of the seemingly unjust trauma of loss.

The dynamic of *Sonatorrek* is based on the notion of sacrifice; poetry is construed as a form of recompense for the loss of Egill's sons, who are symbolically imagined as a sacrifice to Óðinn (Harris 1994). This becomes explicit in stanzas 23–4, where the poetic voice dramatically declares that his unwilling sacrifice to the duplicitous god has been atoned with poetry, a skill without fault, and a mind (*geð* [Egill *St* 24/5]) which exposes his enemies. Egill exploits the fluidity of poetic language, the slippage between word and meaning, in order to imbue his sons and the craft of poetry with a symbolic correspondence. Yet the idea of exchange extends beyond this basic symbolic sacrifice, which weighs familial inheritance against poetic posterity, to the metaphorical 'exchange' between the concepts in the language and imagery of the poem. I will consider a particular aspect of this conceptual exchange: the relationship between the concepts of poetry, the sea, ships and mead, concepts which are often blended within the traditions of poetry-kenning patterns.

The third stanza of *Sonatorrek* is notoriously problematic and elusive, but it seems to exemplify – at least in my reading – the fluid exchange of concepts within metaphorical figures, an exchange which operates implicitly throughout the poem's larger aesthetic framework:

Lastalaus,
 es lifnaði
 á nǫkkvers
 nǫkkva bragi;
 jǫtuns hals
 undir þjóta
 náins niðr
 fyr naustdurum [Egill *St* 3].

Faultless, when the {Bragi of the {ship of Nǫkkverr <=>dwarf}} [POETRY > POET] enlivened it; the {{{wounds of the neck} of the giant <=>Ymir} of Náinn <=>dwarf}} [BLOOD > SEA > POETRY] rush down before the {doorway of the boathouse} [LIPS].

The first *helmingr* has been subjected to a number of speculative emendations, but I follow Turville-Petre's interpretation of the manuscript reading *nǫkkvi nǫkkvers* ('ship of Nǫkkverr <=>dwarf') as a kenning for poetry (1974: 43), whilst supplying *bragi* as a further base word to form a kenning for poet. In this sense, the poem is aligned with a ship, steered by the poet-sailor. Evidence elsewhere in the skaldic corpus suggests that the conceptualisation of poetry as a ship is an association which is embedded in skaldic tradition. A number of kennings for poetry feature a synonym for ship as the base word (Meissner 1921: 428; Kreutzer 1977: 101–3) and they (almost) always involve a dwarf name or dwarf-kenning as the determining figure, in line with the narrative of the myth of the mead of poetry in *Skáldskaparmál*, although there is at least one exception.⁵ A structural extension to this metaphor is manifest in a group of

⁵ A variant of Bragi's verse addressed to a troll-woman in a version of *Skáldskaparmál* preserved in AM 728 II 4to contains a kenning for poet which reads *skipsmið Viðurs* ('smith of the ship of Viðurr <=>Óðinn') rather

kennings for tongue, which employ a synonym for oar or rudder as the base word (Meissner 1921: 133).⁶ The semantic spheres of ships and sailing seem to pervade as metaphors for poetry, both within self-referential skaldic diction and in the technical terms applied to skaldic poetry in thirteenth-century commentary (Sayers 2002; Kreutzer 1977: 255–7).

In the second *helmingr*, I follow the common reading of *undir hals jǫtuns* (‘wounds of the neck of the giant’) as a kenning for the sea, which might be taken to represent poetry in a metaphor which operates in the general context of the stanza rather than within the structures of a kenning. I would suggest that Náinn could be added to this sea-kenning as a further determinant, forming a poetry-kenning which resolves to the basic pattern ‘sea/liquid of the dwarf’. This leave us with *naustdyrr* (‘doorway of the boathouse’), which scholars have tended to attach to Náinn to form a kenning for rocks, giving a sense of the sea, rushing against the skerries (Turville-Petre 1974: 43–4). But it is not inconceivable that *naustdyrr* could be construed as a half-kenning which, given its context in a stanza describing poetic utterance, signifies the poet’s lips. The majority of kennings for mouth have some form of building as their base word (Meissner 1921:132–3). Associating the mouth with a boathouse is particularly appropriate in the context of this stanza, given the alignment of poetry with a ship in the first *helmingr*. We might compare this to the metaphorical continuity developed by the eleventh-century skald Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, where he adopts the base word *smiðja* (‘smithy’) in a kenning for speech within a *lausavísa* which depicts an argument between a smith and tanner in terms of the mythical fight between Þórr and the giant Geirrǫðr: *siur smiðju galdra* (‘{sparks of the {smithy of chanting}} [MOUTH > ABUSIVE SPEECH]’) [ÞjóðA Lv 5/7–8]. Þjóðólfr’s kenning applies an extended or structural metaphor which conceptualises the mouth as a forge and the words as sparks which are cast out as the smith fashions his argument-artifact.

The figurative process in stanza 3 of *Sonatorrek* is slightly more complex, given the kind of blending required to equate poetry with a ship, launched from the mouth-boathouse, whilst simultaneously representing poetry as the sea. The ship metaphor developed in the first *helmingr* transforms in the second *helmingr* to the image of poetry as a raging, primordial ocean, merging with the initial ship metaphor which is reactivated in the word *naust*. Although the metaphor’s source domains of ship and sea are related – ship could be a structural element in the conceptual domain of sea and the sea an element in that of ship – they are somewhat paradoxical when applied to the same target domain. But such a blend seems to be a well established feature in the self-referential language of traditional skaldic poetry, where the various source domains for the concept of poetry interlink to form a network of associations. An example of the way in which skalds manipulate this kind of associative network is Einarr Helgason’s *austr víngnóðar Hertýs* (‘{bilge-water of the {ship of the {wine of Hertýr <=Óðinn>}} } [POETRY > CONTAINER OF POETRY > POETRY]’) [Eskál Vell 5/2–4]. In the concentrated space of one *rekit* kenning, Einarr fuses three conceptual metaphors – the sea, an intoxicating liquid and a ship – for poetry. The blend in Egill’s stanza, and indeed the poem as a whole, works through the accumulative interaction of kennings and other rhetorical figures.

than *skapsmið Viðurs* (‘smith of the mind of Viðurr’) [Bragi *Troll* 1/2] (Finnur Jónsson 1913–15: AI 5). A passage addressing poetry-kennings in *Litla Skálda* in AM 748 Ib 4to suggests that the three main determinants (Óðinn, dwarves, giants) and any base word (including ‘ship’) are interchangeable, irrespective of the mead of poetry myth (Jón Sigurðsson 1848–87: 428). I should also mention *stefknorr* (‘stef-ship’) [HSt Frag 5/4], which operates semantically outside of any mythical frame of reference.

⁶ For example: *orða ár* (‘oar of words’) [Anon *Líkn* 2/5–7; Arngr *Gd* 2/5], *stýri máls* (‘rudder of speech’) [Anon *Leið* 37/3], *hlýr orða* (‘ship-bow of words’). It should be noted that the oar-tongue patterns we have preserved are much younger than *Sonatorrek*, assuming the veracity of the poem’s tenth-century attribution.

In stanza 6, the destructive sea is referred to with simple *heiti* (*hrönn, sær* [Egill *St* 6/2, 8]) as Egill develops the metaphor of his diminishing family as a wall (*frændgarðr* [Egill *St* 6/4]) which is eroded by the onslaught of waves. This echoes the image of weathering in stanza 4, where the poet's family is equated with the withered maples at the edge of the forest, implicitly worn away by the elements of impersonal nature [Egill *St* 4/1–4]. But in stanzas 7 and 8, Egill constructs kennings which endow Ægir, the sea's chthonic personification, with familial relationships:

Mjök hefr Rón
of rysktan mik;
emk ofsnauðr
at ástvinum;
sleit marr þond
minnar ættar,
snaran þótt
af sjölfum mér [Egill *St* 7].

Rán <=wave goddess> has shaken me very roughly; I am bereft of sympathetic friends; the sea snapped the ties of my family, though strung from me myself.

Veiztu um þá sök
sverði of rækak,
vas ǫlsmið
allra tíma;
roða vágs bræðr
um voga mættak,
færa ek andvígr
ægis mani [Egill *St* 8].⁷

You know that if I could get revenge by sword for the grievance, then it would be the end of the {ale-smith's} [ÆGIR] time; if I could dare to redden the {brother of the wave} [SEA], I would have attacked the {woman of ÆGIR} [WAVE].

The poetic voice laments that the wave goddess has treated him harshly and the poet lacks (probably female) friends who are sympathetic towards him. Rather ironically, a female companion does emerge in the final stanza of *Sonatorrek*, but in the form of Hel, who is likely to prove a rougher match than Rán [Egill *St* 25]. The kennings in stanza 8 equip the sea with kinship ties. Egill's poetic voice fantasises about the possibility of vengeance, projecting human codes onto the natural world. He effectively exploits poetic language to humanise the sea, rendering it imaginatively susceptible to revenge. But in reality, Egill is the medieval Icelandic King Lear, a directionless (*gengileysi* [*St* 9/8]) old man who impotently curses the indifferent elements.

The kenning *ǫlsmiðr* ('smith of ale') is commonly taken as a reference to Ægir, who is explicitly characterised as the brewer of mead for the gods in the prose frame of *Lokasenna* and the mythological dialogue at the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál*. The concept of Ægir as a brewer is reiterated in stanza 19 of *Sonatorrek*, where he is termed the *hrosta hilmir* ('chief of

⁷ My text of stanza 8 constitutes a normalised version of Finnur's diplomatic edition (Finnur Jónsson 1913–15: AI 41). The most significant difference in the edition on the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages website is that lines 5–6 are emended to *hroða vábræðr / ef viðá mættak* ('if I could cut down the destructive {brother of the wind} [SEA]'). Bjarni Einarsson and Turville-Petre suggest that *vas* ('was') would be more appropriate in its subjunctive form, although this would be metrically unsuitable, and this is the sense I have used in my translation (Bjarni Einarsson 2003: 148; Turville-Petre 1974: 46).

crushed-malt') [Egill *St* 19/3]. But apart from Sturla Þórðarson's much later sea-kenning *bjórr útverja* ('beer of the outlying fishing stations') [Sturl *Hrafn* 12/7–8], there are, as far as I am aware, no other kennings for sea or Ægir in the extant corpus which associate the sea with either the process or the product of brewing. In Snæbjörn's *liðmeldr Amlóða* ('{{meal-ship}} of Amlóði <=sea-king?>') [MILL > SEA'] [Snæbj Lv 1/6–8], the element *lið* ('ship') could be read as *líð* ('ale'), but in the context of this verse, where the lord's ship is said to cut through the sea, the dominant image in the kenning is more likely to be the concept of the sea as a mill which grinds ships (see Tolley 1995). Egill's sea-kenning *hrosta hilmir* probably plays on a similar frame of reference although the product of the sea-mill in this instance is specifically the mash used in brewing. This is rather apt in the symbolic scheme of *Sonatorrek* when we consider that the sea has ground the ship of the poet's son, and the compensatory product Egill receives is the poetry-mead.

An alternative reading of *qlsmiðr* would be to take it as a kenning for poet, and this would seem the more obvious reading, I think, if it were removed from its verse context. Aside from the prevalent metaphor of poetry as an intoxicating liquid in the self-reflexive language of the skaldic corpus, there are a number of kennings for poet which conceive of the composer as someone who bears ale or is a smith who forges poetry (Meissner 1921: 363–4). For example, Bragi refers to himself as *Yggs qlbera* ('server of the ale of Yggr <=Óðinn>') [Bragi *Troll* 1/5] and *hagsmið bragar* ('skilled smith of poetry') [Bragi *Troll* 1/7]. So if we interpret *qlsmiðr* as 'poet', the sense of the *helmingr* would be: 'you know that if I could get revenge by sword for the grievance, then I would be the poet of all time.' Perhaps scholars have been disinclined to read it as such because the kenning lacks a mythological determinant which would delimit the metaphorical potential of the *ql* to the referential frame of the myth of the mead of poetry. As it stands, the ambiguity of this kenning points to the associative complexity in operation in *Sonatorrek*. Both the poet and the sea are brewers of mead, and just as the destructive sea has torn a gap in the poet's kin-wall, it plays an integral role in the brewing process of the poet's creative compensation.

In the course of *Sonatorrek*, the associations between concepts change and adapt through an echoing of images, manipulating the conceptual blends embedded within tradition and developing new correspondences specific to the poem's context and thematic concerns. Óðinn, the oath-breaker who is as changeable as *Sonatorrek*'s conceptual ebb and flow, serves up 'justice' in the form of poetic mead. Boðvarr's literal death at sea becomes submerged in the intermingling currents of figurative associations functioning in his father's compensatory craft. Whether this compensation is ultimately an adequate means of catharsis is uncertain, as the final stanza of *Sonatorrek* seems to maintain the oscillating balance manifest in the structure of the poem as a whole. The poet continues to be in difficulty (*torvelt*) [Egill *St* 25/1], echoing his situation in stanza 15 [Egill *St* 15/1], and yet he is simultaneously *gláðr* ('glad') [Egill *St* 25/5] and *ó-hryggr* ('without sadness') [Egill *St* 25/7]. A sense of passive resignation to one's own mortality subsumes the triumphant poetic assertion of stanza 24. But Egill's *Sonatorrek*, with its complex network of associations between words, images, the mythical, and the psychological, is a testimony to the power of poetry. It conveys poetry's ability to confuse and even dissolve the boundaries between concepts, between words and meaning, to give an illusory sense of balance (or poetic justice) in a world that seems unbalanced and unfair.

Returning to the above quotation from Lindow, which asserts that *Sonatorrek* is 'quite simple and dissimilar from both *dróttkvætt* and riddles in every way,' I would suggest the opposite, that the meaning developed and accumulated by the language and imagery of *Sonatorrek* creates an intellectual and emotional matrix that is, in fact, just as complex as the cognitive process involved in a riddle.

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Betrothal and betrayal: the eddic tradition's treatment of Sigurðr

Judy Quinn, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic, Cambridge University, England

The Codex Regius cycle of eddic poems introduces Sigurðr in the prose link following the Helgi poems as “þá allra framarstr, ok hann kalla allir menn í fornfœðum um alla menn fram ok göfgastan herkonunga”¹ (‘then the most outstanding of all, and everyone in ancient tradition calls him foremost among men and the most magnificent of warrior-kings’). While all the voices of ancient tradition are united about Sigurðr’s pre-eminence, there seems to have been less consensus about his culpability as a breaker of oaths. Many of the voices of *fornfræði* appear to be present in the eddic tradition as it is turned into the extant vellum anthology, whether through the recollection of orally transmitted poems or through the assimilation of strands of the tradition by the compiler (or his predecessor/s) in the forging of prose explanations before and after poems. The focus of my paper is on two inter-related issues arising from the eddic poems about Sigurðr: first, I will examine the pre-occupation these poems expose with fundamental ethical issues about the keeping of oaths as the foundation for social honour and dynastic survival; and second, I will consider the capacity of the eddic tradition to generate a multiplicity of perspectives on heroic behaviour through the composition of different genres out of the same plot material.

In the tradition of eddic heroic poetry, the focus of each work is generally on a conversation between two; even if more speakers are brought into play, the spotlight moves sequentially from duologue to duologue (the first *Guðrúnarkviða*, for instance). In poems whose dominant mode is third-person narrative (such as *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*), whatever conversation is reported still tends to be private, focused on just one or two figures. And when a poem is cast predominantly as monologue, there is usually a single addressee (for example, *Helreið Brynhildar*) or a fanning out of address from a single addressee to a wider audience of listeners beyond the setting of the poem (for example, *Oddrúnargrátr*). In the Helgi poems and the Atli poems (including the ‘aftermath poems’ of Guðrún’s third marriage), there is nonetheless a substantial cast of players, most typically family members but also members of the princes’ retinues at court. In that context it is striking that both Brynhildr and Sigurðr emerge onto the eddic scene as loners, Brynhildr as a particularly wilful valkyrie who has defied Óðinn and been condemned by him to sleep in an isolated shield-hut until a particular hero can wake her, and Sigurðr, a prince of the Völsung dynasty who enters the set as a kind of lone ranger. In the prose passage introducing the poems about Sigurðr, *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*, the others Völsung brothers – all of whom were “langt um fram alla menn aðra um afl ok vöxt ok hug ok alla atgervi” (‘far surpassed all other men in strength and stature and courage and all abilities’) – fall away from the narrative which focuses solely on Sigurðr: “Sigurðr reið einn saman ok kom til hallar [...] Sigurðr var auðkennr” (‘Sigurðr rode by himself and came to a hall [...] Sigurðr was easy to recognise’).

While Brynhildr is described as the daughter of Buðli and the foster-daughter of Heimir, her valkyrie identity sets her apart from the other princesses on the circuit. She describes her wilfulness in the face of Óðinn’s instructions in *Helreið Brynhildar* (sts. 8–9), choosing to defy him by saving a young warrior from death on the battle-field, much as the valkyries Sigrún and Sváva do in choosing their respective warrior-lovers in the Helgi poems. Indeed in *Grípisspá* 15 Brynhildr is associated with the cycle of paired valkyrie-hero reincarnations which is set out at the end of the Helgi poems, the fundamental pattern of a valkyrie choosing

¹ Texts of eddic poems are taken from the fourth edition by Neckel and Kuhn, with the spelling normalised.

a hero against the will of her family and the social conventions of arranged marriages perhaps a stronger undercurrent in the eddic tradition of Sigurðr's betrothal than is often acknowledged. In applauding Brynhildr's intention to kill herself after the death of Sigurðr, for instance, Högni expresses his hope that she never be reincarnated (*Sigurðarqviða in skamma* 45), describing her in terms that are typical of the ambivalent attitude to the valkyrie in other poems. Brynhildr's extant eddic biography is not straightforward, however: the act of choosing Auða's brother not to die does not lead to marriage and elaborated kinship conflict (as such an act does in the Helgi poems) because Óðinn intervenes at once, suspending her involvement in the plot through an induced coma from which only a man who knew no fear may awaken her ("þann það hann slíta svefni mínum, er hvergi lanz hræðaz kynni", *Helreið Brynhildar* 9). In the story of the valkyrie Sigdrífa, whose biography runs in parallel to Brynhildr's, it is the valkyrie who claims to have sworn the oath herself, in defiance of Óðinn; she proclaims to Sigurðr: "En ek sagðak honum, at ek strengðak heiti þar í mót at giptaz öngum þeim manni, er hræðaz kynni", *Sigrdrífumál* prose). Resolving that her choice of a husband would be criterion-based, she might have expected identifying him would proceed in a straightforward manner, simply by designing some kind of task which would rule out all the fearful.

Whatever the particularity of each staging of the encounter between the valkyrie and Sigurðr, there is no doubt about the force of her oath and its hold over Sigurðr once the criterion of fearlessness is applied to the field, apparently narrowing it to just one candidate. The inevitability of Sigurðr's betrothal to the valkyrie is underscored in the avian prophecy at the end of *Fáfnismál* (st. 44), when he is told the valkyrie's sleep may only be broken by the decree of the norns ("fyr sköpum norna"). Elsewhere Högni acknowledges the strength of Brynhildr's will ("eru Brynhildar brek ofmikil", *Sigurðarqviða in skamma* 19) and in the same poem (st. 40), Brynhildr herself sets herself apart from any stereotype of fickle womanhood: "Unnak einum, né ýmissum; bjóat um hverfan hug men Skögul" ('I loved just one, not various ones; the valkyrie of necklaces [> woman] did not behave with inconstancy'). The poet of *Sigurðarqviða in skamma* in fact portrays Brynhildr betrothing herself to Sigurðr when she first sets eyes on him, something she announces to Gunnarr she had done when remonstrating with her brother after Sigurðr's death (st. 39).

It is a paradox of eddic heroic poetry – so attuned to representing crucial scenes through dialogue – that the betrothal scene between Sigurðr and Brynhildr is shrouded in paraphrase and complexities of plot: the one conversation we might have liked to hear verbatim is instead spun into many fractured reports, laden with blame and attempted exculpation. In part this may be a consequence of the lacuna in the manuscript, into which so much poetry fell, but it is also in part characteristic of a story-line that excited so much interest among eddic poets over a considerable period of time – probably from the moment when the plot was first cast in alliterative measure in a Scandinavian language, to the repeated re-investigation of betrayals and reprisals and the detailed re-imagining, right through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, of conversations between these ancient figures. The twisting of the many-stranded eddic plots into a more or less single thread by the author of *Völsunga saga* is, of course, a significant source, but its flattened story-line necessarily loses the often startling dimensions of encounters portrayed in the eddic idiom.

According to *Sigurðarqviða in skamma* (sts. 3–5), in return for marriage to Guðrún Gjúkadóttir, Sigurðr agrees to betroth himself to Brynhildr while impersonating Guðrún's brother Gunnarr. The narrative obscures the detail of the deal – "[Sigurðr] tók við trygðum tveggja bræðra; selduz eiða eljunfræcnir" (st. 1: 'he accepted pledges from both brothers; the energetic warriors made oaths) – but registers the fundamental compromise on Sigurðr's part as the party of young men visit Brynhildr: "hann um ætti, ef hann eiga knætti" (st. 3: 'he would have married her if he could have'). The discrepancy between his sentiments and his

actions foreground the notion of integrity, as the paragon of legendary warriors woos sincerely, but in another's name. Another thirteenth-century version of the ancient event sheds light on how the integrity of a man was imagined: in Snorri's account in *Skáldskaparmál*, Sigurðr and Gunnarr exchange appearances and names ("Þá skiptu þeir litum Sigurðr ok Gunnarr ok svá nöfnum", *Skáldskaparmál* 47). (In this version Brynhildr's vow is to marry only that warrior who dared to ride through a raging fire and the only horse able to accomplish this, Grani, will only be spurred on by a rider named Sigurðr). This double-swap means that it is Sigurðr in all but physical appearance who betroths himself to Brynhildr. After marrying her ("Þat kveld gekk hann at brúðlaupi með Brynhildi"), but ensuring non-consummation by placing a sword between them in the bed, Sigurðr returns to his companions and resumes his own appearance. Given that Sigurðr is said to have been *auðkennr* and Brynhildr elsewhere professes to have betrothed herself to him because his eyes and demeanour were so *unlike* the Gjúkung brothers ("varat hann í augu yðr um líkr, né á engi hlut at álitum" *Sigurðarqviða in skamma* 39), the deception must have been consummate, his fearless manner convincing her that he was the man for her, despite the identity of the body through which he performed. The voice which pledged his troth belonged presumably to Sigurðr.

Brynhildr's blamelessness at this point in the plot is propounded in *Sigurðarqviða in skamma* st. 5: "Hon sér at lífi löst né vissi ok at aldragi ekki grand, vamm þat er væri eða vera hygði" ('She knew no wrong in her life nor harm in her future, no vice that was or could be imagined'); but it is expressed most powerfully in her own words, at the end of her life: "þá varð ek þess vís, er ek vildigak, at þau véltu mik í verfangi" (*Helreið Brynhildar* 13: 'then I found out what I did not want to know, that they had deceived me in the taking of a husband'). The fundamental ethical question thrown up by the plot is whether Sigurðr is bound by the betrothal vow to Brynhildr which he has voiced while impersonating another. His split identity also has ramifications for another crucial aspect of the pact Sigurðr has apparently made with Gunnarr (*Brot* 18): that while impersonating Gunnarr, he will not make love to Brynhildr. In some poems, the naked sword which Sigurðr deploys to protect his reputation (and his pact with the Gjúkung brothers) becomes instead an emblem of his compromise. Brynhildr insists the same decorated sword lie between their bodies in death because it was with them in the betrothal bed when they declared themselves a couple ("þá er við bæði beð einn stígum ok hétum þá hjóna nafni", *Sigurðarqviða in skamma* 68). According to the poet of *Helreið Brynhildar* (st. 12), Brynhildr's virginity was assured not by a token championed by Sigurðr, but by her own word: "Sváfu við ok unðum í sæing einni, sem hann minn bróðir um borinn væri" ('We slept and were content in one bed, as though he had been born my brother'). Brynhildr lays the blame for her deception as much at the feet of the Gjúkung brothers as at Sigurðr's (*Sigurðarqviða in skamma* 34 and 57).

Yet on his death-bed (*Sigurðarqviða in skamma* 28), Sigurðr stakes his reputation on the fact that he kept his deal with Gunnarr, despite his betrayal of Brynhildr: "enn við Gunnar grand ekki vannk; þyrmða ek sifjum, svörnum eiðum" ('and I caused no harm to Gunnarr; I preserved kinship, sworn oaths'). These powerful declarations by Sigurðr go to the heart of eddic poets' concern with heroic behaviour and culpability, Sigurðr giving voice to different poets' interpretation of the moral bind friendship and kinship create for him. In order to exonerate himself, however, he must blame Brynhildr (*Sigurðarqviða in skamma* 27–8): "ein veldr Brynhildr öllu bölví [...] mér unni mær fyr mann hvern" ('Brynhildr caused the whole misfortune [...] the girl loved me more than any other man'). In his view (in this poem), it is Brynhildr's determined attachment to him that is the source of the tragedy: it his her vow to marry a man without fear, and her subsequent oath of betrothal to that man, that he attempts to subordinate to the oaths he swore to the Gjúkungar, perhaps forgetting how ineluctable the will of the valkyrie can be.

Grípisspá presents a particularly interesting perspective on the ethical crisis of Sigurðr's life. It is a dialogue poem in which the still-furled plot is revealed to Sigurðr through prophecy interleaved with his shocked reaction at the prospect of his own actions. To Grípir's observation "Íþ munuð alla eiða vinna fullfastliga, fá munuð halda" (st. 31: 'you two will indelibly swear oaths, few will you keep'), he responds: "sér þú geðleysi í grams skapi, er ek skal við mey þá málum slíta?" (st. 32: 'do you see lack of probity in the prince's character, when I shall break my word with that woman?'). Untarnished by the compromises yet to come, Sigurðr also expresses outrage, in prospect, at the deception involved in swapping appearances with Gunnarr: "þar mun fláræði fylgja annat, atalt með öllu (st. 38: 'more treacherous conniving will follow there, utterly terrible'). At Grípir's revelation (st. 39) that he will take Gunnarr's "litr" and "læti" ('appearance' and 'manner'), but maintain his own "mælska" and "meginhyggja" ('eloquence' and 'powerful mind'), Sigurðr exclaims: "Verst hyggjum því, vándr munk heitinn, Sigurðr, með seggjum, at sóguru" ('I think that the worst: I, Sigurðr, will be called repugnant by men for doing that'). Though the idealism of youth, and perhaps volition, will later desert him, he is categorical in his denunciation of his predicted betrayal of Brynhildr: "vilda ek eigi véllum beita jöfra brúði, er ek æzta veitk" (st. 40: 'I would not wish to use deceit against the bride of princes, whom I know to be the most noble').

The importance of abiding by oaths to the probity and reputation of a young hero is paramount. In the sequence of advice stanzas the valkyrie delivers to Sigurðr, it is second only to being blameless in dealing with one's kin: "at þú eið né sverir, nema þann er saðr sé; grimmar símar ganga at trygðrofi, armr er vára vargr" (*Sigrdrífumál* st. 23: 'that you do not swear an oath unless it be sincere; cruel consequences follow breach of troth, wretched is the vow-wolf'). And there is no ignoring the responsibilities triggered by an oath, as the valkyrie Sigrún reminds her brother, telling him that oaths he had broken would *bíta* (*Helgaqviða Hundingsbana II* 31). When Grípir describes to Sigurðr how he will remember his oaths to Brynhildr but keep quiet about them (st. 45), Sigurðr acknowledges his responsibility ("hefir snót af mér svarna eiða, enga efnda, enn unat lítit" (st. 46: 'the lady has from me sworn oaths, none kept, and little contentment') but seeks to manoeuvre out of the difficulty by offering her a bribe as compensation for the deceit ("hvat mun at bótum brúðr sú taka, er vélar vér vífi gerðum").

In the eddic heroic tradition a false oath works as a kind of lever, prompting shifting perspectives on an individual's responsibilities and reputation. Responsibilities arising from the oaths between Sigurðr and the Gjúkungar are themselves contested (*Sigurðarqviða in skamma* st 17, st. 20), Sigurðr reducing the scope of his deceit by claiming that at the very least, he should not be called Gunnarr's wife's lover ("síðr værak heitinn hans kvánar vinr" *Sigurðarqviða in skamma* st. 28). In the fragmentary poem, *Sigurðarkviða*, Sigurðr's two oaths become entangled as Brynhildr engineers his death for the false oaths he made with her (st. 2): "Mér hefir Sigurðr selda eiða, eiða selda, alla logna; þá vélti hann mik, er hann vera skyldi allra eiða einn fulltrúi" ('Sigurðr has given oaths to me, oaths he gave, all were broken; then he deceived me when he should have been completely sincere in every one of his oaths'). And she also denounces the Gjúkungar as well as Sigurðr as oath-breakers: "eruð eiðrofa" (st. 16). The first *Guðrúnarqviða* presents Guðrún accusing her brothers of causing misfortune because of the oaths they swore (st. 21); she does not accuse them of oath-breaking, but condemns them for the deception conceived in the very formulation of their oaths with Sigurðr.

Yet another angle is provided in *Helreið Bynhildar* (st. 5), where the deception of the Gjúkungar is posited as the cause of Brynhildr's own oath becoming broken – "Ek mun segja þér [...] hvé gørðu mik Gjúka arfar ástarlausu ok eiðrofa" ('I will tell you [...] how the sons of Gjúki made me love-bereft and an oath-breaker'). The *mise-en-scène* of this eddic poem also reveals a mythological dimension to the exploration of ethics, since Brynhildr invokes her superior lineage (as the daughter of Buðli as well as a valkyrie) to the giantess who speaks

on behalf of the Gjúkungar (sts. 3–4). Brynhildr gives her side of the story from just the other side of the grave (traditionally a reliable source), vindicating Sigurðr’s honour – he lay beside her for eight nights like a brother – but condemning all the children of Gjúki for deceiving her in the taking of a husband. Countering the *gýgr*’s sympathy for the Gjúkungar, Brynhildr invokes Óðinn’s commandment that she only marry a man without fear (st. 9), and describes the god’s supervision of the quest as he establishes a blazing fire around her hall and instructs the warrior who won Fáfnir’s treasure to ride over it (“þar bað hann einn þegn yfir at ríða, þannz mér færði gull, þatz und Fáfni lá”, st. 10). Brynhildr has Óðinn’s authorization of her marriage to Sigurðr, a force which when combined with Brynhildr’s self-vindicating account makes the *gýgr* sink down and the reputation of the Gjúkungar, having to resort to ogresses to defend themselves, plummet.

The angles eddic poets take up in representing different phases of the Sigurðr story vary from poem to poem, as do the perspectives of each of the characters when their fraught conversations with one another are played out. The strength of Brynhildr’s will matched with the pre-eminence of Sigurðr as a warrior-prince makes for an intense consideration of ethical issues in eddic poems, including the relative value of conflicting oaths and the possibility of self-determination among scheming kin groups, issues which clearly maintained a purchase on the imagination of audiences for many centuries.

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The production of Arnamagnæan editions and their audience in the period 1772–1936

Ragnheiður Mósesdóttir, Nordisk Forskningsinstitut, Denmark

How it all began

The Arnamagnæan Commission was established in 1772 by King Christian the Seventh of Denmark. Its role was to supervise and lead the work of publication of texts from the manuscript collection of Professor Árni Magnússon (1663–1730), which he had bequeathed to the University of Copenhagen in his will. According to the will there was to be established a Bequest which was to provide grants for one or two Icelandic students who were to work with the collection and edit chosen texts. The Bequest was established in 1760 and two trustees were appointed to supervise the students, but the publications were slow in coming. So in 1772 the king, at the suggestion from one of his chief advisors, Bolle Willum Luxdorph, established the Commission in attempt to get the publications going. Other members of the Commission were Jacob Langebek, Jón Eiríksson and Peter Fredrik Suhm. The trustees were two professors at the University of Copenhagen, Christian Kall and Bernhard Møllmann. Finally Hannes Finnson, later bishop at Skálholt, was appointed as secretary to the Commission. All these men had the social and political standing to ensure that the stipulations of Árni Magnússon's bequest would be met.

This paper will focus on the period to 1936, when fundamental changes both in the composition of the Commission and its publication plans took place. The main source of information in this article is the archives of the Arnamagnæan Commission (AMKA), housed at the the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen.

Before the Arnamagnæan editions

In the memorandum from Luxdorph to King Christian on the appointment of a commission to supervise the publications of the Arnamagnæan manuscripts it is specially mentioned that the Swedes have already started publishing the old texts about early Scandinavian history (Werlauff 1836:149). It was of course a thorn in the side of the Danes that the arch-rival Sweden had beaten them also in this field. In 1664 Olaus Verelius published *Gautreks saga* in co-operation with the Icelander Jón Rúgman, and the following year parts of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*. In 1666 there came *Bósa saga* with a Latin translation and in 1672 Verelius published *Hervarar saga* with a Swedish translation.

Another Swedish contribution to text editions is the practice of placing variant readings at the bottom of the printed page. This practice develops in European scholarly editions in the 16th century and first appears in Scandinavia in law texts printed in the beginning of the 17th century in Sweden (Frederiksen 2003:25). This the Arnamagnæan Commission took as a model for their publications. Jacob Langebek used this form in his *Scriptores*-series (Langebek 1772–1878) and Peder Kofod Anker, a member of the Commission from 1775 to 1780, uses this system in his edition of *Jyske Lov* in order to be able to present the oldest and best variant readings (Frederiksen 2003: 30).

The texts printed in Skálholt in the late 17th century by bishop Þórður Þórhallsson can hardly be regarded as an inspiration for the Commission, except perhaps that Þórður had printed *Kristni saga* in 1688.

Choice of texts

The Commission met for the first time on 1 October 1772 to decide what to publish. In the minutes from the meeting one can read that it was decided “to start with the history of Christianisation [of Iceland] or some such small pamphlet [...]” (AMKA 5: Forhandlingsprotokol 1772–1942). The charter for the Bequest stipulates that the publications should primarily be based on texts of the manuscripts in the Arnamagnæan collection:

Til den offentlige Bekiendgiørelse ved Trykken udvælges først de troeværdigste, beste og nyttigste Skrifter, og dernæst de, som ere af ringere Værdie: men hvad som maatte befindes at være til største Deelen Fabelagtig, efter mange gamle Scribenteres Maade og saaledes ei til synderlig Nytte, deraf aleene uddrages, hvis i Almindelighed kunde tiene til at oplyse de gamle Leges, Mores, Ritus et Consuetudines etc. (Fundats, paragraph 17).

After *Kristni saga* the commission intended to publish *Hungurvaka*, the history of the first five bishops of Skálholt. This might indicate that there was a publication plan, even if there is no written evidence to support this. But the fact that these have to do with the early history of the church in Iceland may be linked to the fact that the first volume of Bishop Finnur Jónsson’s *Historia ecclesiastica Islandiæ* was published in 1772 and that his son, Hannes, secretary of the Arnamagnæan Commission, was in charge of the publication work. It would seem more than just a coincidence that the publication of the primary texts for the history of the church in Iceland should be the first texts the Commission decided to publish.¹ As it happened, *Hungurvaka* was not published until 1778, and it was in fact *Gunnlaugs saga ormsstungu* which became the second edition to appear in 1775.²

In the period under discussion the Commission published 22 text editions in addition to three editions of skaldic and eddic poetry. The publishing history can be divided into two phases, before and after 1869. In the earlier period the editions had title pages in Latin, and Latin translations accompanied the Old Norse texts. This shows that the intended audience of the publications were the learned communities of Europe. In the following I shall look at the characteristics of these editions.

The earliest editions

The first two editions, *Kristni saga* (1773) and *Gunnlaugs saga ormsstungu* (1775), can serve to illustrate the chief characteristics of the early Arnamagnæan editions. *Kristni saga* is in large 8vo format and *Gunnlaugs saga* in 4to format. They both include a Latin translation of the text, and variant readings are placed at the bottom of the page. At the back there is an index of names and a glossary of terms, in addition to genealogical tables and chronologies. *Gunnlaugs saga*, the first of the Icelandic family sagas to appear in a scholarly edition, also contains engravings from the two principal manuscripts of the text, AM 557 4to and Stock. perg. 4:o nr 4. The Commission ordered a drawing of the first six lines of the Stock. perg. 4:o nr 4 and got Georg Haas to make the engraving from them. Haas also made an engraving of the interior of an Icelandic farmstead from a drawing by Hans Næss. Haas was paid 63 rd. for his work, but the Commission does not seem to have thought that Næss was entitled to payment for his. Næss was not happy with this and complained. The accounts for 1775–76 show that he was in fact paid 80 rd. for his work following the intervention of Johannes Wiedewelt, director of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. (AMKA 35).

¹ This suggestion has earlier been made by Einar G. Pétursson in a talk at *Málþing um Hannes Finnson* in Reykjavík 20 April 1996.

² There is a list of all the old publications on the homepage of Nordisk Forskningsinstitut: <http://nfi.ku.dk/publikationer/trykte_serier/udgaver_1772-1938/> (accessed 29 April 2009).

On the half-title page there is a vignette of Árni Magnússon. It was one of the stipulations of the Charter for the Bequest that all Arnamagnæan publications should bear a portrait of Árni. The development of this vignette is interesting, but cannot be gone into in any detail here. Suffice it to say that the Commission got the finest engraver of the time, J. F. Clemens, to make the vignette from a drawing by Johannes Wiedewelt, portraying Árni as “a Homer on a pedestal”, based on a painting of Árni. Clemens made two vignettes, one for the 8vos and another one for the 4tos. In 1869 a new vignette was made based on the same original painting but very much different in style. The one used today is a version made in the 1980s and first used in Marianne Kalinke’s edition of Möttuls saga. They are all based on the same original painting of Árni, now in the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

The editions are printed in roman typeface; according to the bill from the printer of Kristni saga the main text was set in Mittel antiqua, the Latin translation in cursive and the notes in corpus antiqua (AMKA 11). ‘Mittel’ and ‘corpus’ are point sizes, 14 pt. and 10 pt. respectively. All in all, the makeup of these editions shows that their intended audience was the educated public of Europe.

Both these editions were printed in a run of 500 copies, 400 on ordinary paper (either called French or Dutch paper in the Commission’s minutes), and 100 on so-called writing paper, which was of greater quality and hence much more expensive (AMKA 5, 23 September 1773). Both were sold by subscription as well as through booksellers, though at a lower price to the subscribers. The members of the Commission were well versed in publication matters, having all published things of their own and thus no novices in the book trade. The minutes may not say much about publication strategy, but a great deal is said about practical matters such as lay-out, paper, printers and publishers, as when discussing the publication of Gunnlaugs saga:

Siden blev aftalt, at den i sidste Forsamling foreviiste Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu, strax skal gives i Trykken paa Legati bekostning med samme Tryk og paa samme slags Papiir som Kristnisaga, men i quarto, saaledes at Texten og Versionen trykkes paa hver anden Side, Noterne der i mod udi Spalter (AMKA 5, 18 November 1773).

At a meeting of the Commission on 22 April 1773 it was decided that Hungurvaka should be the next edition to be published. Jón Ólafsson the younger was supposed to check all the manuscripts to find the best text and make a transcription that could be the basis for the edition. He soon went to work on the big Heimskringla edition, however, and the work was finished by Guðmundur Magnússon, the other stipend-holder, and by Hannes Finnsson.

At the same meeting as it was decided to publish Hungurvaka the Commission agreed to start work on an edition of Grettis saga, based on transcriptions and a translation that P. F. Suhm had had made. Jón Jónsson (Jonsonius), who was a stipend-holder from 1779 until his return to Iceland in 1797, was working on this. In the minutes from a meeting of the Commission in May 1783 it says:

Og da Stipendiarius Jonsonius siden til ikke haver afleveret noget af det ham foreskrevne Arbeide blev besluttet at anmode ham skriftlig om at gøre Reede for hvor vidt han var kommen med Arbeidet af Gretla til nærmere derom tagende Beslutning (AMKA 5, 1 May 1783).

It further says that if he does not deliver the work he may risk having his stipend withheld. In connection with the work on Grettis saga pastor Gunnar Pálsson at Hjarðarholt was contacted about translating the verses.

Grettis saga was never published by the Commission, but Suhm’s role in the publication history of the Commission cannot be underestimated. It was in fact he who financed the pub-

lication of the next three editions, *Hervarar saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*, published in 1785, 1786 and 1787 respectively. *Hervarar saga* mentions Suhm on the title-page, stating that the text is “ex ejus operibus transcriptus et latine edditus”. And on *Eyrbyggja*’s title-page it says directly that Suhm paid for the publication. Suhm is further involved in the Latin translation of *Njáls saga* which was published by the Arnamagnæan Commission in 1809. Suhm had originally engaged Johnsonius, who had previously worked on Suhm’s edition of *Orkneyinga saga*, to do the translation, but he returned to Iceland in 1797 without finishing the translation, so after Suhm’s death the Commission took over the project. The *Njáls saga* translation was thought as a counterpart to an edition published by Ólafur Ólavíus in 1772. This edition was based on the text of *Njáls saga* in AM 468 4to (Reykjabók) and differs from the Arnamagnæan editions in that it does not have a Latin translation and is printed in black letter, normally used for popular editions. It does, however, have some variant readings printed at the bottom of the page in the new style of editing. Somehow Suhm seems to have come into the possession of the remaining print-run, which the Commission bought from his estate after his death in 1799.

The most ambitious project the Commission embarked upon in this period was the three volume edition of the Poetic Edda, first called *Sæmundar-Edda*, by Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson. At the meeting of the Commission in April 1773 it was also decided to ask Gunnar Pálsson to start working on a translation of the Edda. This was to be sent to him along with a copy of the verses from *Grettis saga* and *Egils saga*. Jón Ólafsson was to prepare the copies to be ready in time for the ship’s departure for Iceland that summer (AMKA 5, 22 April 1773). In the years to come the meetings of the Commission centre around the theme of the publication of the Poetic Edda. At a meeting in March 1777 there are many deliberations as to how to publish *Hymiskviða*, which was now ready to be set – with a Latin translation and philological notes. The first volume of the Poetic Edda did not appear as a whole until 1787. This volume also contains one of the few scholarly works by Árni Magnússon himself, a biography of Sæmundur Sigfússon, “*Vita Sæmundi vulgo Froda Autore Arna Magnæo*”. The second volume appeared in 1818. In a meeting on the 16th of March that year Børge Thorlacius, a member of the Commission from 1812 to 1829 announced, that the second volume had now been printed. Unfortunately all the copies had to be printed on cheaper paper as the Napoleonic wars had made it impossible to obtain the better quality paper. He then goes into the costs of the publication, and it is clear that the finances were tight at the time [AMKA 5, 16 March 1818]. At the same meeting Thorlacius suggested that work could now commence on the publication of the third volume, which was to appear in four years’ time and would include texts of *Völuspá*, *Hávamál* and *Rígsmál*, “[...]completely reworked as Resen’s edition is so completely useless and full of error.” It appears that Thorlacius was somewhat optimistic as to how long it would take to get the third volume ready, as it was not in fact published until 1828.

The Poetic Edda is the final publication begun by the original Arnamagnæan Commission. One after another the members died. Jacob Langebek died in 1775 and was replaced by Gerhard Schønning, who died in 1780. Jón Eiríksson died in 1787 and Luxdorph in 1788, and Suhm in 1798. Their contribution to the publication history of Old Norse texts cannot be underestimated, they set the tone for the continued publication history and even though they met with obstacles of various kinds – stipend-holders who did not deliver on time, wars and lack of funds – it must be said that these earliest publications were made to a standard which had not previously been seen in the publication of Old Norse-Icelandic texts.

The 19th century

In the 19th century the main emphasis is on the publication of law texts and skaldic verse. New men had taken over, P. E. Müller, Skúli and Børge (Birgir) Thorlacius, Finnur Magnússon, Erik Christian Werlauff, Carl Christian Rafn and Rasmus Rask, to name those who contributed most in the first half of the century.

In 1809 there appeared an edition of Egils saga and the Latin translation of Njáls saga, both of which trace their roots back to the earliest days of the Commission.

This period also saw the publication of Laxdæla saga in 1826, which bears the characteristics of the old editions. It is published in 4to, much the same way as Gunnlaugs saga, though with a smaller ‘cicero’ font, 12 pt.

The largest work to appear in this period is the three volume edition of Snorra Edda. As with the Poetic Edda this was a project that progressed slowly. At a meeting of the Commission in 1829 Finnur Magnússon, who at that time also became the secretary of the Commission, declared that he was willing to take on the edition and the translation of the text into Latin. In the following years Finnur explains at the meetings how he is getting on with the project. In most cases he states that he is not making the progress he would like. In a meeting in 1833 he says he has had the text of Rask’s edition from 1818 copied by Jón Árnason, and the next year he suggests that the Commission ask Sveinbjörn Egilsson whether he will work on the translation (AMKA 5, 4 June 1834). At this point Jón Sigurðsson had become a stipend-holder and it was in fact he and Sveinbjörn who saw the publication through. The final volume was published in 1887, with the help of Finnur Jónsson, who from then on until his death in 1934, was *primus motor* in the publication history of the Arnamagnæan Commission.

It was during the course of the publication of Snorra Edda that the change to more modern publishing techniques was made. It is first seen in three facsimile publications from 1869 and 1877. These are a chapter in and of themselves in the history of Arnamagnæan publications, being the production of P. G. Thorsen, librarian at the Royal Library, a runic scholar and a member of the Commission. He published these three small facsimiles as supplements to his runic studies. They are the first publications of the Commission to have a title page in Danish and also to carry the new vignette of Árni. They appeared between the second and third volumes of Snorra Edda, so the transition from Latin to Danish occurs in the middle of this publication. The first real text edition to carry a Danish title page is the 1879 Grágás (Staðarhólsbók) edition by Vilhjálmur Finnsson. From then on the printing process seems to be more modern. All the publications from then onwards until 1938 are printed in the large 8vo format. At this point the book-historical interest of these publications becomes rather diminished.

Printers and publishers

The earliest publications were printed by Anna Magdalena Godiche, who was the widow of university printer A. H. Godiche, while the university librarian was in charge of storage and distribution. When Hungurvaka was published in 1778 the Commission entered into an arrangement with a new and upcoming publisher in Copenhagen, Søren Gyldendal. He paid the publication costs himself but received from the Commission an *honorarium* of 2 rd. per sheet to offset any losses. The Commission was willing to enter into this agreement as they saw it as beneficial for them too (AMKA 5, 30 October 1776). Unfortunately we do not know whether the publications lost or made money, as the accounts of the Commission do not contain any information on this.

As mentioned above, Suhm paid for the three books published between 1785 and 1787, and the Commission again reached an agreement with Gyldendal to publish the Poetic Edda in the same way as Hungurvaka. The Commission paid for the illustrations (AMKA 5, 8 March 1781). The cooperation with Gyldendal lasted until 1936, though it seems that the firm

only functioned as a distributor. From 1869 the name of the firm appears on the title page until 1936 when the Commission decided to drop Gyldendal in favour of Ejnar Munksgaard, who by then had become a member of the Commission. So the final publications of the “old” Commission, Jón Helgason’s Íslenzk miðaldakvæði, are in fact published by both companies: the first volume is published by Gyldendal while the second (and half the run of the first volume) has Munksgaard as the publisher. The publications of the Commission do not appear to have brought a large profit to the Gyldendal publishing house. One can construct from the accounts of the Commission how many copies there were sold per year and how much Gyldendal returned to the Commission, both in profits and in unsold copies (AMKA 35).

Audience and reception

The Commission was focused from the beginning on distributing the editions: indeed, the main aim of the exercise was to make the texts of the manuscripts known outside the Icelandic-speaking world. They sent copies of the editions to the book-fair at Leipzig right from the start. In 1775 copies of Gunnlaugs saga were sent, which were to be sold at 2 rd., the same price as the subscribers were to pay (AMKA 5, 6 April 1775). In the 19th century the Commission had an agent in Leipzig, Carl B. Lorck and his associate Alphons Dürr (AMKA 52).

The editions were reviewed in Danish and (mainly) German journals. In 1773 there appeared in *Kritiske Journal* an anonymous review of *Kristni saga*, where the critic rejoices that now finally it has become possible to access these old texts, which have been so difficult to get hold of. Despite the fact that he is not completely happy with the Latin translations, he understands the real value of these publications:

Alt dette [problemer med adgang] forekommes ved Trykken, og naar de saaledes mangfoldiggjøres, saa underholdes derved altid hos een eller flere dette nyttige Studium, saa det aldrig mere kan uddøe, ligesaa lidt som Skrifterne selv. Endog Fremmede selv, som det var umuelig, eller som i det ringeste ikke uden stor Bekostning og Usikkerhed kunde forskaffe sig Manuscripterne, gives nu en fri Adgang til alle disse store Skatte for Middelalderens Historie (*Kritiske Journal* No. 42).

In 1775 there appeared a review of *Gunnlaugs saga* by Peter Kofod Anker, who that year became a member of the Commission. He is very pleased with the publication, especially the clear typography, and the essays that are printed as supplements to the text (*Kritiske Journal* 1775: No. 39).

In 1810 there appeared a review of the *Egils saga* edition, written by P. E. Müller, who became a member of the Commission in 1815. His review appeared in three consecutive numbers of *Kiøbenhavns Lærde Efterretninger*, and is very positive:

Textens philologiske Oplysning, den latinske Oversættelse, og mere end 20 Haandskrifters Collation skyldes Commissionens Stipendiarius, afdøde Gudmund Magnæus, og vist nok kunde denne Deel af Arbejdet ikke være i bedre Hænder (KLE, Nr. 15, 1810).

The publications were also reviewed in foreign journals. The second volume of the *Poetic Edda* is very favourably treated by Jacob Grimm, who laments the fact that the first volume has apparently not been reviewed in Germany. The Grimm brothers had in 1815 published some of the *Eddic* poems, but he claims that this edition makes “jene deutsche arbeiten ziemlich oder gänzlich überflüssig” (Grimm 1819: 119).

It would be interesting to go further into the reception of the editions, but suffice it to say that when reading the archives of the Commission one is struck by the many requests for free copies by students, Icelandic farmers and various learned institutions throughout Europe.

Thus one must conclude that the editions of the Arnamagnæan Commission in the period under discussion fulfilled a need for access to the texts – this was, of course, the original intention of Árni Magnússon with his will, which was so closely written down in the Charter for his Bequest and so diligently carried out under the auspices of the Arnamagnæan Commission.

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Grettir the Deep: Traditional Referentiality and Characterisation in the *Íslendingasögur*

Slavica Ranković, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Bergen, Norway

Whether they perceive *Grettis saga* in terms of a post-classical afterglow of a tradition in decline or, on the contrary, as an exploration of new narrative possibilities within the genre, Old Norse scholars nowadays usually agree that the character of Grettir the Strong is among the most intricately crafted in saga literature. But who is the craftsman of this complex, troubled psyche? To simply credit an individual author (Sturla Þórðarsson or whomever) with it would mean ignoring the fact that this, as indeed other sagas, is a traditional narrative, such that evolved over a long period of time and such that involved generations of storytellers, audience members, writers, compilers and scribes, all of whom played a role in shaping of the narrative. Even as a very first textual realisation/performance of some oral “immanent whole” (cf. Clover 1986), a saga is a product of an entire creative network – the “distributed author” (cf. Ranković 2007) – not simply because the writer inherits his material along with some of the narrative strategies and a stock of semantically highly charged formulaic phrases from the oral tradition, but because he continues to work under the precepts of oral poetics, not least through asserting no intellectual ownership over the story he is relating. As the last contributor to the narrative development whose influence is likely to be most keenly felt, the saga writer can be viewed as a particularly significant node in this network. Still, a good measure of that significance will depend precisely on the strength and degree of his connectedness within the network. A newly rendered piece falls within an already existing web of inherited idiomatic meanings on which it draws and which it will enrich in turn, whether through iteration of, or, as it happens in both oral and literary traditions, through transgression against the audience’s “horizon of expectations” (cf. Jauss 1982). As things stand, neither does the *Grettis saga* nor any other survive in its first textual rendering, and so the authorial web is further widened to include scribes who, far from acting as mere photocopiers, treated their written templates with varying degrees of freedom (cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1958), much like oral performers, giving precedence to the story over the exact wording in the text that is copied, and checking the written against the oral accounts that are likely to have circulated in parallel.

But how are such distributed saga origins to inform our reading? Now that the extreme voices of the bookprose and freeprose theories have long fallen silent and scholars generally concur that the sagas are literary works grounded in oral tradition, it seems surprising that, as Gísli Sigurðsson notes (2004:44),

little has been done to address the question of how the way in which we view their origins might affect how we view the sagas as works of art, i.e. what it means for our interpretation of individual sagas to assume an oral tradition somewhere in the background.

However, given the extent to which the available narratological tools are geared towards modern literary texts, perhaps it is not all that surprising, in the end, that, once they acknowledge the sagas as orally derived texts, scholars tend to revert to their literary training and proceed to interpret them as creations of single authors. Significant steps towards treating this problem have been made by John Miles Foley whose study of the aesthetics of the ancient Greek, the South Slavic oral and the Old English orally derived epic has wider consequences for the traditional art in general. Building on the important work of Albert B. Lord (1960), Foley advanced an interpretative strategy that takes into account the echoic nature of traditional idiomatic structures, i.e. their “traditional referentiality” (cf. Foley 1991). Contrary to

our impulse to liken them to literary clichés and treat them as empty of content, Foley argues that formulaic phrases, recurrent themes, motifs, etc. are able to convey subtle and complex meanings through their capacity to reach out of their particular (orally and/or textually) performed instances and metonymically invoke the immanent whole that is tradition. This extra-textual dimension, the “expressive ecology” (Foley 2005:27) of traditional idioms and structures, triggers a play of associations and reveals additional layers of meaning that enrich, and sometimes even contest those that can be denoted from any of their immediate appearances.

To us as modern readers a direct access to the immanent saga tradition is forever denied, but that does not mean that all aspects of the interpretative dynamics inherent in it are also completely out of reach. Each saga remains in a lively dialogue with other works in the corpus, continuing to create an abundance of interpretational possibilities, some of which would not be available in any other way. Consider, for instance, the scene in which, after being persuaded by his boisterous wife that her saving Grettir from the mob of angry farmers has only added to his honour, Vermundr the Slender is still not tempted to take Grettir under his roof. Apart from trying to avoid breaking the law, he remarks that Grettir is difficult to handle and is *ekki auðkvæðr til fylgðar við flesta menn* (*Grettis saga*:172) “not one who easily yields to another’s bidding” (*SGS*:¹ 133). For the reader who takes the scene at face value, strictly as related in *Grettis saga*, there will be little to laugh about here: Vermundr is merely one in a long line of people who refuse to harbour Grettir. However, in the informed audience the remark is likely to provoke at least a little smirk, as it is bound to evoke Vermundr’s spectacular failure to control the berserk brothers whom he insisted on obtaining from Earl Hákon. Unable to gain their respect, let alone make them “do his bidding”, he is forced to pass them on to his more charismatic and commanding brother, Víga-Styrr (*Heiðarvíga saga*, Ch. 3; *Eyrbyggja saga*, Ch. 25). Likewise, a certain Finnbogi to whom Grettir deals a great wound almost in passing seems so inconsequential that he is likely to be forgotten before the encounter at Hítará is over (Ch. 60), yet to those familiar with the dealings of the Vatnsdal people the name is bound to trigger a memory of a bitter feud between Grettir’s great-grandfather Jökull Ingimundarsson, and another, much more important Finnbogi, Finnbogi the Mighty (cf. *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Finnboga saga ramma*). The comparison that the scene is likely to elicit between the two related saga firebrands will further add to the more overt likening of Grettir and Jökull with whose sword Grettir famously starts his epic career, as well as with the rest of his maternal kin (cf. Poole 2004). The more of the corpus we know, then, the richer the associative network on which to draw when reading a specific work.

As mentioned earlier, formulaic phrases are particularly laden with the evocative power of traditional referentiality and can also play a role in characterisation. Take, for example, the phrases such as *hann gaf sér ekki/eigi*, or *lét/lætr sem hann heyrði/viti/vissi/sé[...] ekki/eigi*. When, after being provoked by Oddr the Pauper-poet at the horse-fight we are told that *eigi lét Grettir sem hann sæi þat* (*Grettis saga*: 99) “Grettir showed no sign that he noticed this” (*SGS*: 96), we can be sure that the matters won’t stand like that for long and that Oddr will pay dearly for his insolence. This is not because we know that Grettir’s infamous temper is bound to flair up sooner or later, or because this is a habit somehow peculiar to him (e.g. he similarly shows no reaction when the berserk Björn is taunting him, or when he learns of his father’s and brother’s deaths and his own outlawry). Rather, showing no immediate reaction, pretending not to see, hear, know, take notice or be aware of something hurtful, offensive or damaging to one’s honour, is the way that heroes (and some heroines) in the sagas usually respond before they take revenge. For instance, Víga-Glúmr acts like this when he hears of

¹ The abbreviation stands for ‘The Saga of Grettir the Strong’. Trans. by B. Scudder. 1997. In: The Complete Sagas of Icelanders. Ed. by Viðar Hreinsson & al. 1997. Reykjavík. Vol. II. Pp. 49–191. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of *Grettis saga* are taken from this edition.

the offences committed by his overbearing neighbour while he was in Norway (*Víga-Glúms saga*, Ch.7), Víga-Styrr pretends not to notice the advances that one of those Norwegian berserks put in his charge is making to his daughter (*Heiðarvíga saga*, Ch. 4), and neither do Helgi and Grímr Droplaugarson show reaction to the bitter words of their mother goading them to avenge a slanderous remark to which, surely enough, she did not react herself when she first heard it (*Droplaugarsona saga*, Ch.3). Such partial occlusion is an effective way of highlighting, heightening suspense, and so the temporary restraint on the part of heroes only proves to be the quiet before the storm: the offenders Sigmundur Þorkelsson, the berserk Leiknir and Þorgímr Dung-beetle all end up being killed a few passages or lines later. In this way the heroes' actions are shown to speak louder than words. Moreover, the heroes demonstrate that, in addition to their physical prowess, they are also masters of their mental faculties, including their temper. Thus in the most economical way, through the sheer metonymic “word-power” (cf. Foley 2002) of the idiomatic phrases cited, these instances in which famous characters exercise their restraint are summoned and brought to bear on the one at hand. Without the necessity for the author to add any extra words and explanations, Grettir's character has received some shading through being made to partake in some of the characteristics of heroes who have, in similarly challenging circumstances, behaved in similar ways. This raises Grettir above the level of a mere hothead, which is particularly potent when viewed against the overt references to his struggle with his temper, a struggle that will plague him from his childhood and reach its culmination after the fateful meeting with the undead Glámr. As Grettir related details of the fight to Þorvaldr Ásgeirsson, his relative and the Vatnsdal chieftain,

Þorvaldr bað hann hafa sik spakan, – “ok mun þá vel duga, en ella mun þér slysgjarnt verða.” Grettir kvað ekki batnat hafa um lyndisbragðit ok sagðisk nú miklu verr stilltr en áðr, ok allar mótgörðir verri þykkja. (*Grettis saga*: 122)

Thorvald told him to keep his temper in check, “and everything will turn out well. Otherwise, you will be prone to misfortune.” Grettir said that his temperament has not improved, and that he had much more trouble restraining himself and was much quicker to take offence than before. (*SGS*: 107)

Þorvaldr's prophecy has the potential of mitigating the effect of Glámr's terrible curse, but it will require of Grettir precisely what is most difficult for him to ensure: keeping his temper in check. From this point on, the reader/listener will bear witness not only to Grettir's feats of strength, his heroic encounters with human and supernatural foes, his tricks and a few amorous escapades, but to his continuous strife with his own nature. Albeit with great difficulty, time and again Grettir will manage to repress his anger when it matters most and win respect not only of those easily impressed with physical prowess, but prudent and wise people such as the sly Snorri goði whose son's failed attack on Grettir ended with the outlaw sparing his life. The one time when he does not manage to control his temper (he throws a stone at Þorbjörn Hook's sorceress foster-mother, breaking her leg), he loses his life.

Grettir's violent temper itself becomes less arbitrary and inexplicable when observed from the perspective of traditional referentiality. Not constructed, created from scratch, but evolving over a long period of time, catering to the needs and tastes of different interpretative communities, traditional characters such as Grettir often resound with characteristics of their predecessors, both human, heroic (as mentioned earlier, in Grettir's case, Jökull Ingimundarson is among the important ones), as well as mythic – the rash and capricious ancient gods. In his appearance (red hair, enormous physique), in his explosive disposition and in his role as a dispatcher of monsters and trolls (Branston 1980:120–123), Grettir strongly evokes the Old Norse deity of thunder, Þórr. As a grinning trickster he is evocative of Loki, and through his

role as a poet, Grettir is also taking on some of the characteristics linked with the Norse chief god and the poet of poets – Óðinn. Óðinn (the name is derived from an adjective for “furious”, “wild”, “mad” (Branston 1980:108)) famously steals the mead of poetry, pledges one eye in return for wisdom and also hangs himself as a sacrifice to be able to learn the runes of wisdom (Branston 1980:113–116). Thus he ultimately becomes the patron of poets in the Scandinavian world who inherit some of his characteristics. Considering another famous poet of saga literature, Egill Skalla-Grímsson, Margaret Clunies Ross points out that the “extreme instability of temper [...] accompanies the gift of poetry” (Clunies Ross 1989:131). In her opinion, the connection to Óðinn and the old Scandinavian belief that relates the poet’s talent with extraordinary mental states (shape-shifting, berserk frenzy, etc.) is further strengthened by medieval theories of humours, which we may presume were in some form also floating among the common folk, not only the learned elite. Melancholy is the humour characteristic of poets, marked by “a lack of moderation in [...] behaviour, [...] abrupt transitions from hostility, pettiness and avarice to sociability and generosity” (Clunies Ross 1989: 136). Observed from this perspective, the responsibility for tempestuous outbursts is somewhat shifted from the hero, as they are, among the audience with ears trained “to catch these echoes” (Lord 1960:65) understood to be beyond the power of his will. The craft of poetry and the glimpses it affords into the most intimate thoughts of its complex creators are the redeeming qualities of the hero-poets, including Grettir. The melancholy humour that gives rise to profound emotions expressed in poetry (not only violent outbursts) is thus rendered a necessary evil, and so Grettir’s contradictions resonate with those of other saga skalds.

Still, when Grettir in particular is in question, Margaret Clunies Ross has some reservations and contends that the most significant way in which Grettir diverges from the typical skald characters is that he is more pronouncedly anti-social and “given to much more generalized aggression (including a sadistic interest in animals)” (Clunies Ross 2001: 36). Despite his otherwise astute analysis of psychology in *Grettis saga*, Russell Poole also seems to agree that “sadism or pathological cruelty” would be a fitting, albeit “modern assessment” (Poole 2004:11). Modern or not, if this diagnosis were correct, Grettir would have hardly deserved such a strong iconic presence in the Icelandic culture (cf. Hasturp 1986; also Tulinius 2002:31), let alone inspire Matthías Jochumsson to write those famous words: “You, Grettir, are my nation”. While the animals on his father’s farm indeed suffer cruelly at his hands (he wrings the necks of innocent goslings, and flays the back off of his father’s favourite mare Kengála), we are never led to believe that Grettir takes pleasure in doing so. Thus, the crucial component in definition of sadism is missing, not to mention that such a heavy modern condemnation seems misplaced to begin with, as the actual word used to categorise Grettir’s deeds is *bernskubragð* (“boyish/childish trick” (Zoëga 1904:39), “prank” (Scudder 1997:67)). Modern vs. medieval sensibilities aside, if Grettir’s disposition towards animals were generally cruel, it would be hard to explain that this cold-blooded torturer of animals could be disturbed by desolate bleating of the ewe whose lamb he slaughtered to satisfy his hunger (Ch. 61), or that the ram he encounters on Drangey island becomes a sort of a playmate and is spared even when the food supplies on the island start running low (Ch. 74). For all his “anti-social behaviour”, Grettir seems congenial enough with good people such as the merry farmer Sveinn,² gets on quite well with people he respects, regardless of class, and puts up with a lot of impudence and slovenly behaviour to keep the company of Þorbjörn Noise. Rather, the animals Grettir hurts in his youth could be seen as victims of a vicious war going on between two figures in the household who actually much resemble one another: young Grettir and his

² The episode that starts as a hot pursuit when Grettir “borrows” Sveinn’s horse, Saddle-head, turns into a humorous poetry contest between the pursuer and the pursued, and finally ends in friendship between the two and a lot of marry-making (*Grettis saga*, Ch. 47).

father, Ásmundr. We are told at the outset that Grettir was disliked by his father, his promising, even-tempered and farming-oriented brother Atli being the favourite (Ch. 14). By giving his proud son the tasks he knows must be humiliating for him, Ásmundr deliberately sets out to break Grettir's spirit.³ The father and son war is unequal too, as one side (Ásmundr) has all the power, and the other (Grettir) can only ever strike indirectly, by hurting or ruining something precious to the enemy. As Russell Poole notes, it cannot be a coincidence that Kengála's skin comes off right after Ásmundr ordered Grettir to scratch his back by the fire (the space designated for women's work), while heaping abuse on him. The mare's skin becomes the substitute for the one which the insulted Grettir may have really desired to take off at that moment, the one into which he pressed a wool-comb too strongly while scratching it (and barely escaped a beating as a result), the one belonging to his father. Unlike Poole, however, I do not see this in terms of venting, or deflecting anger (Poole 2004:11) but as exacting revenge, something closer to the conceptual world of the sagas.

It is at this point that the prism of traditional referentiality may offer new, alternative vistas. Grettir is not the only one to be, not simply the second-born, but also the second-best to his father, or to incur his wrath. Egill Skalla-Grímsson is similarly slighted by his father in respect to his handsome, cheerful-tempered elder brother Þórólfr, and on one occasion only avoids being killed by his parent because his foster-mother drew the attention and the rage of the maddened Skalla-Grímr onto herself. Like Grettir, the twelve-year-old Egill only has limited and indirect options when it comes to avenging himself on his father; so, after Skalla-Grímr kills Egill's foster-mother, the boy in turn kills his father's favourite servant at dinner later that evening (Ch. 40). What makes these parallels particularly interesting (and difficult to discount as mere coincidences) is the fact that Skalla-Grímr was in turn slighted by his own father Kveld-Úlfr who preferred the other golden boy Þórólfr (Egill's uncle and the hero of the first 30 chapters of *Egils saga*), and that Ásmundr himself, like Grettir (and quite unlike the favoured Atli), was very adventurous in his youth, disliked farming and was disliked by his own father in turn: *Ásmundr vildi lítt vinna, ok var fátt um með þeim feðgum* (*Grettis saga*: 34) "Ásmund was reluctant to do work and the father and son did not get on well together" (*SGS*:63), we are told. All these saga fathers and sons locked in strife seem to be destined to repeat mistakes of their elders, and the loathing and anger that they feel towards the offspring that takes after them in appearance (and/or temperament) seems to be the self-loathing and self-directed anger too. Thus, without the need for overt psychologising, the saga writer and his "silent partner" (Foley 1991:60), the tradition, have invested the character of Grettir the Strong with a remarkable psychological depth and intricacy.

The scope of the presentation disallows for a more comprehensive and deeper analysis of Grettir's depth, so I have only concentrated on his temper. The goal was to draw attention to interpretative possibilities available if we consider not only the text-specific features but also take into account the distributed nature of traditional texts such as the sagas. From this perspective, the complex journey in which the features absorbed from earlier mythic and heroic figures intertwine (more or less harmoniously) with newer layers of representation, as well as the constant adaptation of the narrative to the present needs and interests of a particular audi-

³ In terms of traditional referentiality, this is a part of a narrative pattern also likely to ring a bell in an informed audience. Namely, in saga literature, it is not only disobedient children who are criticised, but also parents who disregard the nature of their offspring and impose their will on them too despotically. Consider, for instance, Höskuldr's forceful arrangement of Hallgerðr's first marriage in the *Njáls saga* that turns disastrous and forces the father to change his tactics next time round (Chs. 10–13). In this respect, rather than being a mere litotes (Poole 2004:11) or indication of a damaging motherly protectiveness, the evenhanded assessment given by Grettir's mother, Ásdís, is precise: "*Eigi veit ek, hvárt mér þykkir meir frá móti, at þú skipar honum jafnan starfa, eða hitt, at hann leysir alla einn vext time round*" (*Grettis saga*, 41–42). "I don't know which I object to more: that you [Ásmundr] keep giving him jobs, or that he does them all the same way" (*SGS*: 67).

ence, invest traditional characters such as Grettir with multiple shades, dimensions. Grettir had to speak to an audience that still needed heroic figures for guidance and inspiration but was at the same time disillusioned by the destructive outcome of the ‘heroic’ endeavours of powerful and proud individuals. This required a new breed of heroes: erring human beings whose pride is costly and whose noble virtues sometimes turn into vices, combatants who sometimes have to compromise with and even run before their enemies, heroes who sometimes value their lives a trifle more than their honour, philosophers who, arrogant as they can be, still do not suffer from an incurable dose of self-importance and are able to laugh at themselves. A hero is revered, but not as an untouchable figure: he can be criticised, he can even be laughed at and at the same time loved for his flaws as much as for his prodigious qualities. Grettir’s character can thus be perceived as a site of social negotiation of contrasting values and attitudes, and his depth is also the depth of the distributed mind that made him up in its image, and more specifically, the depth of its identity crisis, that most creative of ages in the life of a cultural tradition.

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The women and Óðinn

Margareta Regebro, Dept. of History of Religion, Stockholm University, Sweden

In popular accounts, Óðinn is usually described as one of the most important gods in the Old Norse pantheon, as well as a god who is closely associated with royal power and warrior culture during the Viking Age. Many scholars have in fact focused on Óðinn's importance to men. Some researchers have also raised the issue of Óðinn's significance to the women in the circle of those kings and warriors. Could the Old Norse cult of Óðinn have included women as cult practitioners?

A suitable starting point for answering the question would be to study the mythical women and female mythical beings associated with Óðinn. Descriptions of the women's roles in the cult practise, in the Old Norse literature, can provide further guidance. Finally, archaeological material and runic inscriptions could possibly provide some direction whether the literary motifs may have had any equivalent or impact on women's roles in the actual cult practise.

Dísir (n. f. pl.) is a kind of female mythical beings associated with Óðinn and his cult, but they also have a connection to *Freyja*, who is moreover known as the *Vanadís*. The *dísir* are often attributed to fertility, but they probably have a wider capacity than that. The *dísir* are sometimes connected to horses. In *Ynglingatal* 7 the skald speaks about *Glitnis Gná* 'the shining horse's wife' and *jódís* 'horse-dís'. Óðinn is frequently associated with horses, as well, through several names, for example *Jalkr* 'gelding', *Brúnn* 'brown (horse)' and *Atriðr* 'attack rider' (*Grímnismál* 48; *Gylfaginning* 20; Ström 1954:41, 66). Óðinn's own horse is called *Sleipnir* (*Grímnismál* 44; *Gylfaginning* 15, 41–42).

The *dísir* have the power to make decisions concerning life and death, measure the lifetimes of men and spin the threads of fate. Furthermore, they might be helpful in healing of illnesses and assist during childbirth: *leysa kind frá konum* 'free children from women'. In this aspect the *dísir* are sometimes called *nornir*. (*Hamðismál* 30; *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri* 2–3; *Sigrdrífumál* 9; Ström 1954: 81–82, 85)

The term *mörnir*, which is mentioned a couple of times in *Völsa þattr* (*Flateyjarbók* 2, 266) could possibly be attributed to the collective of *dísir*. The word *mörn* is associated with the word *mara*, a being that could choke, strangle or trample a man to death. (Ström 1954:24–26) Although different terms regarding the *mara*-beings may contain the suffix *-riða*, such as *túnriða* and *kveldriða*, this probably has little to do with the connection between the *dísir* and horses. The verb *riða* is rather having the meaning 'to shiver', such as the shivering from fever, and is not to be confused with the verb *riða* which has several meanings but is frequently used in the sense 'to ride (a horse)'. The *mara*-being has probably been considered to move forward with great speed, and this could perhaps have led to a confusion of these different senses early on?

In *Þjóðólfr ór Hvinis Ynglingatal*, which content with additional comments by *Snorri* is also reflected in the *Ynglinga saga* and furthermore rendered in *Historia Norwegie's* chapter 9, strangulation or suffocation is a rather popular method to kill mythical kings. *Vanlandi* is killed in his sleep by a *mara* (*Ynglinga saga* 13; *Ynglingatal* 3). King *Agni* got hanged in a tree by his wife *Skjálf*, called the *loga dís* 'the *dís* of marriage', using a necklace or a golden chain (Ström 1954:40; Sundqvist 2007:96; *Ynglinga saga* 19; *Ynglingatal* 7). It is interesting to note that *Skjálf* is one of *Freyja's* names (*Nafnapulur* 25) and that this is linked to one of Óðinn's names, *Skilfingr* (*Grímnismál* 54; *Gylfaginning* 20:32; Ström 1954:40). *Freyja* is the owner of the famous necklace *Brísingamen* 'the burning necklace', which is described, not as any small trinket, but as 'the large necklace' *mikla men* (*Þrymskviða* 15, 19). *Brísingamen's* capacity would be to strangle men by hanging (Ström 1954:40–41, 47–48) but the name could perhaps at the same time reflect a common funeral element; the burning of the body?

Ynglinga saga has a story about king *Auðr*'s daughter, who marries *Visburr* and receives a golden necklace as her wedding gift. When *Visburr* has left his wife she sends her sons to ask for the golden necklace but *Visburr* refuses to give it to her, whereupon his sons tell him that the necklace is to be the death of the best man of the family, and afterwards go on to trap their father in the house and burn it down. The golden necklace is later used when *Skjálfr* is hanging king *Agni*. (*Ynglinga saga* 14, 19; *Ynglingatal* 4) *Dómaldi* gets hanged, according to the accounts of *Historia Norwegie*, as a victim to a fertility goddess, in the text provided with the Latin name *Ceres*, while he is, according to *Þjóðólfr* and *Snorri*, instead deprived of his life through blood sacrifice (*Ynglinga saga*: 15; *Ynglingatal* 7). Ritual hanging is clearly associated with *Óðinn*, who is called *hangaguð* or *hangatýr* (*Gylfaginning* 20; *Hávamál* 138; Meissner 1984:253; *Skáldskaparmál* 1), but should also perhaps be associated with *Freyja*? In *Ynglingatal* 10, we find the expression *svalan hest Signýjar* 'Signý's cool horse' as a kenning for the gallows, named after the popular story of *Signý* and *Hagbarðr* which is accounted for in *Saxo's Gesta Danorum* (book 7:7,2–7,16) and other texts. In this kenning we can spot a link between the horse and hanging, which are symbols of both *Óðinn* and *Freyja*.

These two gods have even more in common. They are both associated with *seiðr* (*Lokasenna* 24; *Ynglinga saga* 4, 7), the magical practise often described as a shamanistic method, although this is not entirely undisputed (Dillmann 2006:269–308; Strömbäck 2000: passim). *Freyja* and *Óðinn* are also the two Old Norse gods who share the fallen warriors between them at the battle ground (*Grímnismál* 8.14; *Gylfaginning* 24). In the Old High German *Merseburg* incantations, *idisi*, the *dísir*, are mentioned in their martial aspect. The description is similar to those found in *Gylfaginning* 35 and in *Grímnismál* 36. In *Guðrúnarkviða* 19 they are linked to *Óðinn* by the name *Herians dísir*. *Snorri* explains in *Gylfaginning: Þessar heita valkyrjor. Þær sendir Óðinn til hveggjar orrostu. Þær kjósa feigð á menn ok ráða sigri*. 'These are called *valkyrjor*. *Óðinn* sends them to every battle. They choose death among men and determine the victory.' Andreas Nordberg proposes, based on, among other texts, the accounts of *Sigrdrífumál* (where *Sigrdrífa* is punished by *Óðinn* for having chosen the wrong warrior) that it is actually *Óðinn* himself who choose which men who are to fall and get to *Valhöll* while the *valkyrjor* are merely implementing his orders (2004:128–130). Could it be that the conceptions on this may have varied regionally? The *valkyrjor* often have names that link them either to war or to their role in the drinking rituals at the royal hall, for example *Hildir*, *Gunnr*, *Herfjötur*, *Geirskögul* and *Ölrún*. The latter name connects to *Óðinn's* knowledge of magic practises, such as using runes, a skill that also seems to be expected of the *valkyrjor* and the queens in the heroic poetry (*Atlamál in grœnlensko* 3–4; *Sigrdrífumál* 5–19). The poem *Darraðarljóð*, which is preserved in *Brennu-Njáls saga* 157, is telling the story of a group of women playing an active role in the battle by singing victory songs and weaving the fate of victory with the help of bloody guts and human heads, with sword and arrows. This practise could be said to have some correspondence in the saga literature, where one of the women's tasks was to weave fabric and produce war attire which included installing magic protection in the clothes through rituals before battle, so that the swords would not bite on the combatants. (Dillmann 2006:59–61, 159).

It can be established that *Freyja* and *Óðinn* are characters with a great deal of symbolism in common as well as similar tasks and practises. It has also been noted that the *dísir* are sometimes linked to *Freyr*, and not just to *Freyja* and *Óðinn*. In this case, I have to agree with Folke Ström, who suggests that *Óðinn* could be a hypostasis to *Freyr* rather than a late imported god (1954:63–68). The names *Freyr* and *Freyja* means only 'lord' and 'lady' and perhaps these might be the terms for several different gods depending on the circumstances? Could the names *Freyr* and *Freyja* be euphemisms or noawords?

According to the Old Norse literature there seem to have existed a particular cult surrounding the *dísir*, primarily intended to secure 'a good year and frith' *til árs ok til friðar*. This is

confirmed in later Christian texts which are using the very same expression in connection with different festivals during the winter season (see below). Judging by the literature, the cult of *dísir* seems to have been widespread over both the western and eastern areas of the Nordic region. An important part of the cult seems to have been common festivals including a judicial and political assembly, *þing*, and a market. At these festivals the local people could gather together for cult practise, *dísablót*. Statements regarding the time of year when these rituals were performed differ. *Snorri Sturluson* states in *Heimskringla* that the main *blót* of the *svíar* took place in Uppsala, at the time of the full moon in the month *gói*, which should occur sometime between February 23 and March 31 according to the Julian calendar, or between February 19 and March 20, according to the Gregorian calendar. He also mentions a great *blót* of the *svíar* which took place at midwinter and thus could be interpreted as a *dísablót* (Nordberg 2006:108–110 *Ólafs saga helga* 77; Ström 1954:53–54; *Ynglinga saga* 34). The author of *Viga-Glums saga* (6) is placing the *dísablót* in the winter, *at vetrnóttum*. Adam of Bremen’s report from 1075–1080 is describing an important *blót* in Uppsala around the spring equinox: *Hoc sacrificium fit aequinoctium vernale*. (*Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* schol. 141 (137)). *Snorri*, however, is pointing out that the tradition of holding an assembly and a market continued after the Christianization but the event was moved to Candlemas (*Ólaf saga helga* 77). This could either be interpreted as if the festival had got a fixed date of February 2, or that it took place at the time of the full moon occurring closest to Candlemas. Uppland’s Code of Law regarding Judicial Procedure, Rules of Court, 14th paragraph, stipulates peace during the assembly of the *dísir*, *disäþings dagher* and *disæ-þinx friþær*, which is placed between the peace of Christmas and the peace of spring (Holmbäck & Westén 1979: 205, 211; Schlyter 1834). In *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* the *dísablót* is celebrated during the autumn season (42, 44). The *Gulating Law* 6 states that an autumn festival will be held as *samburðar ol* ‘joint beer’ to ‘a good year and frith’, *til árs. oc til friðar.*, where at least three farmers were supposed to get together for the arrangements of the feast and brew their share of beer before All Saints’ Mass at November 1. Folke Ström believes that this Christianized autumn festival could possibly have a counterpart in the autumn *dísablót* described in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, although he emphasizes that it is not an unproblematic conclusion (1954:17, 19–20). We have thus indications that the cult of the *dísir* was practised in the autumn, winter and spring. Perhaps the solution to the problem of these conflicting dates could be that the *dísablót* was organized at different dates and seasons in different regions? That would indicate that the *dísablót* occurred in late winter or early spring in the eastern area of Scandinavia while people in the western Nordic countries sacrificed to the *dísir* during the autumn and the midwinter? A more simple answer to the problem might be that the *dísir* were involved in several festivals during the year.

Based on descriptions in the literature and in the laws the *dísablót* seems to have been a collective festival, hosted by the local leaders and their wives. The feasts in the aristocratic halls would have included, more or less, ritual elements and symbols. How is the nature of the feasts described in the literature and which were women’s tasks in this context? In *Beowulf* we find the most detailed description of how the queen is distributing gifts among deserving men, building alliances, giving advice and forming military strategy, and how she thus plays a political role in the hall (*Beowulf* 489–499, 611–644, 1011–1069, 1158–1231, 1977–1983, 2010–2028; Nordberg 2004:89–90, 115, 177, 197). The Icelandic saga literature gives some examples of the royal women’s tasks at the feast. During a *dísablót* in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* 44, queen *Gunnhildr*, versed in magic, is asked to covertly carry out revenge when *Egil* behaves shamefully as a guest.

Women’s functions during the feasts of *blót* are reflected not only in the texts. The iconography of archaeological materials, picture stones and, in rare cases, textiles could probably be interpreted as variations on the same themes. So far we have only considered the worlds of

myth and literature. On the question of whether the contents of literature and images could be transferred to any real practice, it will understandably be a lot more problematic. The cult practise in the literature does not contain any objects that are not utilities at the same time. Beakers, looms, rings in precious metals, weapons and other objects have both a symbolic, religious, function and a purely practical use. The artefacts we find in the archaeological material cannot with certainty be said to have had a distinctly religious function. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that these objects have been used in rituals and other religious contexts and that the performed rituals have some parallels with the literature, although the texts probably depict a more mythical and hence a more dramatic course of events.

The difficulties with attempts to discover links between myth and a possible reality is complicated by the perspective of place and time, where several hundred years can differ between text and archaeological finds. Even if we would imagine that the motifs in the literature are much older than the actual manuscripts, we would have to assume that religious practice varied somewhat regionally as well as over time. Additionally, we have to consider that religious rituals and cult practises seldom or never can be interpreted directly according to the content of myths. Despite those issues, it should nevertheless be reasonable to assume that the women of the Viking Age actually played prominent roles in the different parts of the cult of *Óðinn*, especially in connection with drinking rituals and political activity (Nordberg 2004:126; Sundqvist 2007:64).

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Die Fabrikation des Rechts

Implikationen medialer Ausformungen in west- und ostnordischen Rechtsbuchhandschriften

Lena Rohrbach, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany

Die Rolle, die materiellen und medialen Aspekten in Hinblick auf den Bedeutungsgehalt mittelalterlicher Texte im allgemeinen und der altnordischen Literatur im besonderen zukommt, ist erst in jüngerer Zeit zum Gegenstand mediävistischer Forschung avanciert. Damit soll mitnichten unterschlagen werden, dass bereits im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert gründliche Studien primär paläographischer und kodikologischer Natur der Handschriften selbst vorgenommen wurden, die sich nicht zuletzt in den großen Handschriftenkatalogen der nordischen Sammlungen und den Einleitungen zu wissenschaftlichen Editionen altnordischer Texte widerspiegeln. In den letzten Jahren wurden darüber hinaus einige wichtige Handschriften des west- und ostnordischen Raums auf ihre Kompilationsmuster hin untersucht (vgl. z.B. Johansson 1997; Hempel 2001; Müller 2001; Carlquist 2002). Der spezifische Einfluss, den Format, Layout und visuelle Strukturierung eines Codex auf die Bedeutung eines Textes haben, und die Interdependenzbeziehungen dieser medialen Aspekte zu zeitgenössischen gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen wurden dagegen bisher nur sehr vereinzelt aufgegriffen (vgl. Jónsson 2000: 13). Überlegungen in diese Richtung finden sich in einem Artikel Eike Schnalls, in dem er die Kompilationsmuster und intermediale Anordnung einer Gruppe von Jónsbók-Handschriften überzeugend auf mögliche unterliegende Ordnungsvorstellungen beleuchtet (Schnall 2005).

Der vorliegende Beitrag will nun für die mittelalterlichen Rechtsbuchhandschriften des ost- und westnordischen Raums ebendieses Desiderat aufgreifen und in einem ersten Überblicksartikel beleuchten, inwiefern auffällige Unterschiede zwischen den Rechtsbuchhandschriften der nordischen Länder vor dem Hintergrund unterschiedlicher sozialer und politischer Entwicklungen zu deuten sind bzw. inwieweit die materielle und mediale Entwicklung der Handschriften möglicherweise mit einer sich ändernden sozialen Funktion der Rechtsbücher im Laufe des Spätmittelalters in Verbindung steht.

Dabei werden vor allem diejenigen Rechtsbücher in den Blick genommen, die im 13. bzw. 14. Jahrhundert die älteren (Bezirks-)Rechtsbücher ablösten, da sich an ihnen über eine lange Überlieferungszeit hinweg mediale Entwicklungen nachverfolgen lassen: Die isländische Jónsbók (1281), das norwegische Landslov (1274), die beide unter König Magnus Hákonsson Lagabøter kodifiziert und promulgiert wurden, sowie das wesentlich später unter König Magnus Eriksson entstandene schwedische Landslag (1350), das wohl erst sukzessive in der zweiten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts die älteren Bezirksrechte ablöste. In Dänemark gab es keine entsprechende zweite Welle der Verfassung von Rechtsbüchern; die vier überlieferten Rechtsbücher für die drei Rechtskreise Jütland, Seeland und Skåne (Jyske Lov, Valdemars Sjællandske Lov, Eriks Sjællandske Lov, Skånske Lov) wurden alle erst in der ersten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts verschriftet,¹ und erst weit in die Neuzeit hinein, im Jahr 1683, wurde mit dem Danske Lov ein landesweit geltendes Gesetz erlassen. Die folgenden Ausführungen werden jedoch unter anderem zeigen, dass vor allem in Handschriften des ausgehenden Mittelalters eines der vier dänischen Rechtsbücher in besonderem Maße medial in Szene gesetzt wurde und auf diese Weise gegenüber den übrigen dreien – und auch gegenüber den drei Rechtsbüchern der anderen drei Länder – einen herausgestellten Status zugeordnet bekam.

¹ In der Verwendung der Begriffe „Verschriftung“ und „Verschriftlichung“ folgt dieser Beitrag den Überlegungen Hildegard Tristrams (Tristram 1996).

Die auf den nächsten Seiten vorgestellten Überlegungen bilden den Anfang eines auf mehrere Jahre angelegten Forschungsprojektes und sind daher vor allem als erste Übersicht über den Bestand und programmatische Skizze über zu verfolgende gedankliche Pfade zu verstehen. Dabei dienen als Ausgangspunkt zwei auszumachende Sonderentwicklungen in den dänischen bzw. isländischen Rechtsbuchhandschriften, für die es jeweils keine Entsprechung in den Handschriften der drei anderen Länder gibt. Für diese beiden medialen Auffälligkeiten können in der hier gebotenen Kürze lediglich erste Deutungsansätze geliefert werden, die in der Zukunft zu konkretisieren sein werden. Im Abgleich mit dem norwegischen und schwedischen Überlieferungsbestand soll dabei beleuchtet werden, inwiefern diese Sonderwege mit der generellen materiellen Ausformung und Entwicklung des Rechts im nordischen Raum in Verbindung stehen.

Mediale Dimensionen einer Handschrift

In den folgenden Ausführungen ist die Medialität einer Handschrift stets als eine an die Materialität derselben geknüpfte gedacht. In seiner Materialität wirkt ein Codex als zwei- und dreidimensionales Objekt medial. Die in der Schriftlichkeitsforschung hinlänglich behandelte zweidimensionale Qualität der Schrift lässt sich in der Ausgestaltung und Strukturierung des Textes auf der Ebene der einzelnen Buchseite fassen (Gumbert 1992: 283). Ein weiteres materielles Merkmal einer jeden Handschrift ist ihre dreidimensionale Natur, die in der Schriftlichkeitsforschung bisher jedoch nur wenig Interesse erfahren hat. Unter dem Begriff der Dreidimensionalität soll neben der rein haptisch erfahrbaren Räumlichkeit des Objekts "Codex" vor allem die über die einzelne Seite hinausgehende Verknüpfung des Codex oder eines Teils desselben erfasst werden. Eine solche Verknüpfung kann beispielsweise mithilfe von paratextuellen Elementen wie Registern und Querverweisen in den Margen erfolgen. Auch durch die Gestaltung (verschiedener Bestandteile) einer Handschrift in einem bestimmten Layout wird der Codex im Dreidimensionalen organisiert, die einzelnen textuellen Bestandteile zueinander in Beziehung gesetzt und dabei zugleich stets auf etablierte Schrifttraditionen und damit verbundene Funktionen und Konnotationen rekurriert. Schriftzeichen und Schriftcharakteristika, die nicht der Wiedergabe eines lautlichen Phänomens, sondern der visuellen Strukturierung des Niedergeschriebenen dienen, sollen der Terminologie Wolfgang Raibles folgend als ideographische Elemente bezeichnet werden (Raible 1997). Dabei muss bedacht werden, dass ein und dieselbe Gestaltung einer Schriftseite aus pragmatischen Erwägungen heraus gewählt worden sein kann, aber auch der Erzeugung von Pracht und dekorativer Ausgezeichnetheit dienen mag (vgl. Gumbert 1992: 285).

Jenseits des Einsatzes von ideographischen Elementen wird die mediale Wirkung eines Codex auch durch Hinzufügungen von Abbildungen unterschiedlicher Natur und ebenso auch durch die konkrete Zusammenstellung von Texten beeinflusst. Gerade im Falle der Rechtsbuchhandschriften lassen sich in vielen Fällen spätere Be- und Umarbeitungen der Codices feststellen – in Form von Hinzufügungen ideographischer Elemente, einzelner Texte oder auch Zeichnungen, die sich auf den Inhalt der Rechtsbücher beziehen – die für eine Untersuchung der sich ändernden Funktionen der Rechtsbücher äußerst aufschlussreich sein können.

Sichere Aussagen über mögliche Motivationen der medialen Gestaltung einer Handschrift sind jedoch vor allem für die frühe Phase der Überlieferung schwierig, da oftmals nur wenig über die Entstehungshintergründe und Benutzerkreise der Handschriften bekannt ist. Die Informationslage verdichtet sich zum Ausgang des Mittelalters; die vorhandenen Informationen – primär zu den norwegischen und dänischen Rechtsbuchhandschriften – zeigen wenig überraschend, dass die Handschriften im Kreise der weltlichen und kirchlichen Administration zirkulierten, häufig in der aufkommenden Selbstadministration der Städte. Für die große Mehrheit der Handschriften liegen jedoch keine Hintergrundinformationen vor. Das mediale

Potential der Handschriften kann daher primär darüber gefasst werden, die materielle Verfasstheit der Codices mit dem soziohistorischen Kontext ihrer Entstehungszeit in Verbindung zu bringen. Das Ergebnis eines solchen Abgleichs kann jedoch selten zu mehr als plausiblen Szenarios führen (vgl. auch Schnall 2005: 76).

Dänemark – Spielarten scholastischer Kulturtechniken

In Dänemark sind etwa 180 mittelalterliche Codices überliefert, die eines oder mehrere der vier dänischen Landschaftsrechte enthalten. Die ältesten erhaltenen Handschriften datieren ins dritte Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts. Dänische Rechtsbuchhandschriften sind im Vergleich zur Überlieferung der anderen Länder tendenziell kleinformatig; es gibt sogar eine auffällig große Zahl von Miniaturhandschriften des Jyske Lov im Duodezformat – 15 von 100 insgesamt aus dem Mittelalter überlieferten Handschriften dieses Rechtsbuchs –, die alle am Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts entstanden sind.²

Teilweise aus dem kleineren Format resultierend, sind alle bis auf eine der dänischen Rechtsbuchhandschriften in Langzeilen, d.h. einspaltig, angelegt. Bereits die ältesten Codices sind mit der gesamten Bandbreite ideographischer Elemente ausgestattet. Ähnliches gilt für die norwegischen und schwedischen Handschriften, bis auf dass in beiden Ländern eine ganze Reihe von Handschriften im folio-Format überliefert ist, die zweispaltig angelegt sind (vgl. Sandvik: 2005, 237). Das Layout der nordischen Rechtsbuchhandschriften erinnert über den ganzen Überlieferungszeitraum hinweg an das frühe Layout der Sachsenspiegelhandschriften vor dem Aufkommen der Buch'schen Glosse (vgl. Michael 2003: 296).

Neben der tendenziellen Verkleinerung des Formats im 15. Jahrhundert tritt etwa gleichzeitig eine weitere Veränderung in der dreidimensionalen Organisiertheit der Codices auf, und wiederum ist es eine Entwicklung, die eng an die Handschriften des Jyske Lov geknüpft ist. Während bereits die ältesten Textzeugen durchgängig und für alle vier dänischen Rechtsbücher numerierte Inhaltsverzeichnisse enthalten (z.B. AM 4 4to), treten in insgesamt 12 der 141 überlieferten mittelalterlichen Handschriften ab dem Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts alphabetische und/oder systematisch organisierte Register auf, eine Kulturtechnik, die in den scholastischen Handschriften der französischen Kathedralschulen des 13. Jahrhunderts und beinahe zeitgleich in den Handschriften des gelehrten Rechts der Bologneser Juristenschulen entwickelt wurde (Rouse & Rouse 1990: 219) und in keinem anderen der nordischen Rechtsbücher Verbreitung gefunden hat. Lediglich in der schwedischen Überlieferung gibt es einen einzelnen Codex aus der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts, Holm B 2, der neben dem Landslag auch Magnus Erikssons Stadslag und das Hofrecht (Gårdsrätt) enthält, in dem sich auf den Folien 147–157 ein alphabetisches Register in zeitgenössischer Hand befindet (vgl. Schlyter 1862: XL).

Der Überlieferungsbefund der alphabetischen Register ist sowohl hinsichtlich der Kompilationsmuster als auch bezüglich des Aufbaus der Register selbst heterogen und scheint tatsächlich als pragmatisches Werkzeug individuell entwickelt worden zu sein (z.B. NKS 1312b 4to, Thott 1988 4to, GKS 3125 4to). Die Handschriften können teilweise dem Umfeld der städtischen Administration oder auch verschiedener Schulen im dänischen Reich zugeordnet werden. Die systematischen Register sind hingegen ausschließlich in Handschriften des Jyske Lov auszumachen und weisen von Anfang an eine verfestigte Anordnung auf (z.B. AM 12 8vo, AM 16 8vo, GKS 3135 4to). Im Vergleich mit anderen zeitgenössischen systematischen Registern, etwa jenen des Sachsenspiegels, zeichnen sich die systematischen Register des Jyske Lov durch eine markante Voranstellung verschiedener Prozessformen und eine gerade-

² Dass bei diesem Format auch von den Zeitgenossen nicht erwartet wurde, dass es ein Rechtsbuch enthält, zeigt eine kurze Besitzernotiz am Anfang von AM 450 12mo, in der auf den Miniaturcodex als "thenne lille bønnebog", dieses kleine Gebetsbuch, rekuriert wird.

zu eklektische Auswahl der aufgenommenen Stichwörter aus (zur Systematik von Sachsen-
spiegel-Registern vgl. Müller 1991). Diese ungewöhnlich ausgeformten Register gehen in den
Codices auffällig häufig mit der Aufnahme einer ebenso außergewöhnlich angeordneten
Kurzfassung des Jyske Lov und einer der scholastischen Rahmenglosse folgenden Glossie-
rung desselben einher. Die umrahmende Glossierung eines Textes ist eine ebenfalls eng mit
der scholastischen Auslegung von Bibeltexten und gelehrtem Recht verbundene Technik, die
auf die Handschriften des Sachsen spiegels im 14. Jahrhundert übertragen wurde, im nord-
ischen Raum aber wiederum nur in den Handschriften des Jyske Lov aufzuspüren ist (Lobri-
chon 1984: 97–101; Lieberwirth 1993). Wie ich in einem im Druck befindlichen Aufsatz aus-
führlich erörtert habe, lässt sich die spezifische Gestalt dieser Handschriftengruppe gemein-
sam mit vorhandenen Besitzerinformationen vor dem polithistorischen Hintergrund ihres
Aufkommens als primär inszenatorisch begründet interpretieren. Durch die für den nordischen
Raum einmalige Gestaltung wurde das Jyske Lov zum Ausgang des Mittelalters als autoritati-
ves Recht in Szene gesetzt.

Der Einsatz der aus der Scholastik bekannten Kulturtechniken ist folglich im dänischen
Kontext differenziert zu betrachten. Es lassen sich verschiedene, hier nur exemplarisch kurz
ausgeführte Entwicklungslinien ausmachen, für die es in den anderen drei Ländern keine Pa-
rallelen gibt. Einerseits werden die Handschriften des Jyske Lov zum Ausgang des Mittelal-
ters aufgrund abnehmender Größe transportabler und zugleich durch Ausstattung mit alphabe-
tischen Registern (und darüber hinaus auch durch an den Abschnittanfängen angebrachte
lederne Findestreifen) erschlossen: Diese Entwicklungen deuten auf eine veränderte Nutzung
der in den Handschriften niedergeschriebenen Texte hin, die mit der Spezialisierung der Ad-
ministration unter den Vorzeichen der Ausbildung moderner Staatsstrukturen einhergeht
(Lindkvist 2001: 48). Andererseits scheint der Einsatz derselben Kulturtechniken in anderen
Kontexten aber zugleich auch zur Inszenierung bzw. Inthronisierung des Jyske Lov als das
einzige autoritative, königliche Rechtsbuch des dänischen Königreiches bemüht worden zu
sein.

Island – Intermediale Ensembles statt ideographischer Findemittel?

Die isländische Handschriftenüberlieferung unterscheidet sich auf verschiedenen Ebenen
grundsätzlich vom dänischen Befund. Fast alle der 72 überlieferten mittelalterlichen Jónsbók-
Handschriften sind im folio- oder Quartformat angelegt und somit tendenziell größer als vor
allem die ostnordischen Codices. Die Jónsbók-Handschriften sind in Hinblick auf ideographi-
sche Elemente generell wesentlich sparsamer ausgestattet als ihre Pendanten in den anderen
drei nordischen Ländern. In der Mehrzahl der Handschriften gibt es keine Kolummentitel, und
die einzelnen Kapitel sind in der Regel nicht zeitgenössisch numeriert.

Dagegen weisen die Jónsbók-Handschriften in einem Umfang Illuminationen auf, wie es
sich in keinem der drei übrigen Länder findet. Im dänischen Handschriftenbestand existiert
keine einzige figurative Abbildung. Im schwedischen Landslag finden sich lediglich in zwei
der neunzig überlieferten mittelalterlichen Handschriften vor verschiedenen Abschnitten
Zeichnungen, die sich auf den Inhalt des betreffenden Teils beziehen, allerdings in beiden
Fällen wohl erst von späterer Hand hinzugefügt wurden (Holm B 6, vgl. Schlyter 1862: XI,
sowie Holm B 10). Die einzige figurativ illuminierte Handschrift des Landslov ist der so ge-
nannte Codex Hardenbergianus, GKS 1154 fol, der etwa um die Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts
von einem isländischen Schreiber angefertigt wurde und in der Kunstfertigkeit der Illumi-
nationen nahezu einmalig im nordischen Raum ist (Berg 1983: 33). Inwiefern die norwegische
Überlieferung weitere, vergleichbare Handschriften aufwies, bleibt offen.

Die Illuminationen der Jónsbók lassen sich in verschiedene Typen aufteilen. Zunächst gibt
es acht Codices, die ganzzeitige Abbildungen des thronenden König (Olaf des Heiligen) ent-

halten (u.a. GKS 3268 4to, ca. 1300; AM 135 4to, ca. 1370–1380; vgl. Schnall 2005: 92f); in sechs Handschriften ist eine Abbildung des gekreuzigten Jesus zu finden (z.B. GKS 3270 4to, ca. 1320; AM 344 fol, ca. 1400; AM 140 4to, ca. 1530), dabei enthält letztgenannter später Codex wie einige weitere Handschriften beide Bildmotive. Weiterhin gibt es eine Reihe von Handschriften, die ähnlich wie der Codex Hardenbergianus ebenfalls in der Tradition des gelehrten Rechts mit figurativ illuminierten Initialen zu Beginn der einzelnen Abschnitte ausgestattet sind (z.B. AM 127 4to, entstanden etwa um 1330; GKS 3269b 4to, um 1330–1340). Schließlich gibt es als Neuerscheinung zum Ausgang des Spätmittelalters in einigen Codices noch eine dritte Form der Illustration. Die betreffenden Codices enthalten in wesentlich größerer Zahl als in den älteren Codices thematisch mit den illuminierten Abschnittsinitialen und auch den Codices picturati des Sachsenspiegels verwandte Marginalzeichnungen, die sich in der Regel eng auf den Inhalt des darüberstehenden Rechtstextes beziehen, aus Gesichtspunkten der künstlerischen Qualität jedoch sehr einfach ausfallen (z.B. in AM 147 4to, ca. 1490). Die Ausgestaltung der verschiedenen Bildprogramme in den Jónsbókhandschriften zeigt, dass den Illuminatoren gängige Bildmotive in Handschriften des gelehrten Rechts und auch des Sachsenspiegels wohl geläufig waren, dass diese gleichzeitig aber – vor allem in der zuletzt genannten Gruppe – unter spezifisch isländischen Vorzeichen rekontextualisierend aufgegriffen wurden: Die thematische Bandbreite der Marginalzeichnungen ist wesentlich stärker als in den Handschriften des Sachsenspiegels auf Aspekte des agrarischen Alltags beschränkt, während bildliche Darstellungen von Herrschaftsstrukturen, wie sie aus den Codices picturati bekannt sind, beinahe völlig abwesend sind (Rohrbach 2009: 56).

Die Vielfalt bildlicher Ausgestaltungen in den Handschriften der Jónsbók erhält besonderes Gewicht, wenn man die Verbreitung von Inhaltsverzeichnissen in den mittelalterlichen Jónsbók-Codices in den Blick nimmt. Die Überlieferungslage unterscheidet sich auffällig von den übrigen drei Ländern. Während sich im schwedischen und norwegischen Bestand ebenfalls bereits in den ältesten Handschriften häufig, wenn auch nicht so durchgängig wie im dänischen Fall, numerierte Inhaltsverzeichnisse finden (für Schweden z.B. AM 51 4to, Uppsala UB B 23, vgl. Wiktorsson 1989; für Norwegen z.B. Oslo UB 317 4to; Holm perg 17 4to; GKS 1154 fol; Uppsala Delagardie 8 fol), tauchen im isländischen Handschriftenbefund nur sehr wenige Inhaltsverzeichnisse auf (insgesamt in 10 von 72 bis ca. 1550 überlieferten Handschriften), und diese bestehen oft lediglich aus Kapitelaufstellungen ohne Verweise auf Kapitelzahl oder auch Folien. Auch im Text selbst sind die einzelnen Kapitel in der Mehrzahl der Fälle nicht mit zeitgenössischen Numerierungen versehen. In mehreren Codices wurden von wesentlich jüngeren Händen Kapitelnumerierungen nachgetragen, so etwa im Falle der bereits oben erwähnten Handschrift GKS 3270 4to; in der Skarðsbók (AM 350 fol, 1363) wurde das Inhaltsverzeichnis auf den Folien 152–156 in einer Hand aus dem 15. Jahrhundert nachgetragen. Nur sieben Handschriften der Jónsbók enthalten mit einem numerischen Verweissystem ausgestattete Inhaltsverzeichnisse in der Hand des bzw. der Schreiber des Jónsbóktextes, davon lediglich ein Codex, AM 347 fol, aus dem 14. Jahrhundert, die übrigen sechs Handschriften werden alle in die Zeit zwischen 1490 und 1550 datiert (z.B. Thott 2101 4to; AM 148 4to).

Diese auffällige Absenz ideographischer Verweissysteme in Verbindung mit der für den nordischen Raum einmaligen, gleichzeitigen Präsenz bildlicher Darstellungen in den Codices lässt es vor allem für die dritte Art der Illustrationen, den zahlreichen, eng mit dem Inhalt des betreffenden Kapitels verknüpften, Marginalzeichnungen, naheliegend erscheinen, diese als pikurale Findemittel zu verstehen (zu einer ähnlichen Diskussion für die Codices picturati des Sachsenspiegels vgl. Andermann 1996: 431).

Dass die Kulturtechnik des numerierten Inhaltsverzeichnisses auf Island bereits im 13. Jahrhundert bekannt war, zeigt eine der ältesten überlieferten isländischen Rechtsbuchhandschriften, die Staðarhólsbók AM 334 fol, die jedoch bekanntermaßen keine Handschrift der

Jónsbók ist, sondern eine der beiden Haupthandschriften, in denen die Grágás überliefert ist. Dieser Befund ist erklärungsbedürftig. Die Staðarhólsbók, die auch die Járnsíða enthält, wird in der Forschung auf der Basis paläographischer Untersuchungen auf etwa 1260 bis 1270 datiert (vgl. Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog 1989: 259). Eine mögliche Interpretation für diesen eigentümlichen Befund könnte dahingehen, dass die Staðarhólsbók primär als Arbeitsgrundlage für die Ausarbeitung der Jónsbók angelegt wurde und die nummerierten Inhaltsverzeichnisse den norwegischen Bearbeitern als pragmatische, detaillierte Erschließungshilfe der umfangreichen isländischen Rechtsüberlieferung dienen sollte, während in innerisländischem Kontext eine solche Erschließung entweder nicht oder in Form von Bildmarkern erfolgte. Eine in diese Richtung gehende Erklärung führt allerdings möglicherweise weit reichende Folgen für die Deutung der Funktion des geschriebenen Rechts in der spätmittelalterlichen isländischen Gesellschaft mit sich.

Konklusionen

Der isländische und der dänische Bestand adaptieren auf unterschiedliche Weise Präsentations- und Erschließungstechniken aus der kontinentaleuropäischen juristischen Handschriftentradition: Die isländischen Handschriften bedienen sich der pikturalen – man möchte sagen vorscholastischen – Tradition; in den dänischen Handschriften tummeln sich dagegen verschiedene scholastische Schriftechniken, allerdings auffällig konzentriert auf die Handschriften des Jyske Lov.

Verbindet man die Ausstattung einer Handschrift mit Illuminationen primär mit dekorativen Motivationen und die Anfertigung von Registern auf der anderen Seite mit pragmatischen Erwägungen, so zeigen die dänische und die isländische Überlieferung, dass beide medialen Formen im Laufe der Überlieferung zu jeweils beiden Zwecken herangezogen wurden. Die dänischen Register dienten offensichtlich nicht in allen Fällen primär der Erschließung von Textinhalten; die Illustration der Jónsbók in Abschnittsinitialen und in ihrer Dichte noch intensiviert zum Ausgang des Mittelalters in den Marginalzeichnungen erfüllte auf der anderen Seite mit einiger Wahrscheinlichkeit die Funktion eines Findemittels, die die Integration von Inhaltsverzeichnissen, wie sie aus den anderen drei Ländern bekannt sind, möglicherweise obsolet machte.

Die sich über die Zeit ändernden und zwischen den Ländern auch in synchroner Perspektive unterschiedlichen Materialitäten der Rechtsbücher dienten der Fabrikation eines autoritativen, opaken Königsrechts ebenso wie der transparenteren Erschließung unter den Vorzeichen einer sich ausbildenden modernen Administration. Auf der Ebene des Layouts und der Kompilationsmuster weisen die Überlieferungen der vier Länder weitgehende Ähnlichkeiten auf. Zum Ausgang des Mittelalters, ab dem Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts, lässt sich jedoch in einem Teil der dänischen Handschriften eine auffällige Adaption von aus dem kontinentaleuropäischen juristischen Umfeld bekannten Schriftechniken aufspüren. Dieser mediale Sonderweg der dänischen Überlieferung ist dabei neben der geographischen Nähe zum deutschsprachigen Raum auch vor dem Hintergrund der Hegemonialstellung des dänischen Königreichs in der Kalmarunion zu deuten. Der isländische Befund hingegen weist auf eine Erschließung der Textinhalte hin, die völlig anders gearteter Natur ist als in den anderen drei Ländern und der mittelalterlichen Rechtsbuchüberlieferung insgesamt. Inwiefern der pikturalen Ausstattung der Handschriften dabei eine entscheidende medialisierende Funktion zukam, wird in Detailstudien zu erörtern sein.

Der norwegische und der schwedische Befund folgen keiner der beiden Entwicklungslinien, sondern weisen nur vereinzelte Spuren der beiden medialen Ausformungen auf. Die Materialität der isländischen und dänischen Handschriften kann daher nicht als spezifisch west- bzw. ostnordische Entwicklung interpretiert werden, sondern vielmehr als individuelle

Umsetzungen, die eng mit der Nutzung und Präsentation des Rechts im jeweiligen sozialen Kontext in Beziehung stehen. Diese Beobachtungen werden in der Folgezeit auch vor dem Hintergrund weiterer medialer Entwicklungslinien eingehender gedanklich zu verfolgen sein.

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A Hagiographical Reading of *Egils saga*

Philip Roughton, Reykjavík, Iceland

While suggestions have been made concerning the function of certain *Íslendingasögur* and *Íslendingaþættir* as guidebooks in Christian morality, most scholars would not admit striking similarities between the *Íslendingasögur* and established Christian guidebooks represented by the *byskupa sögur* and other Church writings such as homilies, as if the rhetoric of family sagas and bishops' lives were simply unadaptable from the one group to the character and/or function of the other. However, considering the fact that saga writing and the writing of hagiographical accounts of the lives of native Icelandic bishops took place at the same time (primarily the late-twelfth and early thirteenth centuries), and that the writers of ecclesiastical and secular literature might have been trained in the same church schools, if they were in fact not the same people, some crossover might be expected. Icelandic clerics were extremely well-trained in the art of hagiography, imitating imported literary genres and adapting them, often ingeniously, to the needs, tastes, and expectations of their native audience, as can be seen either in their outstanding translations and adaptations of Latin *vitae* of apostles, martyrs, and holy confessors, or in their composition of miracle books or *vitae* for their own native bishops: the latter stand out as exceptional representatives of the genre.

Þorláks saga byskups in elzta (the A-version of his saga, hereafter referred to as *Þorláks saga*), the *vita* of Iceland's patron saint, Þorlákr Þórhallsson (1135–1193), is an outstanding representative of a medieval bishop's life, reflecting a sober Augustinianism in its attention to apostolic authority, the scriptural basis for everyday living, the marked division between the realms of the worldly and the spiritual, and the fruitfulness of *lectio divina*, as well as a certain "humble" historicity in its descriptions of Þorlákr's daily cares and habits. The composer of *Þorláks saga* structured his narrative according to the paradigmatic framework of the life of a holy confessor, thereby securing its (and its subject's) cultural legitimacy. This framework, well known to students of hagiography, emphasizes its subject's excellence as an *imitatio Christi* and his saintly virtues through stylized descriptions of particular stages or events in his life: his birth, childhood, and youth (early promise, recognition of "holiness" by wise men, encouragement or apprehension by parents); his election to the bishopric, travel to a foreign archbishopric for consecration, and return home; his daily life and teaching; miracles; challenges; death and interment; *translatio*; post-mortem miracles (see Asdís Egilsdóttir 1992:210).

The combination of these particular motifs into the framework for the life of a medieval bishop can be traced back through the *Vita Sancti Martini* and its ultimate predecessor, the Gospel accounts of the life of Christ. The use of the motifs in the creation and confirmation of these medieval Christian heroes assures the bishops, like their model Christ, of a place in the pantheon of universal heroes: Herakles' strangling of the vipers and later labors in distant lands are akin to Þorlákr's youthful promise of greatness through his mastery of learning and subsequent travels abroad for study and consecration, as well as his struggles with secular authorities at home. For students of comparative literature or culture, there is in fact nothing particularly striking about any of the paradigmatic motifs in a bishop's life in terms of their usefulness for the literary expression of an individual's heroic character; we have seen them many times before, often in other guises. However, for the medieval Christian hagiographer and his audience, the scheme's cohesive and repeated presence in the lives of the Church's heroes served a specific edificatory purpose: the model, built on key moments in the life of Christ and his saints, was of vital importance in nothing less than the biographer's and his audience's salvation; adherence to it imparted the keys to moral living, wisdom, and the assurance of eternal life. The usefulness and essentiality of the model in this scheme of salvation is

proclaimed explicitly and repeatedly by the bishops and their biographers, for instance when the composer of the prologue to the B-version of *Þorláks saga* writes first of the model: “Þessa heilaga manns líf má cristnom vera svá sem en skýrasta skuggsió til epterdæmes,” and then of its purpose: “[...]at vér megim makliga hluti skrifa Guði til lofs ok dýrðar, sjálfum sér til sœmðar ok virðingar, ǫllum heyrðendum mǫnnum til góðrar ok andligrar huggunar” (ÍF 15, 143).

Surprisingly, the paradigm underlying the narration of a medieval Christian bishop’s life appears in Iceland in another, rather unexpected place: *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, one of the most renowned of the *Íslendingasögur*, recounting the life and travels of the preeminent medieval Icelandic warrior and poet. When the literary presentation of the character of Egill is examined carefully with an eye toward the hagiographical paradigm, one can see that it matches the presentation of a bishop’s life and character, and, in particular, that of Þorlákr in his saga, almost point-for-point, although obviously in a way that is diametrically opposite, considering the enormous differences in the two characters’ personalities and circumstances. That the life of a Viking-age hero, devoted to a particular deity and presented many times in his saga as behaving almost in imitation of that deity, has almost precisely the same narrative framework underlying it as the life of a Christian bishop who lived contemporaneously with the writing of the saga, and whose *vita* was written at nearly the same time period, raises some interesting questions: whether this occurred by mere coincidence or through some sort of “universal motivation” regarding the literary creation of a hero; whether the saga might be a parody of a saint’s life; whether the saga’s motivation, as with the bishops’ sagas, might have been to set up the character deliberately as a model for imitation, and if so, to what end.

In order to begin to address these questions, the matching points between the two sagas with regard to the paradigm must first be outlined, as follows:

1. Birth/Childhood: Although Egill’s birth is not accompanied by any miraculous omens, as is often the case in the lives of confessors, his unique gifts and/or future greatness, like most of those chosen to do God’s work in the world, are recognized at an early age-- only in the case of this future Icelandic Viking and hero, these gifts take a decidedly anti-Christian, or even anti-heroic, spin. Immediately following Egill’s rather unheralded entrance into the saga, we are informed of his ugliness (“[...]þá mátti brátt sjá á honum, at hann myndi verða mjök ljótr ok líkr feðr sínum, svartr á hár”), and of his unusual physical strength and unruly temperament (he is “[...]mikill ok sterkr, svá sem þeir sveinar aðrir, er váru sex vetra eða sjau,” and “var[...]jillr viðreignar” when it came to playing games with the other boys) (ES, 80).

As is well-known, Egill is an unforgettably precocious child; this displays itself famously in the scene in which he insists on accompanying his father and mother on their trip to a feast, and Skallagrímur refuses, telling Egill how hard he is to deal with even when he is not drunk (ES, 81). Although his parents leave without him, Egill makes his way to the feast, and much to the chagrin of his father, impresses the gathered guests by composing and reciting skaldic poetry (ES, 81–3). A little later, when Egill is six, he is described as being “kappsamr mjök ok reiðinn” (ES, 99), and his first killing, of another boy named Grímur, earns him praise from his mother Bera, who says that he is “víkingsefni” (ES, 100). Egill’s killing, at the age of twelve, of one of his father’s most well-liked farmhands (in retaliation for his father’s killing of Egill’s best friend), does nothing to pacify the tension and hostility that is felt between father and son for the rest of Skallagrímur’s life.

Egill is as extraordinary a child as any future Christian bishop, yet his ugliness, both in appearance and personality, stands directly in contrast to the standard qualities of character so often found in the friends of God. Egill’s precociousness, impetuosity, and verbosity are countered by Þorlákr’s obedience and self-restraint (“Hann var [...] auðráðr ok auðveldr í ǫllu, hlýðinn ok hugþekkr hverjum manni, fálátr ok fályndr um allt [...]”); Egill’s early participation in ball games and his egotistical temper and destructiveness are in direct opposition

to Þorlákr's staid and serious nature ("Hann þýddisk eigi leika né lausung. Var hann vakr ok vel stilltr [...]"), and Þorlákr's adherence to David's admonition in Psalm 33 to turn from evil and do good are completely counter to Egill's murderous streak ("[...]lét þess snimma á kenna at hann myndi þat heilræði þýðask vilja er Davíð kennir í psaltara, at maðr skyli hneigja sik frá illu og gera gott, leita friðarins ok fylgja honum"). Þorlákr's thoughtfulness is noticed and encouraged by wise men ("En svá var hann þegar athugasamr á unga aldri at mǫrgum vitrum mǫnnum fundusk orð um hann [...]") (ÞS 48–9), and the saga also tells us that his mother played a strong role in his saintly development, when she "[...]sá af sinni vizku með Guðs forsjá hve dýrigr kennimaðr Þorlákr mátti verða af sínum góðum háttum ef nám hans gengi fram[...]." She takes him to the learned school at Oddi to study under Eyjolfir Sæmundarson, who becomes Þorlákr's foster-father and esteems him most of all his students for his outstanding wisdom (ÞS, 49–50). Egill's mother's encouragement of her son for decidedly different virtues, as well as Egill's father's reduction to silence by his son's behavior, provide interesting contrasts to this description of Christian parental encouragement.

2. Election/Travel/Return, and 3. Daily Life and Teaching: Following a future saint's early showing of promise, his encouragement by wise men, and his achievements in study and promotion to minor orders or the priesthood, he is usually elected to the bishopric (often humbly deferring or attempting to refuse the honor), and in the case of any Icelandic bishop-elect, has to travel abroad for consecration; his trip generally gives him an opportunity to grow even wiser and more humble as he comes into contact with eminent clerics and scholars. In *Þorláks saga*, Þorlákr makes two journeys abroad: he goes first to Paris and Lincoln, to "[...] kanna síðu annarra góðra manna" (ÞS, 52), and upon his return home abides for a time with Bjarnhéðinn at Kirkjubær in southern Iceland, before being appointed as abbot of the newly established Augustinian cloister at Þykkvabær (ÞS, 59). His second trip abroad, for his consecration at Lund (July 2, 1178), occurs after he is well-established within the canonical life and his miraculous powers have already started to be felt around the countryside (ÞS, 62).

These travels and their subsequent benefits to the individual and the community at home once again display the folkloric universality mentioned previously, forming the backdrop for either the protagonist's initiation into adulthood or his triumphal overcoming of the chaotic forces that threaten those at home: Þorlákr and other bishops-elect are not exceptionally far away from other mythical or legendary heroes such as Telémakhos, Herakles, Jack the Giant-Killer, or Þórr. As we know, the *Íslendingasögur* avail themselves of the motif as well, making us believe that the standard way for Viking-age heroes to prove their manhood and make their name was to go abroad, impress foreign kings and win wealth and fame. Curiously, in *Þorláks saga* the narrator pauses specifically to disparage the materialistic ends of journeys abroad made by members of the secular community, and sets up Þorlákr as a model far more worthy of emulation than any that might be found in the sagas:

Hann var þá með sama lítillæti eða meira er hann kom aprt ór sinni brotferð sem hann hafði áðr verit, en eigi hafði hann sótt skart eða þessa heims skraut, sem margr sá annarr er minni fremð ok gæfu sækir í sinni brotferð en hann hafði sótt. Þat er ok margra manna siðvenja at þeir búask þá vandligr at vápnum ok klæðum er þeir koma út ór fǫr ok þeir koma í meira val um slíka hluti en þeim hafi áðr til gefit. En Þorlákr hafði sér at farablóma lærdóm ok lítillæti ok marga góða síðu, þá er hann sá í sinni ferð með mǫrgum góðum mǫnnum, byskupum ok qðrum lærdum mǫnnum ok ráðvǫndum [...] (ÞS, 53).

It ought to be recalled that tense disputes between the Church and secular authorities took place in Iceland during Þorlákr's bishopric, and while *Þorláks saga* is noteworthy in its downplay of the contentious aspects of Þorlákr's episcopacy (as opposed to the later B and C versions of his life), here real life and idealized life meet to such a degree that it almost seems

as if the conflict between secular and spiritual, temporal and eternal, is being played out in a clash between two genres, hagiography and saga, as the shared travel/spoils motif is used as an opportunity to give precedence to one way of life over the other.

As far as Egill's journeys are concerned, Egill wants to go abroad, but he has to coerce his father and brother into giving him permission, by first setting one ship adrift and grounding it, and then threatening more trouble if he should be disallowed from going (ES, 102–103). In continuation of the idea of *Egils saga* as displaying sentiments directly counter to those found in a Christian saint's life, the reluctance normally displayed by the saint-to-be is here transferred to those who would in the hagiographical setting readily encourage the publicly-chosen electee to travel and fulfill his wishes and the will of God, while the protagonist's humility is replaced with a zealous desire to overachieve, a desire so fierce that nothing can stand in its way. Finally Egill's brother Þórólfr does indeed agree to take him along, and Egill quickly shows his capacity for acting as an *imitatio Odini*, a living imitation of the wandering, often disguised Norse god who is the patron of poetry, runes and runic magic, and the guardian of ancient Scandinavian codes of hospitality and friendship.

Egill's dedication to Óðinn is self-proclaimed, and his acting in imitation of Óðinn or in conformance to Odinic ideals has been noted widely elsewhere (see e.g. Finlay 2000:91 and North 1991:150). Almost all of Egill's actions on his two trips abroad can be seen to uphold and demonstrate the "moral codes" as given either in the gnomic wisdom of the *Hávamál* or elsewhere in the surviving poetic accounts recounting the deeds and lessons of Óðinn and other Norse gods. The *Hávamál* contains specific admonitions concerning the proper hospitable treatment of guests, as well as warnings against those who are treacherous and deceitful, and no actions are as ruthlessly avenged by Egill as those that deliberately violate these specific proscriptions (much as Óðinn himself deals harshly with transgressors against hospitality; see for instance *Grímnismál*, in which King Geirröðr, who is notorious for his inhospitality, is rewarded for torturing the disguised Óðinn by being caused by the god to slip and plunge onto his own sword). In Norway Egill repays the farmer Bárðr's treachery and abandonment of traditional codes of hospitality by driving his sword through Bárðr and leaving him in a pool of blood, after "miraculously" countering Bárðr's and Queen Gunnhildr's attempt to poison him by carving runes upon the drinking horn (ES, 107–111; Finlay 2009:93; Boyer 1973:18–19).¹ Bárðr is not the only one to suffer the consequences of transgressions against Odinic codes of morality, nor is this scene the last in which Egill employs the miraculous power of runes and poetry in overcoming the treachery of enemies. Following the killing of Bárðr, Egill turns his wrath upon Queen Gunnhildr's men, who, in their aggression against Egill, violate the sacred nature of assemblies. Egill again uses runic magic in his struggle against Gunnhildr and Eiríkr, setting up a *nið*-pole in order to curse the two and incite the guardian spirits of the land to harass them out of the country, and eventually when he confronts King Eiríkr face-to-face, he, as we all know, ransoms his own head through the Odinic power of his skaldic verse (ES, 154–173, 175–195).

Egill's adventures read like a grotesque version of the life of a Christian confessor or martyr, as through his actions he upholds and reinforces Scandinavian codes of morality, punishing transgressors and reaffirming the mercenary, Viking way of life: he and his companions kill scores of men at a settlement in the woods in Courland and carry off boxes of treasure (ES, 114–118); he cures a girl of her "vanmátt" by disposing of the runes that had been previously used in an attempt to cure her and by carving his own; he vomits over Ármóðr in response to the man's underhandedness and inhospitality, and the next morning gouges out one of the man's eyes (whereas Christian apostles give sight to the blind, Egill does the exact op-

¹ North 1991:151 points out how details of this and other of the "miracle" scenes in *Egils saga* (for instance the curing of the girl mentioned below) resemble rites and spells in *Hávamál*.

posite, and in fact, as noted elsewhere, leaves Ármóðr as a mirror-image of the one-eyed Óðinn; ES, 226–228; see also Finlay 2000:92).

In addition, Egill actually achieves a kind of consecration of his own, comparable to that undergone by bishops who travel abroad for that specific purpose; in Egill's case, his "consecration" comes in the form of a bestowal of reward/compensation from King Athelstan for his service in battle and his brother Þórólfr's death in the same battle. It is a defining moment in the saga, in which Egill's Odinic qualities are given full play – not only in the focus on his "Odic" face, but also in the palpable threat of violence should the king fail to fulfill his duty as "ring-giver," thus fulfilling Scandinavian (Odic) codes of generosity (ES, 141–148; Finlay 2000:86–88; North 1991:151–2). Shortly after this episode Egill returns to Iceland, bringing with him the impressive treasure given to him by Athelstan: precisely the sort of wealth and fame that the author of the Þorlákr's *vita* criticizes. Whereas a saintly man such as Þorlákr is sure to extend the benefits of his journey abroad to the rest of the community, Egill miserly hordes this treasure, and even, as we know, takes pains to keep it out of other people's hands after his death by burying it and killing the servants whom he has transport it for him (ES, 297).

3. Death and Burial/*Translatio*/Miracles: It is well-known that in the lives of martyrs and confessors, the saint's death is often the occasion for the impartment of a lasting legacy to the community, and the focus on the saint's commitment to his community and his peaceful death, along with a subsequent physical manifestation of spiritual greatness (often through a miraculous preservation of the saint's body), help to elevate his status and glorify the work that the saint achieved in life, as well as provide a kind of impetus for the work that he will continue to perform on his community's behalf after death. In the case of Þorlákr, he ensures his legacy by making sure that his estates are in order, providing financial outlays to his kinsmen, distributing his raiment to his clergy and the poor, bestowing his consecrated ring upon his successor, and making provisions regarding men whom he had excommunicated (ÞS, 80). Before Þorlákr's death, his close associate Gizurr Hallsson entreats the future saint to grant them the benefit of his continued presence after his physical departure: "[...]sé þér oss andligr faðir, árnanði miskunnar við almáttkan Guð, því at vér trúum því fastliga at þér munið í andligu lífi hafa með Guði eigi minna vald en nú" (ÞS, 81). After his peaceful death the color of Þorlákr's skin is more radiant, his eyes are as bright as those of a living man, and the numerous sores on his skin are healed, all signs that witness to his sanctity (ÞS, 82).

In *Egils saga*, Egill is, once again, portrayed as quite the reverse of a saint: he is blind, feeble, miserly, and chastised by his own servants. His troublemaking plan to cast his silver into the crowd at the Alþingi merely to be able to enjoy the ensuing fighting is encouraged by his daughter (she being of the same violence-prone Odinic bloodline) but criticized by other members of his household.² In the end Egill is not allowed out of the house, and he dies rather unheralded at home, after having first buried his treasure (ES, 294–298). Curiously, this unclimactic ending, completely lacking any focus on qualities of enduring greatness found in the portrayal of a hero or a saint, is followed by what in the context of a bishop's life would be the requisite hagiographical motif of post-mortem physical manifestation of the hero's prowess, as well as a *translatio*: in a scene that reads almost as a caricature of the display of blessedness in a saint's body, the priest Skapti tries and fails to crack Egill's skull with an ax, and later Egill's bones are "translated" to the church at Mosfell (ES, 298–300).

Bjarni Einarsson (1976:49) has commented on the fact that six sagas of Icelanders describe the re-interment of the bones of saga characters, and while he admits that these descriptions

² Even though Egill does not die a warrior's death, it should be noted that his blindness, feebleness, miserliness, and roguishness are not specifically un-Odic qualities (see Finlay 2000:91 for commentary on blindness and agedness as attributes of Óðinn).

most likely result from the employment of a literary motif rather than a recording of historical fact, he says that the use of the motif has nothing hagiographical about it, although, as he says, in *Egils saga*, *Grettis saga*, and *Eyrbyggja saga* the bones do give witness to the quality of their owners' lives. Yet it ought to be considered, in the case of *Egils saga*, whether this ultimately lackluster *translatio* is in fact the necessary final element in the total portrayal of Egill as an anti-saint, or a saint of the "dark side," so-to-speak.³ Egill's dedication to Óðinn, his physical and personal characteristics that so resemble Óðinn's, and his Odinic actions distinguish him as what might be considered a disciple of his god, or even an apostle, since he has the power, derived from Óðinn, to perform runic miracles. Bjarni Einarsson (1976:50) describes the methods employed by the composer of *Egils saga* as "crafty" or "cunning" (*klóklegar*), but when one considers the possibility of Snorri Sturluson as the saga's author, some of these methods seem to make more sense in the light of Snorri's literary personality, and lead to further intriguing speculations concerning the appropriation of hagiographic convention in the portrayal of the saga's hero.

Snorri's *Heimskringla* has been shown to have a strongly independent streak: its portrayals of Norwegian royalty are ambiguous, to say the least, and it often seems to find its greatest energy in descriptions of bands of farmers allied against the Norwegian kings, making it seem as if Snorri were speaking less to his royal patrons in Norway than to his Icelandic compatriots, whose conflicts at the time of the work's writing would prompt strict foreign intervention and cost Iceland its independence. Snorri's *Edda* might have been seen as an antiquarian aberration in medieval Christian Iceland, and he appears to have had a very strong interest in some of the more ghoulish aspects of older Scandinavian folkloric and religious beliefs (such as berserkers and burial in barrows; Berman 1982:32, 34, and 43). If we take Snorri to be the author of *Egils saga*, we can see in this saga these, and other, aspects of his literary personality combined: the work is anti-royal or suspicious of royalty, several of its main characters are as morbid or grotesque as they come, and it displays a bias toward an older order when the often-seen saga-motif of a conflict between old and new is employed (see in particular the feud between Þorsteinn Egilsson and Steinarr Önundarson, where Egill steps in to try to resolve the conflict, saying that in his day no chieftain would have been of such ilk as to let matters reach such a disturbing point (ES, 285–5)).

Snorri's artistic creation of an Icelandic hero whose position in a family that harbored stubbornly independent and markedly anti-royal sentiments may be a figuration of the type of personal character that he wished for Icelanders in the face of the pressure from the increasingly interventious Norwegian crown. Perhaps he is using the saga in some way to warn his compatriots of the dangers of the Norwegian king's power, and of Icelanders' own part in prompting the intervention of that power because of their inability to maintain the peace on their own, as well as to set up Egill as a model of older (Odic) ideals of behavior (especially concerning fortitude, generosity, and honesty, despite Egill's rather beastly nature), that perhaps, if adhered to, would preclude or prevent violent conflict and help to protect Icelanders' autonomy. In this sense, Snorri's creation of Egill (or re-working of traditions concerning him) might be seen as a secular variant on the way in which the Icelandic populace and clergy at the end of the twelfth and start of the thirteenth century pursued the promotion of native Icelandic saints, perhaps as an expression of autonomy in the face of increased attention and intervention from the Church in Norway.

This meddling arose in response to increasingly heated internal tensions between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities in Iceland, represented respectively by Bishop Þorlákr and Jón Loftsson of Oddi, and this conflict should perhaps not be overlooked when it comes to con-

³ See Finlay 2000:86 on Egill's "darkness and ugliness" as an extension of pre-Christian images of violent, moody, marginal poet figures.

sidering cultural influences on the creation of the character of Egill Skallagrímsson. The Church in Iceland needed its tools in the task of legitimizing and strengthening its power in its own eyes as well those of the Church abroad, and works such as *Þorláks saga* describe how it set itself up against native secular ideals and traditions, upheld by chieftains and their clans or celebrated in native sagas. One could ask whether *Egils saga*, diametrically opposed as it is in so many of its details to *Þorláks saga* and its figurehead, might in some ways have been a propaganda tool written in support of the cause, or at least the ideological heritage, of secular ideals on a cultural battlefield, if not in response to a particular individual conflict (Þorlákr vs. Jón Loptsson), then at least to the increasing assertion of the Church's authority in all social spheres in late-twelfth and early-thirteenth century Iceland.

With these things in mind, the appearance of the hagiographic narrative paradigm in *Egils saga* would then be less a matter of the employment of a universal scheme for the creation and framing of the life of a hero than it is deliberate manipulation of that paradigm and related motifs for a particular didactic purpose, be it political or "quasi-hagiographical." Through the employment of this particular paradigm, Egill becomes, as mentioned before, a kind of Icelandic "saint"; his Odinic "sanctity," like the bishops' saintly virtues, is magnified and stylized, providing a model of "virtues" that might perhaps have been intended for emulation by his creator's generation (particularly in the secular realm); or that were perhaps at least admired by the saga writer himself (as well as those who preserved Egill's memory in oral tradition). If Snorri were indeed Egill's creator, his nationalistic streak and preoccupation with native pagan religion and sensibilities would be quite amenable to this idea, as would the possibility of his having been personally influenced by Jón Loptsson's conflicts with Þorlákr (considering that Snorri was fostered by Jón at Oddi).

The deliberate appropriation from one saga/genre into the other of not just particular individual literary motifs, but an overall narrative structure, might raise serious implications for our interpretation of the saga, as well as for our better understanding of the relationship between hagiography and saga narrative in Iceland, even with regard to the question of the origins of saga literature. Reassessment of both Egill and other characters in his saga, in particular his family members, as well as the nature of the saga itself, would certainly be useful if the saga were approached as a type of hagiographical narrative, written by an antiquarian-minded author such as Snorri Sturluson and adapted and cloaked in purely Icelandic terms (even if it were considered as parody). New assessment might also occur, in this connection, of the nature and types of universal, heroic motifs that appear in medieval Icelandic sagas or that were available to medieval Icelandic writers, especially considering that medieval Icelandic writers' earliest available literary models were Christian biographies.

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Coming to Grips with the Beast

Carrie Roy, University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA

The gripping beast art motif was found throughout Norse regions and settlements abroad c. 800–1000. Over the past 125 years, the unique creature has been characterized as a quadruped, depicted *en face* and engaged in gripping itself or others. Although it has often been referred to as an art style, the gripping beast's appearance varies widely and only its unusual gripping behavior persists throughout its two centuries of popularity. Its signature behavior, as opposed to style, reveals unique insight into 9th and 10th century Norse culture and in the course of this research it has also revealed a wealth of information regarding modern scholars' subjective tendencies and perceptions. This paper will briefly address two broad arguments regarding the role of the gripping beast, before introducing a new approach and theory. The first perspective considers whether the motif is more than simply ornament and the second considers attempts to link the motif to major Norse gods. Finally, a material culture-based methodology incorporating findings from my survey of over four hundred gripping beast artifacts from collections in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, England, and Iceland, suggests an animist concept and apotropaic function.

Decoration or Deification?

Signe Horn Fuglesang has argued that 'animals and other ornamental motifs' were first interpreted symbolically in the 12th century, coinciding with the appearance of Romanesque art but that animals of 'Viking age art cannot be interpreted in this manner' (1992:176). In another article on Norwegian amulets, she argues jet and amber materials were not inherently amuletic, the gripping beast and other zoomorphic examples were rare, and 'another peculiarity of the Viking amulets is the absence of close connections with pagan gods; apart from the Thor's hammer, there is no verifiable instance of divine attributes used as amulets' (1989:15). Such observations offer a rather narrow view of the range of beliefs and deities in Norse pagan religion. For example, the material culture evidence, which I detail in the following paragraphs, suggests that the motif would appear to be more than simply ornament.

My survey documented ten examples of gripping beast amulets of jet or amber and one in particular shows evidence of being concealed in a soft pouch or container (Shetelig 1944:12). Evidence of concealment would contradict the functional purpose of ornament. Furthermore, if the motif were valued purely for its aesthetic merits, one would expect to see its popularity wax and wane with other styles, yet the motif endures through the rise and fall of several Viking art styles. In fact, the greatest impact on where and when the gripping beast motif appears seems to have more to do with religion. Gripping beast artifacts found in pre-Christian Norse settlements from Russia, to France, Ireland and England highlight the continued use of the visually distinct zoomorphic motifs by the Norse – even when surrounded by the Christian world and its material culture (which did not adopt the motif). Moreover, around the conversion to Christianity c.1000, vegetative motifs slowly usurp this and many other forms of traditional zoomorphic art. The pre-conversion segregation of the motif to pagan settlements abroad and then notable shift in Scandinavia during the conversion period, may suggest a broadly recognized connection between such zoomorphic forms and pagan identity.¹

However, my survey does support Fuglesang's statement that no direct evidence exists to link animal amulets to pagan gods (if the term 'gods' specifies major Norse gods from later

¹ It should also be noted that the new religion also ushered in new burial practices which excluded grave goods. Therefore, this situation could also skew our understanding of the speed and extent of post-conversion shifts in zoomorphic motifs.

literature). No runic inscriptions, pictorial narratives, or grave finds directly link gripping beast imagery to any one major god or goddess. This brings us to consider the second perspective – a more recent wave of scholarship exploring the potential connections between Viking art motifs and pagan gods.

God-less

A number of scholars have examined possible connections between Viking art imagery and Eddic characters. Regarding the gripping beast, Capelle has argued for a relationship to the Midgårdssorm, dragon, and other mythological beings (1968:90; 1986). Steuer argued for the motif's connection to the domesticated cat (but Warmers rebuked the argument with evidence for the cat's Roman Iron Age presence) (Steuer 1994:648–676). Domeij relates bound animals to warring, Odin, and violence and Hedensteirna-Johnson connects the gripping beast to Birka warrior imagery and Odinic shamanism (2007:41–42; 2006). Neiß has argued the gripping beast was a shamanic vessel for Odin's soul (2007:87). Their work presents useful observations, but the limited scope of the research tends to skew interpretation and this is a criticism for my own survey as well, since the artifacts that have survived are not entirely representative of the complete material culture record. Nevertheless, connections to specific gods are particularly difficult to support when archeological information and place name research (Brink 2001) indicates regional cult worship of Odin, Thor, Freyr, and other major gods, yet the gripping beast is not found regionally. Rather, it appears broadly throughout Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Norse settlements abroad.

Other archaeological information also contradicts a connection to a specific god, social status, or gender. For example, documented cult objects such as Thor's hammers, share no correlation with gripping beast finds. The gripping beast motif does not appear in sacred narratives on picture stones, and the beast can appear singularly, in pairs, triples, and practically any combination of full or partial numbers. Also, the motif is found on precious metals, jet, amber, costly textiles, and artifacts belonging to the elite yet it can also be found on wood and on lower status, poor quality brooches and pins. The survey indicates no strong gender association. Statistically, female gripping beast artifacts outnumber male artifacts, but the primary reason for this is likely the popular, mass produced oval brooch styles P15, P16, Berdal style, P47, P27A, Birka type, P37:1, P42, featuring some form of the gripping beast motif (Jansson 1985:27, 28, 31, 36, 39, 43, 50, 62).² Regarding chronology, Helmbrecht's research revealed no recognizable chronological development in the gripping beast motif's stylistic rendering and no specific point of origin could be established (2007:239–307). My survey data does not match social and cultural expectations based on preserved texts regarding worship of major Norse gods. Moreover, Neil Price has noted that a 'large proportion of this material really does not fit with anything described in the Old Norse written sources' (2006:182). In addition, at an average size of about 2 cm or smaller, it would be difficult to argue that the gripping beast motif was intended as any decipherable or recognizable sign of cult, clan or social affiliation since determining friend or foe within an arm's length would be a dangerous and unlikely proposition. Likewise, theories of 'reading' these complex designs as coded narratives is also problematic based on the awkward (if not impossible) position one would have to assume in order to read a narrative off a three-dimensional ornament usually employed as a

² Jansson estimates over 4000 oval brooches exist (1985:12), and I concede that oval brooches likely constitute a disproportionately small portion of my survey yet it still constitutes roughly one quarter of the artifact recorded. In comparison, 10% of the survey artifacts are trefoil brooches, 6% pendants, 5% circular brooches, 5% animal head brooches, 4% equal armed brooches, 4% keys, 3% drum brooches and a significant percentage of mounts for various belts, and horse gear.

garment fastener on the chest. Moreover, reservations over the accuracy of our external, artifact resources should also apply to our inner resources.

The scholarship that has been done on the gripping beast motif illuminates the issue of subjectivity that plagues any attempt at understanding and interpreting another culture's art. Consciously and subconsciously, we hold rather specific ideas about the division of sacred and secular, as well as ways in which objects and imagery are used. Even on an aesthetic level, attitudes vary considerably. David Wilson has called the gripping beast 'brilliant' while Kendrick had some other choice words for this 'horrid art, the least attractive of all barbaric forms of ornament' (Wilson 2001:145; Kendrick 1938:29). Adjectives from other scholars include 'bizarre' 'unusual' 'strange' 'confident' 'playful' 'odd' 'well-fed.' So, where does a new approach begin and how can one attempt to limit the issue of subjectivity?

Material Culture Perspectives

One useful approach involves focusing on basic sensory, intellectual, and emotional experience humans encounter with the object. The sensory experience offered by a well-preserved artifact is unique in that it is the only direct and uncompromised experience we can share with people of the past (Prown 1982:5). All other aspects are not interpreted through our shared physiology with people of the past, but subject to flux – worldview, the meanings of words, and beliefs all change over time. Jules Prown's methodology advocates developing theories based on the material culture evidence and then subjecting an idea to examination against secondary or external sources of cultural information such as texts. One of the merits in Prownian analysis – which 'reads' artifacts as primary sources – is that artifacts are more representative of the overwhelmingly illiterate population than any prior, contemporary, or subsequent text could aspire to achieve given literature's privileged status (Prown 1982:3; Glassie 1977:29–30). Using this methodology to cross-examine theories and definitions has also proven useful. For instance, since the size of the average gripping beast motif appears to contradict a conspicuous function, we may instead examine the possibility that the gripping beast served a more personal, intimate, non-narrative purpose – such as protecting the wearer. Haakon Shetelig suggested that the protective properties of jet gripping beast amulets should not be viewed as arbitrarily related to gripping beasts from the Oseberg ship (Shetelig 1944:12–14). Although a leap from the motif on a personal amulet to one on a mode of transportation may seem unusual from a modern perspective, it is precisely this sentiment of following the paths, patterns and information preserved in the material culture – wherever they may lie – that can lend new perspectives. Let us take another example – a description of the gripping beast from a chapter on 'Religion, Art, and Runes' in *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga*:

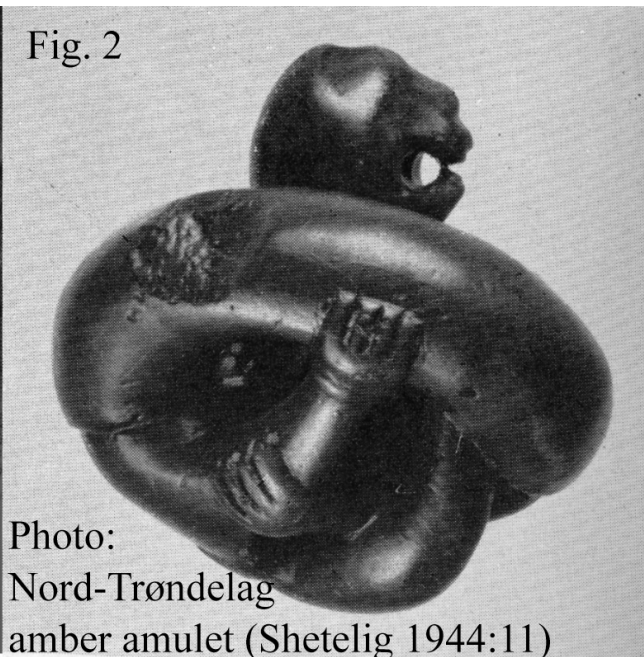
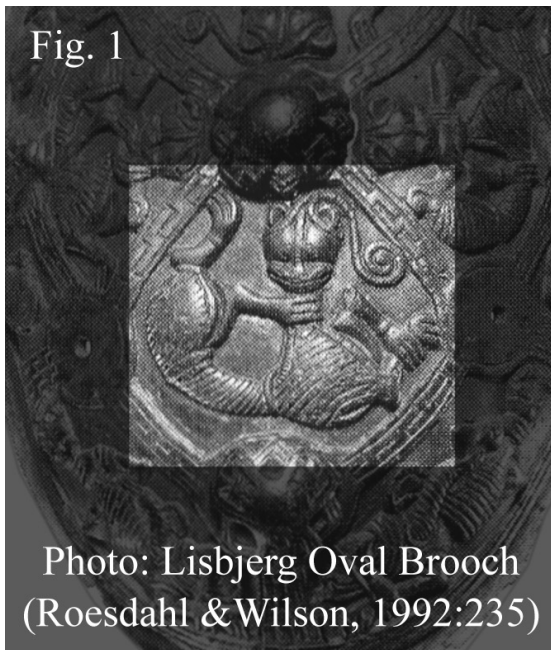
Perhaps the most important Viking art style of all was the so-called gripping-beast style. The style, which first appeared at the beginning of the Viking Age and is related to style III, is no longer an animal seen in profile but *en face* with a round face, huge round eyes, and neck tendrils. Its thin ribbon-like body is set off by large muscular shoulders and hips, and its legs end in paws, which grip tight to everything – to the edge of the ornamentation border, to neighboring animal, or to its own body. (Gräslund 2000:64)

This description exemplifies the features and observations on the gripping beast motif over the last century and a quarter. However, the results of my survey challenge several points.

First, as initially noted, it is difficult to validate the gripping beast as a style since the motif extends beyond the rise and fall of several 'styles' over two centuries and the motif's composition and appearance varies considerably. Second, a feature of 'huge round' or bulging eyes is commonly mentioned; however, less than 1/4 of artifacts in the survey have what could be

considered enlarged eyes and of those, only a few have eyes that actually protrude beyond the surrounding surface. In fact, there are many examples of recessed eyes and even closed eyes. Also, the common use of the adjective ‘muscular’ should be questioned since clearly defined ‘muscles’ are quite unlikely on such stylized forms (fig. 1).

While I disagree with the term ‘muscular’ it is apparent that the body – more specifically the chest – appears rounded or enlarged. Considering this feature alongside the tendency to grip the neck and the limbs (the limbs in this period were also understood to channel *anda*, I would propose that the beast is perhaps bloated or distended with *anda* or some aggregate air/spirit/breath/wind concept as Eldar Heide has discussed (2006). Supporting this idea is the previously overlooked feature of a closed or clenched mouth consistently appearing in this motif. If the body is distended with air then details such as a closed mouth or some form of strangulation would indicate the capture, control, or retention of breath/spirit/air. This scenario also appears plausible in some representations of figures apparently covering or holding their mouths closed. Interestingly, when the gripping beast is rendered three dimensionally –



there are indications that the mouth – or perhaps what it held back – was likely perceived as an active, dynamic component of the artifact. For example, an 9th century amber gripping beast amulet from Nord-Trøndelag, Norway indicates a cord or some fastener likely passed through the clenched mouth (fig. 2) and other amulets reveal some form of damage to the mouth. This 9th century jet amulet from Lærdal, Norway, described by Haakon Shetelig (1944:12) as showing signs of regular wearing down or polishing all over, as if it was carried in a skin pouch, shows a clenched mouth with teeth bared – and the mouth in particular is nearly obscured from damage (fig. 3). Another amulet of amber from Østfold, Norway also has damage to the mouth (fig. 4). From a material culture perspective, the cord passing through the mouths of the amber amulets could be understood as extending the apotropaic potency via the cord (an item in direct contact with the perceived spirit/breath portal of the amulet) around the wearer. Likewise, the damaged or worn mouth on the jet and amber amulet may indicate a similar understanding of the mouth as an active gateway to the amulet's protective spirit or force. Another interesting example can be found inside the mid 10th century Mammen mounts from two harness bows. Within the animal's gaping mouth, a tiny but centrally featured gripping beast acrobatically grabs its neck in its hind legs and grips the corners of the animal's mouth with its front paws. Again, the self-strangling gripping beast motif in the midst of a gaping mouth is likely understood in some connection to breath, spirit or air.

To better understand the significance of the mouth or breath, examples in wood from the Oseberg excavation reveal a gaping animal figure head post coined the 'Academic Animal-head' by Shetelig. It was found in the front of the boat; however, four other animal head posts (two found in the northeast section of the burial chamber and two in the southeast area) had clenched mouths and evidence of rope passing through the mouths (1917:115–117). It is possible that the heads holding the rope may have created a protective parameter within the burial chamber, but the single gaping mouth post served an offensive role in the bow of the boat. Given the marked absence of gaping-mouthed gripping beasts in relief and careful rendering of clenched mouths in relation to cords and human contact, it seems likely that special attention to such details may have been influenced by the animal motif's perceived impact on the spirit or supernatural world.

Indeed, evidence from literary sources seems to confirm this theory. Both mouth position and direction merits attention in texts, while the explanation for the broader, spirit-vexing tradition remains obscure. One of the entries in *Landnámabók*'s 'Úlfjótslög' requires that any ship figure heads – described as *gapandi höfðum eða gínandi trjónum* – be taken down when in *landsýn* so as not to frighten the *landvættir* (*Íslensk fornrit* I 1986:313). As previously noted, the gaping 'Academic Animalhead' was positioned in the prow of the Oseberg in what could be considered an offensive role, but in the grave chamber and on amulets, the objects indicate a somewhat harnessed version of this supernatural potential in protecting the owner or wearer. With regard to direction and positioning, in *Egils Saga*, Egill erects a *nið* pole on a cliff that *vissi til lands inn* and he states:

'Hér set ek up niðstong, ok sný ek þessu níði á hönd Eiríki konungi ok Gunnhildi dróttningu,' – hann sneri hrosshöfðinu inn á land, – 'sný ek þessu níði á landvættir þær, er land þetta byggva, svá at allar fari þær villar vega, engi hendi né hitti sitt inni, fyrr en þær reka Eirík konung ok Gunnhildi ór landi.' Síðan skýtr hann stönginni niðr í bjargrifu ok lét þar standa; hann sneri ok höfðinu inn á land, en hann reist rúnar á stönginni, ok segja þær formála þenna allan. (*Íslensk fornrit* 2 1988:177)

Forms of the word *snúa* appear several times evoking both meanings of 'to turn' and 'to turn upon a person, begin hostilities.' Therefore, the physical and supernatural implications of turning the horse head 'on' or 'at' the realm of the royal couple with the intent to disrupt land

spirits, are one and the same. Consequently, I believe the positioning of zoomorphic motifs on objects and on the body constitutes a series of cultural decisions worth considering.

A formal analysis of the object's physical, dimensional form and configuration has uncovered some interesting tendencies in terms of composition and positioning. For instance, when the gripping beast appears in numbers, the heads consistently face in different directions. This positioning would potentially address a protective function – with vigilant figures positioned strategically at the surrounding environment. The bodies do not appear lined up or formally framed, but the swarming and multi-directional positioning covering surfaces might suggest an anti-gravity association (see *fylgja* below). Interestingly, scholars continue to repeat the interpretation of gripping beasts as 'contrasts' to their ribbon-shaped predecessors because of the gripping beast's more 'naturalistic' qualities (Roesdahl 172, Klindt-Jensen 1966:75. However, floating, self-strangulation, and possessing a form that no scholar has been able to convincingly label as a specific species (Klæsøe 2002:84), should perhaps propel us to consider the possibility that the motif was intended to be a liminal entity. It is familiar yet not of this world or subject to the natural laws of this world. Furthermore, gripping beasts and band animal forms can appear side by side and occupy the same fields in different examples of brooches, so I am equally hesitant to understand their function as contrasting in nature.

Contemporary with development of early band animal forms are runic inscriptions on the backs of bracteates including the frequent inscription *lapu*, which has been interpreted as an 'invitation, or summons of a spirit' and the authors elaborate on the likelihood of this term appealing specifically to 'animal-shaped helpers or spirits' (McKinnell Simek and Düwel 2004:99). Another runic inscription contemporary with the gripping beast's sudden popularity notes specifically the term *fylgir* (masculine form of the word *fylgja* – a spirit entity responsible for an individual's protection (McKinnell, Simek, and Düwel 2004:171). Turville-Petre's chapter on 'guardian spirits' covers a wide range of benevolent supernatural entities from Nordic pagan religion such as *fylgja*, *disir*, *hamingja*, *hugr*, etc. (1964:230). These apotropaic entities – sometime depicted flying or riding in the sky – were likely intended to ward off any number of forces in super/natural form. While my survey results do not support a specific interpretation of who or what the gripping beast was, I believe these Norse guardian spirits represent a likely category matching many functions and features discussed.

Regarding application of the gripping beast motif, it is overwhelmingly found on curved or protruding surfaces – such as the oval brooches, trefoil brooches, circular brooches, etc. The mouths or snouts of the motif are often found on the highest region of the artifact and sometimes the body, and limbs may also bulge from the surface. Other features that could protrude from the artifacts include tiny metal cords fastened to brooches or pins and there was a strong correlation with cord, rope, or plaited patterns incorporated into the design and borders. For instance, limbs of the gripping beast commonly feature two to four cords, yet the body can also feature corded patterns. The cord motif may be associated with the previously mentioned concept of binding, controlling or fastening.

And finally, considering the placement and positioning of the gripping beast may be helpful in understanding its role. This motif appears primarily on Viking period brooches and fasteners and is overwhelmingly positioned facing outward (away from the wearer), directed forward, and it is prominently featured on the human torso. Over 75% of the gripping beast artifacts are worn on the front of the shoulder, base of the neck, chest, breast, or waist. The placement ties back to the notion of spirit/breath/air and the importance of the chest. This symbolically and anatomically important region is describes in the Prose Edda:

Hjarta heitir negg. Þat skal svá kenna, kalla korn eða stein eða epli eða hnot eða mýl eða líkt ok kenna við brjóst eða hug. Kalla má ok hús eða jörð eða berg hugarins. Brjóst skal svá kenn<a> at kalla hús eða garð eða skip hjarta, anda eða lifrar, eljunar land, hugar ok minnis. Hugr heitir

sefi ok *sjafni, ást, elskugi, vili, munr. Huginn skal svá kenna at kalla vind tröllkvinna ok rétt at nefna til hverja er vill ok svá at nefna jötnana eða kenna þá til konu eða móður eða dóttur þess. Þessi nöfn eru sér. Hugr heitir ok geð, þokki, eljun, þrekr, nenning, minni, vit, skap, lund, trygð. Heitir ok hugr re<i>ði, fjándskapr, fár, grimð, böl, harmr, tregi, óskap, grellskap, lausung, ótrygð, geðleysi, þunngæði, gessni, hraðgeði, óþveri. (Faulkes 1998:108)

Based on the valuable human features that were believed by this culture to be housed in the chest, it is quite plausible that various forms of protection would be placed on this region. Jager's article 'Speech and the Chest in Old English Poetry: Orality or Pectorality?' argues the term pectorality would be a more appropriate expression for a culture that associates speech with the chest – 'the source of utterance' and therefore center of 'psychological functions' more so than with other regions of the body (1990:845). In Scandinavia, strong emotions or thoughts emanating from the chest called *hugr* could actually mount physical attacks according to Strömbäck's research into the concept of the soul in nordic tradition (1975). And as previously noted, Eldar Heide has also examined the physical influence of airborne spirits in his research and has navigated the spirit/breath/wind/air entanglement with connections to health and even magical practices such as *seiðr*.

I acknowledge that my theory of the gripping beast as a protective motif – perhaps quite literally bloated with apotropaic potency is a stretch for the modern imagination. Nevertheless, a bloated being was likely a concept with some resonance for this pastoral and agrarian culture. Bloating was not only a potentially deadly condition in livestock, but according to the *Old Icelandic Medical Miscellany*, bad or evil wind needed to be loosened from the stomach and processes from digestion to birthing involved terms related to binding and loosening (1931:60, 64, 65 67, 76, 100, 107). In viewing the features and behaviors of the gripping beast, the enlarged chest, closed mouth, common cord motif, grip around the neck and/or limbs³ could all relate to the concept of fixing, fastening or binding air/spirit/breath/wind.

In conclusion, evidence from distribution, amulets, and even a concealed amulet suggests the gripping beast functioned in a more complex capacity than the modern sense of the word ornament. Also, the pan-Scandinavian nature of the motif, inconspicuous size, absence on sacred narratives, and lack of evidence for class, gender, cult object or region, make connections to specific Norse gods or Eddic characters difficult. Rather, the evidence would more likely point to a personal, non-narrative significance such as protection. Based on the results of my survey, traditional adjectives such as 'muscular' and 'bulging eyes' and 'naturalistic' were logistically or statistically doubtful. However new observations related to the consistently closed or clenched mouth, composition, application and placement of the motif, its enlarged or distended chest, and Norse perceptions about the chest and spirit/air/breath, may indicate an animistic association with plausible connections to guardian spirits (ex. *fylgja*). This material culture-based theory of the gripping beast as an artistic innovation in depicting a more confrontational, *en face* protective motif – distended with apotropaic potency conveys a concept not at odds with directional and supernaturally potent zoomorphic representations in extant Old Norse texts.

³ Supporting this possibility is the 13th century account in *Hrafns Saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* which describes the physician Hrafn treating a *hugarválað* woman suffering from *brjóstpungt* by bloodletting from the *þjótandi*, translated as a 'wind vein' or 'whistling or rushing artery' or what was likely thought of as an air-filled artery in the arm (1987: c–civ, 5–6). The circulating arterial air (animal spirit/*anima/pneuma*) concept--which was thought to mingle with blood in the heart--was a widespread belief throughout the West, starting with the 2nd century writings of the Greek physician Galen and not challenged until the 16th century (Evans 1945:291).

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Brenna at Upsölum: the Denial of Cosmos.

Giovanna Salvucci, Università di Macerata, Italy

Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglingasaga* enumerates the kings who, from a mythological past, succeeded one another up to the reign of Rognvaldr, father of Hálfðan svarti, the first "historic" Norwegian king who has a saga named after him in *Heimskringla*.

In his prologue to *Heimskringla*, Snorri states that his sources were poetic genealogies, skaldic poems and the testimony of Ari fróði and his own sources, i.e. what he has been told by wise old people. Snorri seems to emphasize these sources because they contain, in particular, information about the deaths of the kings they deal with. His comment on the lay of Þjóðólfr about King Rognvaldr, the *Ynglingatal*, is actually the following: 'Í því kvæði eru nefndir xxx. langfeðga hans ok sagt frá dauða hvers þeira ok legstað' (*Yngs* 1, ll. 12–14)¹ Moreover, he stresses the same quality of the lay of Eyvindr skáldaspillir, the *Háleygjatal*, that enumerates the ancestors of the jarl Hákon: 'sagt er þar ok frá dauða hvers þeira ok haugstað' (*Yngs* 1, ll. 18–19)²

One of the most peculiar deaths reported by Snorri in *Ynglingasaga* is certainly the death of Ingjaldr Qnundarson who, surrounded by his enemies while he is at a feast in Ræning, sets the hall on fire, thus killing himself along with his daughter Ása and all his people.

Together with *Ynglingatal*, among the sources available to Snorri to trace the history of the crucial period revolving around Ingjaldr Qnundarson there probably was *Historia Norvegiæ*, according to which Ingjaldr committed suicide because he was abnormally terrified by King Ívarr:

Post istum filius suus Ingjaldr in regem sublimatur, qui ultra modum timens Ivarum cognomine withfadm regem tunc temporis multis formidabilem se ipsum cum omni comitatu suo cenaculo inclusos igne cremavit. (*Historia Norvegiæ* 101, l. 10–102, ll. 1–3)³

Ynglingatal does not account for Ingjaldr's fear, but it reports his suicide as being considered a remarkable deed:

Ok Ingjald / ífjörvan trað / reyks røsuðr / á Ræningi, / þás húspjófr / hyrjar leistum / goðkynning
í gognum sté.

Ok sá yrðr / allri þjóðu / sanngörvastr / með Svíum þótti, / es hann sjalfr / sínu fjörvi / fræknu
fyrstr / of fara skyldi. (*Yngs* 30, ll. 15–22)⁴

Both sources appear to say that after Ingjaldr's death, his son Óláfr trételgja continued to rule in Sweden. *Historia Norvegiæ* writes that he reigned long and peacefully and died full of days in Sweden, while his son Hálfðan was accepted by the Norwegians as their king and died at an advanced age:

¹ Trans. Hollander (3): 'In this lay are mentioned thirty of his forebears, together with an account of how each of them died and where they are buried.'

² Trans. Hollander (3): 'And in it also we are told about the death of each of them and where his burial mound is.'

³ Trans. Kunin (13): 'In succession to him his son Ingjaldr was elevated to the kingship. He had immoderate fear of a King Ivarr, called viðfaðmi, who terrified many people at the time, so with all his retinue he shut himself up in his feasting-hall and set it on fire.' For a survey of Snorri's sources see Whaley 1991:63–82.

⁴ Trans. Hollander (43): 'Raging fire / at Ræning farm / trod Ingjald / while in this life, / when by stealth / in stocking feet / it fell on / the friend-of-gods; / and this fate / most fitting seemed / to all Swedes / for scion of kings: / to die first / in fiery death, / and end first / his own brave life.'

Ejus filius Olavus cognomento tretelgia diu et pacifice functus regno plenus dierum obiit in Swethia. Olavus genuit Halfdanum cognomine hwitbein, quem de Swethia venientem Norwegenses in montanis sibi regem constituerunt; hic provectus ætate in provincia Thotne reddidit spiritum. (Historia Norvegiæ 102, ll. 3–9)⁵

On the contrary *Ynglingatal* reports that Óláfr trételgja died in a fire, and it mentions that he had left Uppsala long before:

Ok við vág, / hinns viðar[...] / hræ Áleifs / ǫlgylðir svalg, / ok glóðfjálgr / gǫrvar leysti / sonr Fornjóts / af Svía jǫfri. / Sá áttkonr / frá Upsöllum / Lofða kyns / fyrir löngu hvarf. (Yngs 31, ll. 23–27)⁶

In the context of Snorri's tale, the story of Ingjaldr Ǫundurson and Óláfr trételgja takes on a broader and symbolic meaning, and it is a possible clue to the ideologic and cultural basis which Snorri provided for his history of the Norwegian kings. Indeed, Snorri clearly states that it was because of Ingjaldr's deeds and after his celebrated death that the dominion of Uppsala fell from the Yngling line: '*Eptir Ingjald illráða hvarf Upsala-veldi ór ætt Ynglinga þat er langfeðgum mætti telja.*' (Yngs 30, ll. 27–29)⁷

King Ingjaldr seems to represent a point of focus for Snorri, because after listing his 24 predecessors, of whom we are briefly told about the causes of their death, he devotes eight chapters to him (Yngls 34–41). Contrary to all the other kings in the *Ynglingasaga* then, Snorri begins to tell of Ingjaldr's infancy: once a very feeble child, after having been fed the heart of a wolf by his foster-father, he turned into the most violent of men:

Annan dag eptir lét Svipdagr taka hjarta ór vargi ok steikja á teine, ok gaf síðan Ingjaldi konungssyni at eta, ok þaðan af varð hann allra manna grimmastr ok verst skaplundaðr. (Yngls 26, ll. 6–9)⁸

Through no fault of his own then, Ingjaldr assumes the main characteristic of the wolf, namely that of being *útangarðs* (out of the fence), i.e. out of the area of the social order.⁹ Ingjaldr becomes a creature enrolled by the forces of chaos, and in chapter 36 he begins his fight against the cosmos. He significantly starts by building a hall in Uppsala in order to give a funeral banquet in honour of his father. Snorri relates that his banqueting hall was very similar to the one already present in Uppsala, and that it was equipped with seven high-seats for the seven district kings invited, only six of whom showed up. The construction *ex-novo* of a banqueting hall and the dramatic events that will take place there are not an unknown motif: the same fact can be found in the Celtic tale *Fled Bricrenn* (the feast of Bricriu), where the trickster Bricriu had built a hall, identical to the one of Tara, "which was doomed to reveal itself as the place of discord and profanation" (Poli 1985: 85 *et passim*). In Germanic culture as well as

⁵ Trans. Kunin (13–14): 'His son Óláfr, with the nickname 'Tree-feller', ruled the kingdom long and peacefully and died full of days in Sweden. Óláfr was the father of Hálfðan, with the nickname 'Whiteleg', whom the Norwegians of the mountainous region accepted as king when he came from Sweden. He gave up the ghost at an advanced age in the district of Þótn.'

⁶ Trans. Hollander (45): 'By bay bight / the building-wolf / swallowed up / Ólaf's body. / Fornjót's son / with flaming heat / smelted off / the Swede king's mail. / That ruler / of royal race / long before / had left Uppsalir.'

⁷ Trans. Hollander (44): 'With Ingjald the Wicked the race of the Ynglings lost their power over the domain of Uppsala, so far as one can follow the line.'

⁸ Trans. Hollander (45): 'The day after, Svipdag had the heart cut out of a wolf and had it steaked on a spit, and then gave it to Ingjald, the king's son, to eat. And from that time he became the most cruel and most ill-natured of men.'

⁹ See Chiesa Isnardi 1991: 578–582; Poli 1990, *passim*; Hastrup 1985: 105–154, Meulengracht Sørensen 1993: 140–142.

in the Indo-European world, the banqueting hall seems to represent the civilized site, the harmony of the universe, the sacral area where everyone occupies a seat according to one's rank and function (Poli 1990: 597–608; Hastrup 1985: 105–154). Snorri seems to convey this idea when he writes that at Ingjald's banquet: '*Þar var vi. Konungum skipat í inn nýja sal; [...]. Qllu liði því, er til var komit, var skipat í inn nýja sal.*' (Yngls 27, ll. 10–13)¹⁰ Furthermore, he says that during the banquet everything is done according to the customs. All the ceremonial seems to be respected: Ingjaldr is sitting on the step before the high-seat until the beaker, called the *bragafull*, is brought in. He stands up to receive it, vows that he will increase his dominion, drinks from the beaker and ascends the high-seat his father had occupied (Yngls 27, ll. 14–23).

The importance attached to the respect for the ceremony causes the following act of Ingjaldr to be more dramatic: once everyone is drunk, King Ingjaldr, with the help of Svipdagr the Blind's sons, sets fire to the hall and kills all his guests (Yngls 27, ll. 23–28). In so doing he consciously upsets the order which he has previously stated.

The destruction of the banqueting hall is reflected in the destruction of the rules of civilised living. The reign of Ingjaldr is actually characterized by battles and killings perpetrated in violation of the rules: '*Þar er sögn manna, at Ingjaldr konungr dræpi xii. Konunga ok sviki alla í gríðum; hann var kallaðr Ingjaldr inn illráði.*' (Yngls 29, ll. 34–36)¹¹

In contrast to the troublesome reign of Ingjaldr, Snorri describes the realm of the only king who survived the fire at Uppsala: King Granmarr of Södermanland, the seventh king invited by Ingjaldr. Chapter 37 of *Ynglingasaga* is entirely devoted to him, and to his alliance with the Viking King Hjörvarðr. Significantly this alliance is formed during the banquet organized by King Granmarr for King Hjörvarðr. Contrary to Ingjaldr's one, this banquet overflows with peace and harmony. Also in this case, Snorri dwells on the description of the ceremonial:

Ok um kveldit, er full skyldi drekka, þá var þat siðvenja konunga, þeira er at lönðum sátu eða veizlum, er þeir létu gera, at drekka skyldi á kveldum tvímenning, hvár sér karlmaðr ok kona, svá sem ynnisk, en þeir sér, er fleiri væri saman. En þat váru víkingalög, þótt þeir væri at veizlum, at drekka sveitardrykkju. (Yngls 28, ll. 2–7)¹²

The harmony of the banqueting hall as a place for social cohesion and peace, is embodied by the figure of the beautiful Hildiguðr, King Granmarr's daughter who, according to the Germanic banquet ceremonial, pours the ale for the Vikings and greets King Hjörvarðr while handing him the beaker. King Hjörvarðr, awed by such grace and beauty, decides to renounce his Viking customs to be allowed to drink in couple with her.

The contrast between the forces representing harmony and peace and those representing chaos comes to the fore in chapter 38, when the army of Granmarr and Hjörvarðr meets Ingjaldr's army, which is the largest by far, as it is composed of the soldiers recruited from the realms of the kings killed by Ingjaldr. Notwithstanding his larger forces, Ingjaldr is defeated because his troops betray him: Snorri openly says that Ingjaldr '*þóttisk þat finna, at honum myndi vera herra sá ótrúr, er hann hafði ór síni ríki, því er hann fekk með hernaði.*' (Yngls 29, ll. 6–7)¹³ Moreover, Svipdagr the Blind is killed together with his sons.

¹⁰ Trans. Hollander (39): 'There, the six kings were assigned seats in the new hall. [...]. All the host that had come there were given seats in the new hall.'

¹¹ Trans. Hollander (43): 'It is said that King Ingjald slew twelve kings, and all by treachery. He was called Ingjald the Wicked.'

¹² Trans. Hollander (40): 'It was the custom of those kings who resided in their own lands or sat at the banquets they had arranged, that in the evening, when the beakers were passed around, two and two were to drink together, in couples, one man and one woman, as far as possible, and those left over were to drink [together] by themselves. Otherwise it was Viking law that at banquets all were to drink together.'

¹³ Trans. Hollander (41): 'He felt certain that the troops he had levied in those parts of his dominion won by him

Being unable to defeat his enemies in a fair battle, Ingjaldr is once again compelled to disrupt the peace of the banquet: he kills Granmarr and Hjørvarðr surrounding their house and burning them in their hall (*Yngls* 29, ll. 19–23).

The harmony that the king should represent is definitively destroyed by the last deed he performs, together with his daughter, when surrounded by his enemies:

Ingjaldr konungr var þá staddr á Ræningi at veizlu, er hann spurði, at herr Ívars konungs var þar nær kominn; þóttisk Ingjaldr engan styrk hafa til at berjask við Ívar; honum þótti ok sá sýnn kostur, ef hann legðisk á flóttu, at hvaðanæva mundu fjandmenn hans at drífa. Tóku þau Ása það ráð, er frægt er orðit, at þau gerðu fólk alt dauðadrukkit, síðan létu þau leggja eld í hollina; brann þar hollin ok alt fólk, þat er inni var, með Ingjalði konungi. (*Yngls* 30, ll. 6–13)¹⁴

By committing suicide, Ingjaldr completes his upsetting of the established order, because he destroys the person who is supposed to represent and vouch for it; himself.

Though *Ynglingasaga* succeeds in conveying atmospheres that recall ancient traditions and the beliefs of heathen lores, Snorri was most probably aware that Ingjaldr's suicide was strongly condemnable from the point of view of Christian doctrine. That's probably why in his tale of Ingjaldr's infancy he ascribes the king's evil and blasphemous actions to the ancient demonic rites that changed his peaceful attitude against his own will. At the same time, however, he seizes the opportunity to distance himself from this king and to isolate him in history. He actually writes that, because of him, the Ynglings lost the domain of Uppsala: '*allr múgr Svía hljóp upp með einu samþykki at rækja ætt Ingjaldz konungs ok alla hans vini.*' (*Yngls* 30, ll. 33–34).¹⁵

In the following chapters, Snorri has to reconstruct what has been destroyed, in order to make Norway be founded by a king of noble descent and by the best and wisest men, i.e. those who were already far from ancient beliefs and suitable to inhabit a land which will become the kingdom of Saint Óláfr.

According to Snorri's exegesis it is Óláfr trételgja, the son of Ingjaldr, who has the duty to restore all that has been destroyed. In order to rebuild the cosmos, Óláfr has to start from the chaos which is represented, in the Germanic world, by the forest. He becomes then a *skógarmaðr*, an outlaw of the forest. But contrary to his father, who tried to upset the cosmos from the inside, as an inhabitant of the chaos Óláfr tries to give it order by clearing the forest and cultivating the land. In doing so he develops good conditions for living and, as a consequence, a great multitude of Swedes settles there.

As that land can not sustain them all, they lay the blame for that on the king, as Snorri explains: '*kenndu þeir þat konungi sínum, svá sem Svíar eru vanir at kenna konungi bæði ár ok hallæri.*' (*Yngls* 31, ll. 17–18).¹⁶ By this statement, we understand that Snorri's attitude towards the Swedes is changing, and that he is now considering them from a Norwegian point of view.

The initiation rite, represented by the exile in the forest, eventually ends with a human sacrifice, the sacrifice of the king himself, immolated to Óðinn to ensure fertility:

through force had betrayed him.'

¹⁴ Trans. Hollander (43): 'King Ingjald was being entertained at Røning when he learned that the army of King Ívar was near at hand. He did not consider that he had sufficient force to fight against Ívar. He also saw clearly that if he fled, his enemies would fall upon him from all sides. So he and Ása hit on a decision which since has become famous: they had all the people [with them] become dead drunk, then set fire to the hall. It burned down with all the people inside, and King Ingjald also.'

¹⁵ Trans. Hollander (44): 'all the people in Sweden with one accord rose up to drive out the kin of King Ingjald and all his friends.'

¹⁶ Trans. Hollander (44): 'They laid blame for that on the king, as the Swedes are wont to ascribe to their king good seasons or bad.'

Óláfr konungr var lítill blótmaðr; þat líkaði Svíum illa og þótti þaðan mundu standa hallærit; drógu Svíar þá her saman, gerðu for að Óláfi konungi og tóku hús á honum og brendu hann inni, og gáfu hann Óðni og blétu honum til árs sér. (Yngls 31, ll. 18–22)¹⁷

Snorri's comment aligns with his previous judgement on the Swedes: '*Þeir er vitrari vǫru af Svíum fundu þá, at það olli hallærinu, at mannfólkit var meira, en landit mætti bera, en konungur hafði engu um valdit.*' (Yngls 31, ll. 29–31)¹⁸

The same wise men were the ones who elected Hálfðan Ólafsson their king, the first Yngling to reach Raumaríki, a district in central Norway.

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¹⁷ Trans. Hollander (44–45): 'King Ólaf was but little given to offer sacrifices. The Swedes were ill-pleased at that and believed it was the cause of the bad harvests. They collected a host and moved on King Ólaf. They surrounded his hall and burned him inside, giving him to Óðinn and sacrificing him for good crops.'

¹⁸ Trans. Hollander (44): 'those of the Swedes who were wiser attributed the famine to the fact that the inhabitants were too numerous for the land to support and they believed that it was not the fault of the king.'

Redaktionen av *Skáldskaparmál* i Codex Upsaliensis

Daniel Sävborg, Dept. of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University, Sweden

Textverket Snorra Eddas tre delar Gylfaginning, Skáldskaparmál och Háttatal möter, i lite olika utformning, i handskrifterna R (Gks. 2367 4to), T (Utrecht MS nr. 1374), W (AM 242 fol) och U, Codex Upsaliensis (DG 11 4to). R och T ligger nära varandra och representerar en och samma version, och W har en text som är denna version närstående. Fragmentet C (AM 748 II 4to) omfattar senare hälften av Skáldskaparmál i RT(W)-versionen. U avviker däremot på åtskilliga sätt från denna version och måste sägas representera en annan version.

Avvikelserna mellan de två versionerna är av delvis olika slag i verkets olika delar. I Gylfaginning handlar det om stilistiska skillnader. U är markant kortare än RTW och tycks representera ett annat, mer kortfattat och faktacentrerat, stilideal för berättande prosa. Däremot är själva innehållet och strukturen nästan helt desamma. I Skáldskaparmál saknas däremot åtskilliga avsnitt som finns i RTWC, och avsnittens ordningsföljd är ofta annorlunda.

Skillnaderna mellan de två versionerna har länge uppmärksammats. En primär frågeställning har traditionellt varit att avgöra vilken version som bäst representerar Snorris ursprungliga text, eller åtminstone avgöra vilken version som förutsätter och omarbetar den andra. Detta var också huvudfrågan i vårt aktuella projekt såsom det formulerades i den titel som angavs till Vetenskapsrådet: ”Originalversionen av Snorre Sturlassons Edda? Studier i Codex Upsaliensis.” I detta arbete skall jag göra ett försök att besvara den frågan för åtminstone en del av Snorra Edda, Skáldskaparmál.

Vilka är då skillnaderna mellan U- och RTC(W)-versionerna av Skáldskaparmál?

Den mest fundamentala och genomgripande skillnaden är de berättande avsnitten i RTWC är utspridda över hela Skáldskaparmál och interfolierar förteckningarna med de kenningar och heitin de skall belägga, medan dessa berättande avsnitt i U är samlade i början (som en direkt fortsättning, utan avbrott, på Gylfaginning) och slutet av Skáldskaparmál.

Ett långt avsnitt – med heitin för furstar, människor av olika slag, kroppsdelar, känslor och intellektuella funktioner, vidare med olika kenningstyper och till sist homonymer – har olika placering i de två versionerna. I RTC (W har en helt annan redaktion i senare hälften av Skáldskaparmál) följer detta avsnitt sist i Skáldskaparmál (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 181–193), närmast efter avsnitt om heitin för djur, naturfenomen, himlafenomen och tidsfenomen. I U står hela detta avsnitt (Grape 1977: 73–78) mellan ett avsnitt om heitin för himla- och tidsfenomen och ett avsnitt om heitin för djur och naturfenomen.¹

I RTWC-versionen återges flera gånger i Skáldskaparmál längre diktcitat som syftar till att belägga guda- och hjältesagor.² Dessa citat saknas i U, ehuru ett par gånger hänvisningen till den aktuella dikten finns med (Grape 41 och 42).

I RTWC-versionen finns ett antal avsnitt som saknas i U. Några av dessa är relativt utförliga (en digression om Greklandsgudar och hjältar, Finnur Jónsson 86–88, berättelsen om Ægirs fest, 121, völsungahistorien fr.o.m. Sigurðr t.o.m. Hamðir, Sqrli och Áslaug, 129–134, heitin för jorden, 167–168, heitin för luften och vädret, 171, heitin för havet och andra sjöfe-

¹ Det finns också några belägg för att enstaka korta avsnitt har olika placering, men det rör sig om få fall, främst placeringen av avsnittet om heitin för tidsbegrepp (Grape 72; Finnur Jónsson 179) och ordningsföljden mellan heitina för sol och måne (Grape 72; Finnur Jónsson 166–167). Sådana skillnader finns även mellan handskrifterna inom RTWC-gruppen.

² Det rör sig om följande fall: 7 helstrofer ur Þjóðólfr hvínverskis *Haustlǫng* om Hrungr (Finnur Jónsson 104–105, 19 helstrofer ur Eilífr Guðrúnarsons *Þórsdrápa* om Geirroðr (107–110), 13 helstrofer ur *Haustlǫng* om Þjazi (111–113), 4 ½ strof ur Bragis *Ragnarsdrápa* om Hamðir och Sqrli (134), *Grottasǫngr*, 24 strofer, (136–138), 4 ½ strof ur Bragis *Ragnarsdrápa* om Hjaðningavíg (155).

nomen, 173–177, heitin för personer av olika slag, särskilt furstar, 179–181), andra består av enbart en eller ett par rader (heitin för nöt och får, 171, kenningar för Sif, 110).

Åtskilliga av de strofer som citeras i RTWC saknas i U, och dessutom har U i ett par fall citat som saknas i RTWC.³ I åtminstone ett strofcitat är skillnaderna mellan de två versionerna av sådant slag att den ena versionen knappast kan bygga på den andra.⁴ U- och RTWC-versionerna tycks alltså i samband med strofcitaten delvis ha källor oberoende av varandra. I de flesta fall har dock strofcitaten tydligt samma förlaga.

De berättande avsnitten i U är i regel kortare än motsvarande avsnitt i RTCW.

I alla dessa fall handlar det om skillnader som uppkommit genom medvetna ingrepp, oavsett vilken version som är den primära. Men U har i några fall regelrätta fel (utöver enkla läs- och skrivfel) som förrycker textens sammanhang och mening, fel av ett slag som inte förekommer i RTWC-versionen. Ett exempel är att prosaintroduktionen om kenningarna för skaldskap först felaktigt placeras före en räkka med strofcitat som belägger kenningar för något helt annat, nämligen Óðinn (Grape 51), och därefter tas en gång till (52–53), denna gång korrekt före den räkka av strofcitat som verkligen belägger de aktuella skaldskapskenningarna. I RTW återges prosaintroduktionen om skaldskapskenningarna enbart på sin korrekta plats (Finnur Jónsson 92).

I diskussionen om eventuell prioritet hos två versioner av samma verk grundas slutsatser om påverkansriktningen oftast på antingen 1) påstått logiska argument – vad som verkar rimligast utifrån ett allmänt sunt-förnuft-perspektiv – eller 2) på analogier med andra fall där vi har att göra med en äldre respektive yngre version av samma verk. Men sunt-förnuft-argument är i grunden subjektiva gissningar, och erfarenheten visar att olika forskare gör motsatta rimlighetsbedömningar. Analogier ger en mer objektiv grund, men de förlorar i värde om jämförelseobjekten avviker i tid, rum, ämne och genre.

Men i det aktuella fallet finns faktiskt möjligheter att finna analogier där jämförbarheten ovedersägligen är stor. Vi är i själva verket inte alls utan kunskap om hur bearbetning av just Skáldskaparmál kunde gå till under medeltiden, rentav under just den tid U och R tillkommer. Vi har två omredigerade versioner av Skáldskaparmál där vi vet vilken version som omarbetats. Det handlar om handskrift A (AM 748 I b 4to) från ca 1300 och B (AM 757 4to) från ca 1400.

A och B är sinsemellan besläktade. Båda låter sin Skáldskaparmál-redaktion följa direkt på 3:e grammatiska avhandlingen med den s.k. Litla Skálda (som bygger på kenninglistor från Skáldskaparmál) som övergångsavsnitt, båda fortsätter med förkortade versioner av berättelserna om Fenrisulven ur Gylfaginning och Grotti ur Skáldskaparmál, varpå båda återger en version av Skáldskaparmál i RTC-versionen⁵ med början i avsnittet om guldkenningar (Arnamagn. ed., vol. II, 1852: 427 ff resp. 511 ff) ända till slutet med homonymerna och tulorna. Efter några avsnitt börjar de dock skilja sig åt, de tar avsnitt i olika ordning, gör delvis olika

³ Vid ett tillfälle återges en halvstrof av Ormr Steinþorsson (Grape 71) som helt saknas på motsvarande plats i RTWC (Finnur Jónsson 165), och av ett citat tillskrivet ”Einarr” återges i U (Grape 65) två rader fler än i RTWC (Finnur Jónsson 151).

⁴ Det gäller främst den suspenderade strofen av Þjóðólfr Arnórsson (Grape 79; Finnur Jónsson 172).

⁵ A-versionen kan omöjligt utgå från U-versionen. Vi de många tillfällen U- och RTC-versionen skiljer sig åt överensstämmer A med RTC mot U. Några exempel: de avsnitt med heitin i RTC-versionen som saknas i U (för havet, jorden, nöt och får samt luft och vindar) finns med i A (RTC, 173–177, 167–168, 171, 171; A, 449–451, 448, 458, 459); A (461–468) låter i likhet med RTC (183–193) det stora sjoket med heitin för människor, mänskliga funktioner, homonymer m.m. avsluta Skáldskaparmál (följt av tular i båda versionerna), medan U låter hela detta sjok komma betydligt tidigare i verket (och återger inga tular); den verbala utformningen i A överensstämmer med RTC medan U ofta avviker markant (t.ex. RTC, 142–143; A, 432–433; U, 87); A återger normalt alla de strofer i RTC som saknas i U (t.ex. RTC, 153; A, 441–442).

strykningar, och B inkorporerar dessutom åtskilliga avsnitt från första delen av Skáldskaparmál. A och B förutsätter alltså RTC-versionen av Skáldskaparmál och representerar bearbetningar av denna version.⁶ De kan därmed lära oss mycket om hur sådan bearbetning gick till på Island kring år 1300 och vara till hjälp för vår bedömning av frågan om prioriteterna mellan U- och RTWC-versionerna.

Här kommer jag att koncentrera mig på A. Denna handskrift är från samma tid som U och R (ca 1300) och därmed tidsmässigt mest jämförbar med dessa. Denna handskrift har heller inte, till skillnad från B, några lakuner i den aktuella delen.

A-versionens omarbetning av RTWC-versionen⁷ är huvudsakligen av tre slag.

Främst handlar det om *redaktionella förändringar* av ordningsföljd, men också strykning av avsnitt. A ger en version av Skáldskaparmál fr.o.m. senare delen av avsnittet om guldkenningar t.o.m. homonymförteckningen och tulorna. Ordningsföljden är oftast densamma som i RTC, men i partiet om heitin för djur och naturfenomen kastas ordningsföljden fullständigt om i A (A, Arn. 448–461; motsv. RTC, Finnur Jónsson 166–179). A innehåller inga avsnitt som helt saknas i RT i själva Skáldskaparmál (i några fall finns dock extra kenningar tillagda, och de avslutande tulorna är fler i A). Däremot finns det några, relativt få, avsnitt i RT(C) som är helt strukna i A. Det handlar om berättelsen om Hjaðningavíg (RT 153–155) samt om de korta avsnitten om heitin för björnar (RT 169), hjortar (RT 169) och oxar (RT 170). Efter berättelsen om Grotti saknas i A (och B) helt de citat ur *Grottasöngur* som i RTC belägger denna historia (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 136–138). Dessutom finns några avsnitt som delvis saknas i A: senare delen av ett avsnitt om kenningar och beteckningar för furstar (RTW 160–164), ett sjuk omfattande senare delen av ett avsnitt om beteckningar för mannen (RTC 179–181) samt den inledande delen av avsnittet om Hálfdan gamli (RTC 181–182).

Det förekommer även *stilistiska förändringar*. Mest påfallande är den kraftiga förkortningen av Grotti-historien (A, 431, även B, 515; jfr RTC, 135–138).

I några fall använder sig A av *strofcitat från andra källor* än RTWC-versionen. Ett exempel är citatet ur *Alvíssmál* som belägger heitin för natten (460), där A återger en påtagligt anorlunda version än RTC (179), men där A:s version i gengäld ligger mycket nära texten i Codex Regius av eddadikterna. I avsnittet om fursteheitin citeras i A (461; även B 540) en strof av Markús som belägg för heitit *harri*; i RTC (182) citeras på motsvarande plats en helt annan strof som belägg för samma heiti. Någon gång citeras i AB-versionen mer av en strof än i RTC. Ett exempel är Granis strof i samband med fursteheitina, där A (462) och B (541) återger en hel helming, men RTC enbart två rader (184). A-versionens redaktör har uppenbarligen haft tillgång till andra diktkällor än RTC-versionen och några gånger, om än relativt sällan, valt att återge dessa i stället för sin huvudförlaga.

I A finns trots omarbetningen ibland spår av förlagan, RTWC-versionen. Flera gånger refererar texten till sådant som påstås ha nämnts tidigare, trots att detta har strukits i A-versionen. I avsnittet om fursteheitin hänvisas vid belägget för ordet *sinjórr* till Sighvatr, och en rad (utan själva heitit) citeras, varpå A skriver: ”ok fyrr ær ritat” (463). Men det stämmer inte i A, där strofen aldrig har citerats tidigare. I RTC återges på denna plats också enbart början av citatet (185) och i C står dessutom, alldeles som i A, en hänvisning: ”ok fyrr var ritat” (Arn. 609). Men i dessa tre handskrifter – som alltså representerar den version som varit A-

⁶ För fullständighetens skull bör betonas att AB inte kan utgöra den ursprungliga versionen av Snorra Edda (vilket ingen heller hävdar). I B finns en uttrycklig hänvisning till den *bók* som utgör förlagan, och det gäller uppgifter i prologen i Snorra Edda, vilken alltså inte finns med i A eller B (Arn. 533).

⁷ Jag talar här för enkelhets skull om ‘A-versionens omarbetning av RTC(W)-versionen’, men utgår från att det också har funnits mellanled. Så har t.ex. A och B med stor sannolikhet haft en gemensam förlaga som redan denna utgjorde en omarbetning av RTC(W)-versionen. Men ytterst återgår A (liksom B) på RTC(W)-versionen, och det är alla de förändringar som gjorts i förhållande till denna som jag här diskuterar, oavsett om de gjorts i själva A eller i något av de led som ligger mellan A och en text av RTC(W)-typ.

versionens förlaga – har verkligen strofen citerats tidigare (Finnur Jónsson 180; Arn. 605). Att A återger hänvisningen bakåt i detta fall är ett misstag av redaktören vid omredigeringen, och hänvisningen är ett oavsiktligt spår av förlagan. Ett avsnitt om Hálfðan gamlis söner inleds i A: ”Enn attv þav halfðan ok alvig .ix. sonv [---]” (Arn. 461). Ordet ”Enn” framstår som omotiverat, ty ingenting har sagts om Hálfðan, Alvig eller några söner tidigare. Men i RTC (och B) är det annorlunda. Där står det också ”Enn áttu” på motsvarande ställe (Finnur Jónsson 183), och där syftar ordet *enn* naturligt på det föregående avsnittet, som består av en presentation av kung Hálfðan, hans hustru Alvig och 18 söner till dem (181). Efter avslutningen av ett heiti-avsnitt i A finns följande text: ”Maðr ær hverr fyrir sær. leita fyrr i bokinni allt til þæss ær stvfr qvað.” (Arn. 461) De första orden utgör i RTC (179) inledningen på ett avsnitt om beteckningar för mannen. Men i A följer aldrig själva avsnittet. I stället avbryter sig A och övergår omedelbart till en text som motsvarar slutet av skaldecitaten efter första delen av berättelsen om kung Hálfðan gamli i övriga handskrifter. Ett påbörjat avsnitt avbryts alltså och blir därmed blint och omotiverat i sin stympade form. A omredigerar texten från sin förlaga (en RTC-liknande text) men lämnar spår kvar kvar av denna. Även vid andra tillfällen finns i A och B hänvisningar till passager ‘tidigare i boken’ (Arn. 446, 533), vilket gäller passager som saknas i A resp. B och som i stället refererar till förlagan. I alla dessa fall finns spår från förlagan trots att denna är omarbetad.

Vi återvänder till U och dess relation till RTWC-versionen. Vilken version förutsätter och omarbetar vilken? Vi skall försöka undersöka detta i ljuset av kunskaperna om A och B och deras omarbetning av sin förlaga.

Inför de två berättelserna om Þórrs mellanhavande med Hrungrnir och Geirrøðr finns i såväl U som RTW en introduktion som innehåller uppgiften att verket nu skall berätta om grunden för de kenningar som tidigare är exemplifierade. Texten lyder i U: ”Nv skal segia af hverio þær keNingar ero er aþr ero dæmi savgþ.” (Grape 38). Och i R: ”Nv skal en segia dæmi, af hveriv þær keNigar erv, er nv voro ritapar, er aðr voro eigi dæmi til savgð” (Finnur Jónsson 100; nästan ordagrant detsamma i TW). Båda versionerna hänvisar alltså till kenningar som redan tidigare givits (U: ”kenningar [---] er aþr ero dæmi savgþ”; R: ”keNigar [---] er nv voro ritapar”) och som genom den nu (explicit ”Nv” i båda handskrifterna) följande historien skall förklaras (explicit *af hverju* i båda handskrifterna).⁸ Denna uppgift stämmer utmärkt i RTW. Där följer de aktuella Þórr-historierna närmast efter ett antal förteckningar över kenningar för alla gudarna, inklusive en del räckor med skaldecitat med samma slags kenningar, och bland dessa kenningar finns åtskilliga Þórr-kenningar, bl.a. ”vegandi Hrvngnis, Geirroþar” (95), som syftar specifikt på de två historierna om Þórrs strider med Hrungrnir och Geirrøðr, vilka berättelser enligt prosainroduktionen alltså skall förklara dessa kenningar. Introduktionens ord stämmer alltså i RTW. Däremot stämmer de inte i U.

Vi såg att även U i introduktionen till Hrungrnir- och Geirrøðr-berättelserna motiverade dessa med behovet att förklara de kenningar som presenterats tidigare (*áðr*). Men i U har de kenningar som förklaras genom dessa berättelser inte alls återgivits tidigare. De återges i stället betydligt senare (Grape 54). Den placeringen är ett uttryck för det jag tidigare betecknade som den mest fundamentala redaktionella skillnaden mellan U- och RTWC-versionerna: principen att U-versionen för samman gudaberättelserna i början av verket, som en obruten fortsättning på gudaberättelserna i Gylfaginning, och sedan tar kenning- och heiti- avsnitten och de tillhöriga skaldecitaten separat, medan RTWC-versionen integrerar berättelserna i dessa företecknande avsnitt. Den enda möjliga tolkningen av den inkorrekt hänvisningen är att U-

⁸ Att ordet *dæmi* används på olika sätt i de två citaten (i RTW betecknar det uppenbart en förklarande berättelse, i U betecknar det snarast exempel i en företeckning) påverkar inte tolkningen av passagera: att båda versionerna refererar till en tidigare kenningförteckning.

versionen har haft en förlaga med samma uppläggning som RTW, där kenningarna som förklaras i Hrungrnir- och Geirrörberättelserna faktiskt föregick själva berättelsen, vilket ju introduktionstexten uppger i såväl U som RTW. U-versionens redaktör har som en del av sin omarbetning flyttat kenningförteckningen till en placering efter berättelsen, men glömt att ändra referensen bakåt i introduktionen av berättelsen. Det är ett misstag av en typ vi känner igen från A och dess inkorrekta hänvisningar bakåt till passager som stod i förlagan men som redaktören strukit vid sin omarbetning. U-versionens hänvisning till den påstått föregående kenningförteckningen är ett spår av den förlaga den har omarbetat. RTW:s redaktion måste här vara den ursprungliga, och U-redaktionen förutsätter denna. Det är en slutsats av stor vikt för vår syn på U. Åtskillnaden mellan berättelser och förteckningar är den mest fundamentala skillnaden mellan versionerna i fråga om Skáldskaparmál. Slutsatsen innebär att den åtskillnaden är sekundär i U-versionen och att hela dess sammanknytning av Gylfaginning och den inledande delen av (det vi idag kallar) Skáldskaparmál som ett oavbrutet helt bestående av gudaberättelser är ett sekundärt fenomen, följden av U-versionens omarbetning av en förlaga som åtminstone i detta hänseende återgav RTWC-versionen.

I U:s version av Skáldskaparmál tas även i slutet ett antal berättelser i grupp, denna gång ur både guda- och hjältesaga, berättelser som i RTWC i stället finns utspridda tidigare i verket, i anslutning till de kenningar de förklarar. Är även denna egenhet i U en följd av en omarbetning av en RTWC-liknande förlaga?

En av de berättelser U tar i slutet är historien om dvärgasmidet, vars syfte är att förklara guldkenningen *haddr Sifjar*. Omedelbart efter denna berättelse följer en skaldestrof av Eyvindr skáldaspillir, som belägger guldkenningen *hofuðband Fullu*. Detta citat introduceras helt abrupt omedelbart efter de avslutande orden i berättelsen om dvärgasmidet: "[---] Sa þvengr er mvnr loka er saman savmaðr með heitir vartari. Her heyrer at gvll er kent til havfvð banda fvlló er eyvindr qvab. Fvlló skein a fiollvm [---]" (Grape 83). Direkt efter citatet följer berättelsen om uttergålden, som belägger några guldkenningar kopplade till asarnas mellanhavanden med Hreiðmarr. Det är tydligt att citatet av Fulla-strofen är ett inslag som bryter av starkt mot sammanhanget. Här citeras inga fler skaldestrofer. Den kenning som exemplifieras i citatet har ingen koppling till vare sig den föregående eller följande berättelsen. Strofen framstår som helt malplacerad. Hur har den hamnat där?

Strofen har faktiskt citerats en gång tidigare i U (Grape 60). På den platsen är strofen däremot väl motiverad av sammanhanget. Den återges i ett avsnitt om guldkenningar. Detta inleds med en lista över guldkenningar, bl.a. just "havfvð bavnd fvlló" (60), och omedelbart efter denna lista heter det: "Sva segir eyvindr. Fvlló skein a fiollvm [---]", varpå hela citatet ges (60). Det följs i sin tur av ytterligare ett antal skaldecitat som belägger andra guldkenningar i den inledande listan, även dessa liksom Fulla-kenningen innehållande ett gudinne-namn. Här kommer strofen in i en kontext av besläktat material. Här finns själva kenningen i en lista, och här finns andra skaldestrofer som belägger nära besläktade kenningar. Det råder ingen tvekan om att det är här Fulla-strofen hör hemma. Men varför har den dessutom hamnat vid slutet av verket, mitt i sjöket av berättelser, mellan två berättelser som den inte har någon koppling till?

Ser vi på RTW-versionen klarnar det hela. Här citeras Fulla-strofen bara en gång, och det sker i just i avsnittet om guldkenningar, och precis som vid det första citatfallet i U är detta det första citatet i en räkka skaldecitat som belägger guldkenningar (Finnur Jónsson 125–126). Men i RTW är som nämnts de förklarande berättelserna integrerade i de tidigare delarna av Skáldskaparmál, och här föregås den aktuella räkkan med skaldecitat av två berättelser som ligger mellan listan med guldkenningar (som har ungefär samma text som motsvarande lista i U) och Fulla-strofen. Berättelserna syftar till att förklara två av de kenningar som också nämndes i kenninglistan. Efter dessa två berättelser kommer alltså Fulla-strofen som belägger ännu en av de kenningar som nämndes i kenninglistan. Men det viktiga är att den andra av de

två berättelserna är berättelsen om dvärgasmidet, som syftar till att belägga kenningen ”haddr Sifiar” som finns med i den inledande kenninglistan (120). Och det är omedelbart efter denna berättelse Fulla-strofen kommer, då den belägger den kenning som i den inledande kenninglistan följer omedelbart efter ”haddr Sifiar”, nämligen ”höfvöband Fvllv” (120). Övergången från berättelsen om dvärgasmidet till citatet av Fulla-strofen är nästan identisk med den text vi mötte i U:s avslutande parti (”Sa þvengr, er mvöriN Loka var saman rifaðr, heitir Vartari. Her heyrir, at gvll er kent til havfvbantz Fvlllo, er orti Eyvindr skaldaspillir: Fvlllo skein afiollvm [---]; R, 124–125). Övergången från berättelsen om dvärgasmidet till citatet av Fulla-strofen är alltså lika direkt i RTW som i U:s slut. Men här i RTW-versionen kommer Fulla-strofen inte alls omotiverat. Den följs omedelbart av andra skaldecitat som belägger kenningar för guld av typen ‘Freyjas gråt’, vilket är den kenningstyp som nämns efter *höfuðband Fullu* i den inledande kenninglistan, ”gratr Freyio” (120). I U finns i den inledande kenninglistan samma ordning – ”haddr sifiar, havfvð bavnd fvlllo. gratr freyio” (Grape 60) – men efter listan följer inte berättelsen om Sifs hår och dvärgasmidet, utan skaldestroferna med belägg för kenningarna *höfuðband Fullo* och *grátr Freyju* följer direkt. U ger ju inga berättelser i denna del av Skáldskaparmál utan samlar berättelserna vid slutet. Där återfinns, som noterades inledningsvis, bl.a. berättelsen om Sifs hår och dvärgasmidet, och denna berättelse följs alltså omedelbart av Fulla-strofen, som då citeras för andra gången.

Den enda förklaringen till U:s upprepande av Fulla-strofen i slutet av Skáldskaparmál är att den ‘följt med på köpet’ när berättelsen om dvärgasmidet har flyttats från sin ursprungliga plats i avsnittet om guldkenningar (där det finns i RTW) till samlingen med de övriga berättelserna i slutet av Skáldskaparmál. Om man tvärtom antar en revision åt motsatt håll – att RTW-versionen omarbetat U-versionen och flyttat berättelser från en samling vid slutet till de tidigare avsnitten med kenninglistor och skaldecitat – blir upprepningen av Fulla-strofen mitt emellan två orelaterade berättelser oförklarlig. Att också Fulla-strofen återgavs vid slutet var ett misstag av U-versionens redaktör; strofen hade redan tidigare citerats och hade dessutom ingen funktion att fylla på sin andra plats. Den citerades enbart eftersom den följde direkt på den föregående berättelsen om dvärgasmidet och har tydligen vid avskriften, felaktigt, uppfattats som kopplad till denna berättelse. Fallet utgör ett belägg för att även samlandet av berättelser i slutet av Skáldskaparmál är ett sekundärt fenomen i U-versionen. U-versionen förutsätter även här en redaktion av RTWC-typ, där berättelserna var integrerade i avsnitten med kenningförteckningar och skaldecitat. Den upprepade Fulla-strofen i U är, liksom den felaktiga bakåthänvisningen i introduktionen av Hrungrnir- och Geirrøðr-avsnitten, ett spår av RTWC-versionen.

Slutsatsen är entydig. När det gäller den grundläggande redaktionella strukturen i Skáldskaparmál är RTWC-versionen primär, och U-versionen utgör en omarbetning av denna. U representerar åtminstone i detta avseende icke originalversionen av Snorris Edda.

Gäller då denna slutsats U-versionen av Skáldskaparmál och dess relation till RTWC-versionen generellt eller enbart grundstrukturen? Att U-versionen generellt är sekundär i förhållande till RTWC-versionen förefaller som den rimligaste, den primära, hypotesen. Varför skulle U-versionen på en central punkt ha omarbetat RTWC-versionen samtidigt som denna på andra punkter skulle ha omarbetat U-versionen? Men det är riktigt att vi med resonemangen ovan inte har bevisat att också den stilistiska utformningen av de berättande avsnitten eller frånvaron av hela avsnitt skulle vara sekundära fenomen i U i relation till RTWC, ej heller att stroforna skulle vara sekundära i U. Låt oss därför med utgångspunkt i analogin med AB-versionerna pröva några av de påståenden som använts för att stödja tesen om U:s prioritet och om RTWC-versionen som en sekundär bearbetning av denna.

Det har föreslagits att frånvaron i U av avsnitt som finns i RTWC skulle indikera U-versionens prioritet utifrån antagandet att det är sannolikare att man vid en revision lägger till avsnitt än stryker dem. U saknar åtskilliga avsnitt som finns i RTWC, medan det omvända

knappast någonsin är fallet. Vi såg i översikten ovan att det rör sig om frånvaro av flera hela berättelser – t.ex. historierna om Ægirs fest och historierna om gjukungarna –, av längre dikt-citat som enbart syftar till att belägga historier – t.ex. *Pórsdrápa* och *Grottasöngur* – och även av enstaka kortare avsnitt med kenningar och heitin, t.ex. avsnitten om heitin för nöt och får. I alla dessa fall skulle det enligt det refererade synsättet handla om tillägg i RTWC-versionen, inte om strykningar i U-versionen. Men en analogi med A-versionen styrker inte denna tanke. Här stryks en hel berättelse (historien om Hjaðningavíg). Här stryks en dikt som i förlagan citeras för att belägga en historia (*Grottasöngur*). Här stryks enstaka heitilistor, avsnitten med björn-, ox- och hjorthaitin, en strykning som framstår som en nära parallell till frånvaron av avsnitten med får- och nötheitin i U. Sammanfattningsvis framstår förklaringen att U-versionen strukit de aktuella avsnitten ur sin förlaga, en text av RTWC-typ, som sannolik utifrån analogin med A och dess relation till RTWC-versionen.

Det har även föreslagits att tendensen i U till större korthet än i RTWC i de berättande avsnitten skulle indikera denna versions prioritet utifrån antagandet att det är sannolikare att man vid en omarbetning förlänger än förkortar. Här erbjuder A (och B) färre jämförelsemöjligheter, eftersom de berättande avsnitten är så få. Men i både A och B finns en version av Grotti-historien som uppenbart bygger på en text tillhörande RTC-versionen.⁹ Texten i AB är starkt förkortad, så att enbart de grundläggande faktauppgifterna kvarstår. Förkortning av berättande texter var uppenbart en naturlig strategi för en medeltida bearbetare av Skaldskaparmål. Att den större kortheten i berättelserna i U i relation till RTWC skulle vara följden av en förkortning framstår därmed som rimligt.

U har i några fall strofer som saknas i RTWC och även markant avvikande versioner av vissa strofer. Det har hävdats att detta belägger att U inte kan vara en omarbetning av RTWC-versionen. Men vi har sett att även A återger strofer som saknas i RTWC (t.ex. Markússtrofen) och i ett annat fall återger en strof i en markant annorlunda version än den som finns i RTWC (*Alvíssmál*-citaten) – detta trots att A förutsätter RTWC-versionen. Det är följaktligen rimligt att U-versionens redaktör hade tillgång till strofer ur andra källor även om han byggde på RTWC-versionen.

Det har hävdats att den oftast sämre text – framför allt rörigare och klumpigare disponerad – som vi möter i U i förhållande till RTWC skulle indikera U-versionens prioritet utifrån antagandet att det är sannolikare att man vid en revision förbättrar en text än försämrar den. Och visst känner vi alla till från vårt eget arbete att vår första version av en text är sämre än den sista, och att texten normalt blir mer stringent allteftersom. Men de rena felaktigheterna i U är inte självklart onöjaktigheter av det slag som är typiskt för en första version. Misstaget när U låter introduktionen av skaldskapskenningar följas av skaldecitat för något helt annat (Óðinn-kenningar) och sedan korrigerar sig och tar om introduktionen av skaldskapskenningar, denna gång korrekt följd av skaldecitat för just detta, är en onöjaktighet av ett annat slag. Det kan i stället tolkas som en typ av fel som uppstår vid en omredigering, där olika avsnitt flyttas runt, stryks och byter plats. Det är under alla omständigheter en typ av fel och otympligheter som har åtskilliga paralleller i A. Där har vi sett hur strykning av ett avsnitt (presentationen av Hálfdan gamli och hans söner) innebär att fortsättningen av historien om Hálfdan och hans avkomma blir egendomlig i A. Vi har sett exempel på hänvisningar till påstådda tidigare strofcitat som emellertid strukits under revisionen, och vi har sett ett avsnitt som påbörjats men avbrutits och ersatts av en abrupt övergång till ett helt annat avsnitt. Omarbetningen av en text av RTWC-typ har i fallet A resulterat i tidvis stor rörighet och flera fall av ologisk struktur till följd av att avsnitt flyttats runt och strukits. Det framstår utifrån denna

⁹ Utöver alla de gemensamma sakuppgifterna finns även verbala överensstämmelser, t.ex.: ”var þar eptir svelgr ihafinv, er særinn fellr iqvernar avgat; þa varð sær salltr” (R; Finnur Jónsson 136); ”Þar er svelgr síþan ær sær fællr i avga grottv. Þa gnyr ser ær hon gnyr ok þa varð siorinn salltr.” (A; Arn. aa 431).

analogi som rimligt att tolka de likartade onöjaktigheterna i U på samma sätt: som en följd av en omarbetning av en förlaga av RTWC-typ.

Det rör sig i dessa fall om analogier. De *bevisar* självfallet inte något om relationen mellan U- och RTWC-versionerna. Men analogierna belägger ändå att de egenheter som karaktäriserar U i relation till RTWC är precis desamma som också karaktäriserar A (och B) i relation till RTC och som där ovedersägligen är en följd av en omarbetning av RTC-versionen. Vi måste också väga in vår tidigare slutsats att U-versionen i fråga om Skáldskaparmál grundstruktur är sekundär i förhållande till RTWC-versionen. I kombination med denna slutsats utgör analogierna ovan starka indicier för tesen att U-versionen av Skáldskaparmál är en omarbetning av en förlaga av RTWC-typ.

Min slutsats är att Skáldskaparmál i U:s version i sin helhet representerar en revision av den version vi möter i RTC(W). U representerar åtminstone inte i fallet Skáldskaparmál originalversionen. Om RTC(W)-versionen gör detta kan vi inte säkert veta, men den representerar tydligt en äldre version, den äldsta version av Skáldskaparmál som vi kan belägga. Hur skall vi då se på U-versionen? Jag vill hävda att den inte är så avvikande som har sagts. Det är tvärtom en redaktion med flera paralleller. I likhet med A, B och (i mindre utsträckning) W utgör den en markant omarbetning av den Skáldskaparmál vi har i RTC. Skáldskaparmál var ett verk som åtskilliga gånger omredigerades, och det finns gemensamma tendenser i dessa omredigeringar. Åtskilliga förtecknande avsnitt ströks eller bytte plats, de berättande avsnitten flyttades undan, ströks och förkortades. Verket sammankopplades med andra poetologiska och retoriska verk, framför allt grammatiska avhandlingar (3:e grammatiska avhandlingen i A, B och W, 2:a grammatiska avhandlingen i U och W, 5:e grammatiska avhandlingen i A och 1–4:e grammatiska avhandlingarna i W), men även en poetförteckning som Skáldatal i U och separata kenning- och heitisamlingar som Litla Skálda i A och B. Det är i denna kontext vi skall se U. Dess version av Skáldskaparmál har på många sätt mer gemensamt med A och B än med R och T.

Litteratur

Citat och hänvisningar:

U: Grape, Anders m.fl. 1977 (utg). *Snorre Sturlassons Edda : Uppsala-handskriften DG 11*. Vol. II. Uppsala.

RTWC: Finnur Jónsson 1931 (utg.). *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*. Köpenhamn.

AB (och om så anges C): [Arnarnæanska editionen (=Arn.)] 1852. *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar : Edda Snorronis Sturlæi*. Vol. II. Köpenhamn.

The “Wild East” in Late Medieval Icelandic Romances – Just a Prop(p)?

Werner Schäfke, *Institut für Vergleichende Germanische Philologie und Skandinavistik, University of Freiburg, Germany*

Introduction

According to Glauser’s (1983) Propp-influenced description of the *Märchensaga* genre, the narrated world of the late medieval Icelandic romances is characterized by a courtly center of the world. This space is in opposition to the uncourtly marginal regions of the diegesis. The outer regions are populated with lesser beings of the Norse mythology amongst which are dwarfs, giants and elves. The saga hero’s task is to travel these places and fight the anti-courtly beings living there. Glauser (1983) and van Nahl (1981) regard these expeditions as the hero’s way of completing his personal development.

In those sagas which at least partly employ realistic geography, the marginal regions are often located to the East of the hero’s European or western Scandinavian homeland. This type of East, however, must to be differentiated from India in Icelandic romances, which is depicted in a positive way (cf. Johanterwage 2007). Typical sagas are *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* and *Sigurðar saga þögla* as well as *Samsons saga fagra* and *Ectors saga*, the latter three being central examples in Glauser’s (1983) analysis of late medieval Icelandic romances.

This view of the structure of the Icelandic romances has serious shortcomings with regard to the relationship between saga characters and spatial semantics, because the division of the diegesis into center and margin gains further semantic value: The saga heroes do not only meet monstrous, vicious beings but also employ anti-courtly behavior themselves. This is the case when the protagonist of *Gibbons saga* rapes the maiden queen Florentía, when dwarves get bereft of their mighty weapons or thieves are ordered to steal magic items such as in *Sigurðar saga þögla* and *Samsons saga fagra*.

Glauser (1983, p. 201–202) acknowledges that the behavior of the hero changes when he is away from his home space but he does not explain it. The spatial semantics also appear to apply to saga characters not originating from these marginal areas. These finer grained patterns of spatial division are found in *Märchensagas* which only at first glance seem to follow the basic pattern mentioned above. The example discussed in this paper is *Samsons saga fagra*. It sums up the conclusions of a chapter of my dissertation project concerning this saga as one of the typical late medieval Icelandic romances.

On the one hand this paper attempts to reconstruct the pattern Glauser concluded from his survey of the Icelandic romances following Boklunds (1977) work on continental Arthurian romance. This pattern is then compared with those found in *Samsons saga fagra* when employing contemporary structuralist methods for analyzing spatial semantics.¹

On the other hand the paper tries to shed light on the variety of ideological modeling encountered in late medieval Icelandic romance. Conclusions can be drawn from the behavior of the saga heroes with regard to the localization of ethical systems in late medieval thinking. The ideological models of these texts can in principal range from a constant personally-focused ideology to a spatially-focused one where the characters act according to the areas in which they are currently located. If the latter one can be found, Glauser’s (1983) description

¹ The method is described and demonstrated in Renner (1983), summed up in Krahl (1999) and put into context of structural literary analysis in Titzmann (2004).

of the Icelandic romances' narrated worlds could be harmonized with the apparently inconsistent behavior of the saga heroes.

Reconstruction of the Glauserean pattern

The Glauserean pattern for the organization of the narrated world of Icelandic romances can be described with the help of spatial semantics. In addition a basic plot pattern described by Glauser (1983, p. 197–200) as “deficiency – trial – reconstitution” must be applied to describe the hero's development within this pattern. It thus combines a description of the structures of the romances *histoire* and *discours*.

Glauser (1983) understands the diegesis of the Icelandic romances as a strict dichotomy. An inner space stands in opposition to an outer space (1983, pp. 192–196). The inner space is characterized by positively connoted values of a courtly society. These values are beauty, aristocracy, courtly conventions, knightly virtues and strength (1983, p. 165). Glauser (1983) regards them as strongly interconnected and states that they are in an equivalency-relation through the logical terms of reciprocal implication (1983, p. 168). The “outside” space is characterized as an oppositional space where all values of the “inner” space are negated. Glauser (1983) sums up these negated values as being non-courtly, non-human and non-aristocratic and that they in addition include a dangerous and unleashed sexuality.

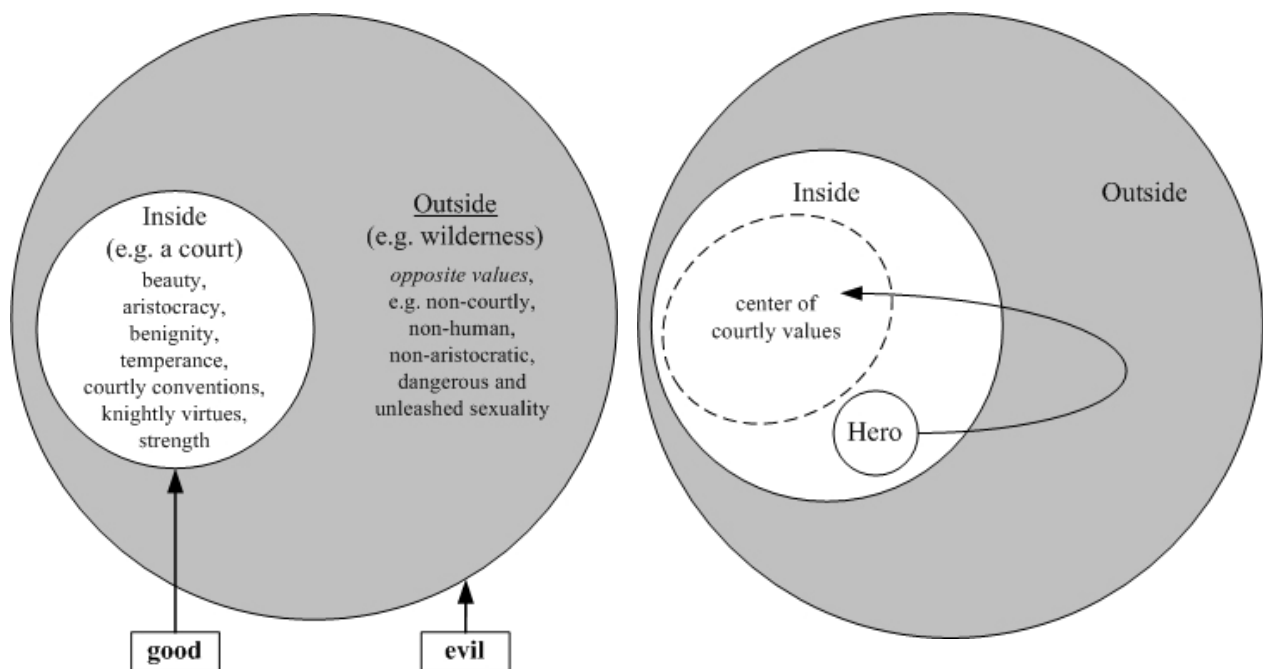


Fig. 1: The Glauserean spatial pattern.

Fig. 2: The Glauserean pattern of the central motifem "deficiency – trial – reconstitution".

If the hero of an Icelandic romance is lacking any of the values of his home space, the inner space, he must leave it (1983, pp. 197–200) and venture into the evil outside world filled with giants, witches and berserks. After fighting the diabolic abominations he can return home. Then he is in possession of all the values of his home space and can finally inherit the throne.

The positive values of the narrated worlds of the romances are focused upon the male heroes of these texts. They can only prove themselves worthy of their origins through military

expeditions and mortal combat with the dire monstrosities of the outer space. Glauser (1983, p. 215) thus comes to the conclusion that the world of the romances is a masculine and warlike world – just as Edwards/Pálsson (1970) conclude for the world of the *Fornaldarsögur*. However, the hero's behavior does not differ from the outside world's inhuman population when dealing with these beings. Glauser (1983, pp. 201f.) sees no difference in morals between the hero and his antagonists while the hero is venturing outside his home space. Nevertheless he argues that the *Märchensagas* demonstrate the superiority of the courtly society (1983, p. 217). Furthermore, according to Glauser (1983, p. 218), the world of the *Märchensagas* is a stable one much unlike the unstable world of the sagas of the Icelanders.

Samsons saga fagra: female taming of the warlike masculine world

When closely examining *Samsons saga fagra* and reconstructing its system of values using contemporary structuralist methods, a less polarized structure can be observed, that is also more complex. Glauser (1983) employs with Propp's simple terminological inventory and strict dichotomies that were characteristic of the narratology of the sixties and seventies. And since this inventory knows only black and white, good and evil as well as inside and outside, a more fine grained description of the worlds of the Icelandic romances is impossible. Thus it is not surprising that Glauser's (1983) examination of these sagas resulted in a simple pattern as he approached the texts with such a basic narratological repertoire.

The *Samsons saga* clearly displays isolated characteristics of Glauser's (1983) description of the *Märchensagas*. Fig. 3 shows the courtly biography which constitutes the main norm of action of the saga and organizes the values of the text. All male characters have to follow this courtly biography if they want to become a central part of the courtly space. If a step is missing or accomplished too early or too late, the characters of the diegesis are sanctioned. Sanctioning can occur on the one hand either as a disciplinary commentary by a reputed king: e.g. King Artús disciplines his son for charging Valentína before he has proven himself worthy through an expedition and having met some more princesses: “k(ongr) [sc. Artús] mællti ‘[...] hefer þu [sc. Samsons] ok ecki víjda farit at sea agætar jungfrur þær eigi mun þickia minna vm vert’” (*Samsons saga fagra*, p. 4).

Deviation from the norm can also be indicated through commentary by “the people”: e.g. the “people” are upset that King Sigurðr wants to marry for the third time even though he is already of old age and has a son proving himself on an expedition: “þotti monnum þat þo meira jafnrædi at hann [sc. Úlfr] hefði att Hrafnborgu” (*Samsons saga fagra*, p. 43).

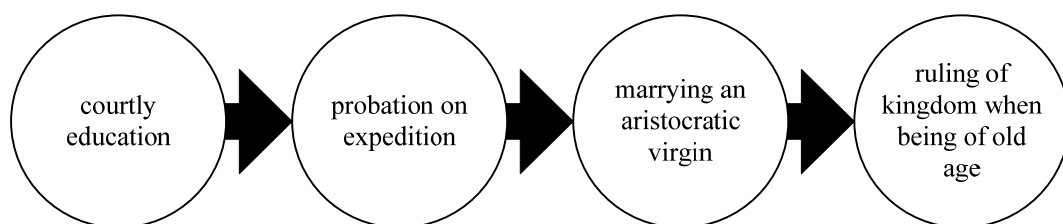


Fig. 3: The courtly biography of *Samsons saga fagra*.

Through this biography it is possible to reconstruct a hierarchical order of values:

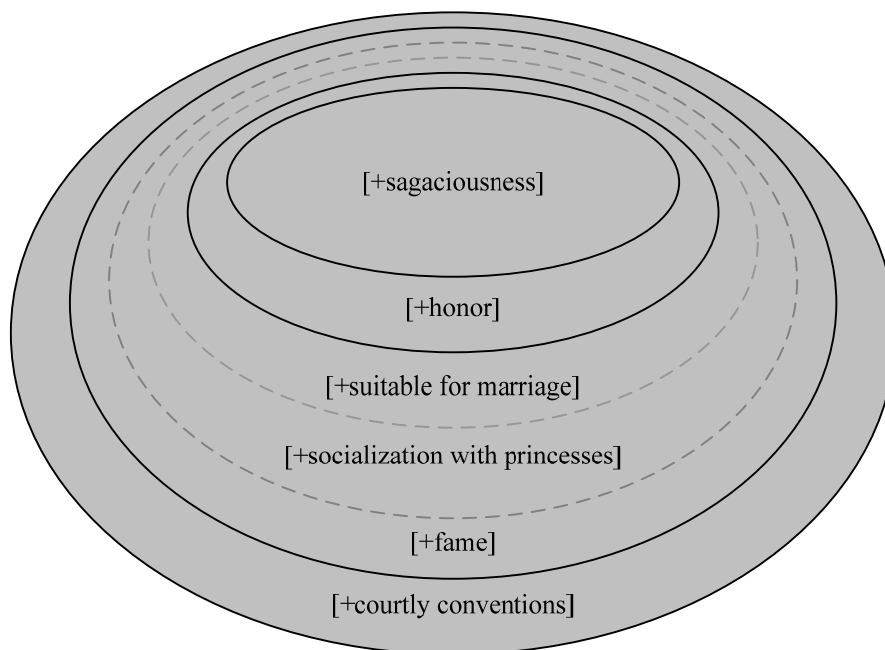


Fig. 4: The hierarchical order of values in *Samsons saga fagra* represented as a “feature onion”.

The values are clearly not equivalent to each other as stated by Glauser (1983, p. 168) and do not apply to all (male) characters in the same way. For example, Olímpía’s late husband Salmon has the value [+sagaciousness] while King Artús does not. Consequently he cannot use diplomacy as Olímpía can and has to ask for help to achieve peace with king Garland. Values B to F can be acquired through courtly education and probation on an expedition to the “outside” world. Value A plays a complex role in the set of rules constituting the diegesis of the saga. To explain this role a look has to be taken at the plot of *Samsons saga*.

Samson has freed Valentína from the rapist Kvintalín, son of a troll woman and a non-aristocratic miller who live deep in a nut forest. Samson threatens to torture and kill Kvintalín. Olímpía however, who is “sagacious” (*djúpvitr*, contrary to Samson who is “not very sagacious” *eigi mjög djúpvitr*), advises Samson to send Kvintalín on a journey to a distant country in the North East, where Kvintalín has to obtain a magic object. This is set up as a test for Kvintalín’s abilities corresponding to the step of “probation on an expedition” in the courtly biography. Kvintalín succeeds in obtaining this object as well as a young princess. Therefore he is able to enter the social space of the courtly society – much to the contrary of what Glauser (1983, p. 185) states to be possible in the late medieval Icelandic romances.

However, Kvintalín’s honorific deed of bringing Samson the magic object plus a princess is dishonoring king Sigurðr’s son Úlfr, whose father was slain by Kvintalín in the heat of the action. Úlfr wages war on the western kingdoms and quickly wins his first two battles. A modern reader would wonder why neither Kvintalín nor Olímpía is sanctioned, the former for the consequences of Sigurðr’s killing, the latter for the fatal idea of sending Kvintalín out. This very same question remains unanswered when Glauser (1983, p. 201f.) says that he sees no difference between the morals of hero and antagonists while on the outside.

How can this inconsistency be explained? One solution can be to apply a rather pre-modern concept of “individual” to these late medieval texts. The “individual” would have to be solely determined by the social space surrounding them while lacking any personally linked morals. Such a concept of “person” can be found in the Middle High German *Nibelun-*

genlied (cf. Müller 2009) Moral values are linked to social space which is in turn linked to geographic space. While on an expedition one does not have to adhere to one's home morals. Such a concept would have to be applied to explain *Samsons saga fagra* through Glauser's (1983) model of the Icelandic romances as narrated worlds.

But an easier and less anachronistic explanation can be found. Honor is not only an attribute applied to a person who acts by the rules of their society. A person who has no honor is not to be treated according to the rules of one's society. Furthermore a person who is treated dishonorably loses his honor. However, one addition has to be made. While the abstract space of courtly values is linked to the social space of the kingdoms these courtly values are not valid beyond those social spaces. The validity of the abstract space of courtly values is determined by the concept of honor. In addition its point of view is focused on the social space. The following figure aims to visualize this concept.

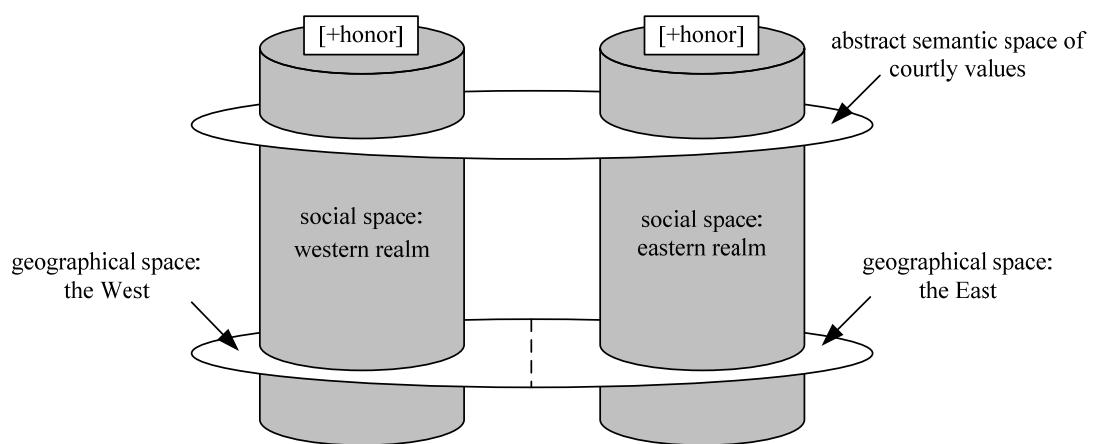


Fig. 5: The structure of semantic spaces in *Samsons saga fagra*.

This leads to the last point of the interpretation of the values of *Samsons saga fagra*: the hitherto overlooked heroine *Olimpía*. The above figure shows her value of being sagacious overrules all the other values. This is a result of critical reflection of the masculine warlike world in *Samsons saga fagra*. *Kvintalín's* expedition as a part of the masculine way leads to near destruction of the western kingdoms. This can only be prevented by sagacious *Olimpía* who is able to restitute peace through marriage and interchanging of estates between the western and eastern kingdoms. This results in a rather stable situation where otherwise the masculine way of warlike campaigning – which forms a crucial part of the courtly biography – threatens to destroy society. While the ethics in *Samsons saga fagra* are questioned, they are not deconstructed or substituted by another set of rules.

The shortcomings of the Glauserian pattern have been demonstrated. The courtly values are not all equivalent. There is no strict opposition of courtly and non-courtly space. Even anti-courtly beings can be utilized by one courtly society against another. And finally the society of the *Samsons saga* is far from stable and only reaches some kind of fragile equilibrium toward the story's end. Furthermore uncourtly behavior of courtly subjects is explainable in this saga when abducting the black-and-white-view of early structuralism which prevailed much longer than necessary.

Samsons saga as one of his more prominent examples of the *Märchensagas* does not follow his pattern. It rather offers a more complex view of the world where the East is still

filled with strange beings and monsters but does not work as an asocial outer space as Glauser (1983) claims. The monstrosity of the outer space just appears to be a prop for the hero's journey because it does not possess any further semantic value. The Glauserian description of the marginal parts of the diegesis of the *Märchensagas* results from his usage of folk tale semantics. The "Wild East" can thus be regarded as a "Propp" – a result of his application of Propp's simplistic inventory for the description of narrative texts.

However a further question comes up: Is Glauser's idea of the world of the *Märchensagas* in need of correction for the total of this saga corpus? Or are there a group of late medieval Icelandic romances that constitute a further developed world view questioning the values of classical *Märchensagas*? And what are these classical *Märchensagas* if *Samsons saga fagra* as a classical example does so radically falsify the Glauserian pattern?

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The reconstruction of Old Norse religion: aims and methods

Jens Peter Schjødt, Aarhus University, Denmark

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss some methodological issues that we face when dealing with the religion of the pagan Scandinavians. The first part of the lecture will thus deal with the fact that there is hardly any single interpretation of a source that has not been heavily discussed in the history of research. The disagreement concerns mythological as well as ritual and any other religious phenomena that are at stake in our effort to reconstruct the old religion. However, even if we disagree about the answers to questions such as: How did the pagans perceive of this or that god? How did they carry out this or that ritual? How was the historical development of this or that ideological formation? etc, we can usually at least agree on the relevance of such questions. I am certainly not going to dispute that, but the time may have come to be a little more aware of the content of such questions and the problems involved in the formulations. The first part of this lecture is thus about the aims of a history of Old Norse religion.

The second part of the paper is about our possibilities for gaining knowledge about this religion. We all know how complicated the source situation is, and there seems to be two opposite scholarly views on this situation. On the one hand, some historians and philologists would maintain that we have almost no possibilities to reconstruct the pagan world view whereas, on the other hand, historians of religion and archaeologists are very bold in their interpretations of the sources that we do have. I believe it is time to evaluate these two views and their consequences for the whole field. To do so, however, we would have to reflect on how history as a subject is integrated in the cultural situation of our own society and, at the same time, take into consideration some more or less recent view points from the theory of humanistic scholarship in general. I will not come up with some full-fledged conclusions but argue that the criticism of the first-mentioned group, when taken to its limits, seems to be not only devastating for the future of the field but also rather naïve in relation to the actual situation of humanistic scholarship.

Man as the Measure of All Things: The Relationship Between Mankind and the Gods in Eddic Wisdom Poetry

Brittany Schorn, Dept. of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, Cambridge University, England

The eddic wisdom poem *Hávamál* ends with a stanza (164) addressing its own efficacy, wishing the audience luck in their efforts to make use of it and hinting that they're going to need it. Its wisdom is both *allþorǫf*, 'completely useful' and *óþorǫf*, 'completely useless' for *ýta sonom*, 'the sons of men'.¹ While this fits in very well with the tone of the poem as a whole, a later medieval scribe felt the need to correct what seemed to him a mistake, by changing *ýta* in the second instance to *iǫtna*, 'of giants'. It makes sense that the giants should not be allowed to benefit because men and gods are supposed to be allied in mythology against their chaotic forces. Yet while this interpretation is understandable, the original reading could still be seen as preferable. The gods are not straightforward, benevolent patrons of all men and the relationships between the different classes of mythological beings are more complicated than the emended reading suggests. In order to understand how mythological poems function as didactic tools for human audiences it is necessary to clarify how the relationship between divine and human society is conceived. Old Norse eddic wisdom poetry presents divine figures as part of the same natural order as men and other beings, subject to many of the same conditions in life and ultimately facing a common fate in death.

Wisdom literature is a phenomenon common to many pre-industrial societies, not least those of medieval Europe. The term has its origins in biblical scholarship, and has come to be applied to a range of literature from a wide variety of times and places that is felt to be somehow analogous to it. Broadly speaking, it aims, as Martin Bloomfield (1989: 8) writes, to enable 'early societies to make some kind of sense out of the world'. As well as demonstrating broad similarities across cultures, they also demonstrate the unique features of individual traditions and may offer some insight into the societies that produced them. Wisdom is a broad term that encompasses a range of overlapping concepts. Babylonian wisdom literature, for instance, was dominated by interest in magic (Lambert 1960: 1) and Old Testament wisdom, which in many ways still shapes our expectations of the genre, is characterised by proverbs and instruction for human behaviour. Both of these are found in Old Norse wisdom literature, alongside a variety of other types of information, such as mythological facts. Different types of wisdom may occur within a single poem. The best single example of this is *Hávamál*, which includes gnomes, mythological information, advice, runic wisdom and spells. It cannot be considered representative because of its composite nature, but in some ways this makes it more valuable as evidence for the full range of what could be considered wisdom.

The first two-thirds of *Hávamál* also contains the largest collection by far of precepts for human behaviour, which tend to occur rather more sporadically in the other eddic poems. They are often expressed factually as observations, integrating society into the greater natural (and supernatural) order. This attitude finds its clearest expression in a list in *Hávamál* (85–88) that occurs in the midst of a sequence of stanzas on the theme of things that are not to be trusted. It includes in the same breath a burning flame, a gaping wolf, a broken sword and a seer who prophesies good. Sentient beings and the products of their societies exist as part of the natural order and can be understood and negotiated successfully in the same way by those with sufficient wisdom.

The Old Norse poems devoted to espousing wisdom are all of the eddic type. They are dialogue poems in which mythological speakers predominate and are composed in *ljóðahátt*, the

¹ All Old Norse quotations are taken from Neckel and Kuhn 1983 and translations from Larrington 1996.

metre associated with these features. It links the wisdom poetry in form as well as content to other closely related genres, such the verbal contests of the *sennur*. As well as being the subject of entire poems, wisdom exchanges can also occur as distinct episodes within poems of other genres. Of the eleven mythological poems of the Codex Regius, four can be classed as wisdom poems: *Hávamál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál* and *Alvíssmál*. Several relevant passages also occur within the heroic cycles.

One of the most striking aspects of Old Norse wisdom poetry is that the frame narratives that provide the context for the utterance of wisdom are often unusually specific and well-developed. They can be contrasted, for example, with the Old English *Precepts* and *Vain-glory*, which both contain the teachings of an archetypal ‘wise old man’, a *frod fæder* or *frod wita*, experienced and benevolent, who offers universally applicable advice. In contrast, *Vafþrúðnismál* contains a fully developed mythological episode in which Óðinn contends with, defeats and, it is implied, ultimately kills the giant Vafþrúðnir. The information revealed is part of a specific, self-contained mythological narrative. This distances the audience somewhat and complicates the way in which they might comprehend the wisdom of the poem. Examination of these narrative situations is thus key to understanding how the actual wisdom content of the poems is to be contextualised and therefore understood.

These are not poems of passive instruction: rather they demand attentiveness. They are often cast as agonistic dialogues (or monologues) in which something more is immediately at stake besides the acquisition of knowledge.² The information they convey is presented as a valuable commodity for mythological and human characters, and participants in these exchanges include a variety of beings, among them gods, giants, dwarfs, dragons and men. In contrast with biblical and Old English wisdom literature, there is no single, omniscient source of wisdom in the mythology of the *Poetic Edda*, much less a benevolent one. Indeed the most commonly recurring character by far in these poems is the god Óðinn, who is portrayed both revealing and acquiring wisdom, and his too is the voice most often heard. He participates in dialogues in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Reginismál*, and speaks monologues in *Hávamál* and *Grímnismál*. Outside the *Poetic Edda*, in *Hervarar Saga ok Heidreiks*, the only surviving Old Norse riddles are also ascribed to him. Óðinn’s association with poetry, power over language and deceit as well as wisdom further complicates the way in which these poems function as didactic tools.

The characters with whom Óðinn interacts are varied and include a giant, as well as humans at various stages of their careers: a king; the prince about to succeed him; and a young hero. One of the characters he addresses in *Hávamál* is a certain Loddfáfnir who is otherwise unknown. He is often taken to be another human protégé, but it is not entirely clear from the poem either that he is human or what his relationship to Óðinn is. When Óðinn is addressing his human protégés, it appears that his interests align with theirs, at least temporarily, but he is still not the wise old man of Christian wisdom poetry. His patronage can always be lost or transferred – rather lightly too if the prose introduction to *Grímnismál* is to be believed. This suggests that the whole exchange which follows between Óðinn and Kings Geirroðr and Agnarr is the result of a wager between Óðinn and Frigg, prompted by their bickering over the relative worth of their protégés.³ Even in his dealings with his own protégés, Óðinn is less than forthright. He disguises himself in his meetings with them just as he does in the wisdom contests and metes out his information sparingly. *Hávamál* ends with a list of spells that Óðinn boasts of knowing but won’t reveal, even though they would be of great value: he claims of one, for instance, that it is *ollom er nytsamlicl at nema*, ‘most useful for everyone to

² The poems *Sólarljóð* and *Hugsvinnsmál* are important exceptions, with frame narratives heavily influenced by non-native works.

³ See lines 15-20 of the prose introduction to the poem (Neckel and Kuhn 1983: 56).

know' (153.2–3). The audience must be quick and perceptive in order to benefit from witnessing his revelations, as so few of his interlocutors manage.

Even in the gnomic portion of the poem, in which the subject being addressed has yet to be named, the tone is still more riddling than pedagogic. *Hávamál* begins with a warning of danger:

Gáttir allar, áðr gangi fram,
um scoðaz scyli,
um scygnaz scyli;
þvíat óvíst er at vita, hvar óvinir
sitia á fleti fyrir.

‘All the entrances, before you walk forward, you should look at, you should spy out; for you can’t know for certain where enemies are sitting ahead in the hall.’

The next few stanzas then treat the physical needs of a guest before returning once again to the danger he faces from his fellow men, and suggesting that the best defence is the wisdom to guard his tongue and use speech judiciously (6–7). This scene, whether it is meant to serve as a frame for the whole poem, or even just the gnomic section of the poem, is certainly reminiscent of some of the other wisdom poems.⁴ The plight of the individual who must negotiate social interactions to his own advantage by suspecting as well as employing deceit is a central theme in *Hávamál*. This requires, of course, the wisdom to judge a situation accurately, without which the advice is useless. This irony is not lost on the speaker of *Hávamál* who comments in stanza 27:

Ósnotr, er með aldir kómr,
þat er bazt, at hann þegi;
engi þat veit, at hann ekki kann,
nema hann mæli til mart;
veita maðr, hinn er vætki veit,
þótt hann mæli til mart.

‘The foolish man in company does best if he stays silent; no one will know that he knows nothing, unless he talks too much; but the man who knows nothing does not know when he is talking too much.’

The principle is also exemplified, if not directly expressed, in *Vafþrúðnismál*. The initial characterisation of Vafþrúðnir as *alsvinnr*, ‘all-wise’ (1.6), is quickly undermined when he accepts the challenge to a wisdom trial before he discovers the identity of the stranger in his hall. Óðinn drops hints about his identity, but overconfident and eager to begin, Vafþrúðnir ignores or fails to understand them. One of these hints comes in the only really gnomic stanza in the poem:

Óauðigr maðr, er til auðigs kómr,
mæli þarft eða þegi;
ofrmælgj mikil hygg ec at illa geti,
hveim er við kaldrifaðan kómr.

⁴ And indeed in *Gylfaginning* (ch. 2), where Snorri attributes (a version of) it to Gylfi as he enters the hall of the Æsir.

‘The poor man who comes to the wealthy one should speak when needful or be silent; to be too talkative I think will bring bad results for the visitor to the cold-ribbed giant.’ (10)

The full meaning of this stanza is lost on Vafþrúðnir, who has failed to recognise that this is no mere vagabond, but not on the audience who are aware that Gagnráðr is Óðinn in disguise. Though his knowledge does not fail him in the wisdom contest itself, it is his lack of judgement that leads Vafþrúðnir to enter a contest that he cannot possibly win, because as he says Óðinn will always be *vísastr*, ‘wisest’ (55).

Even when human beings are the subject of Óðinn’s observations or advice, it is clear that it does not benefit them all equally. There are also some hints that there may be different standards for gods and men. Thus on at least two occasions in *Hávamál*, Óðinn makes observations that apparently contradict his own behaviour and experience. In stanzas 12, 13 and 14 he warns against drunkenness but alludes to an episode in which he, and ultimately mankind, profited from it (Larrington 1993: 24). Similarly in stanzas 54, 55 and 56 he warns against becoming too wise and seeking information about one’s fate, while he apparently devotes most of his energy and makes extraordinary sacrifices in order to do just that. It is not clear, however, that it is Óðinn’s divine nature which distinguishes him from others who cannot act as he does and profit.

Strong parallels between human and divine nature are suggested not only the narratives of the Poetic Edda, but also by the vocabulary used to refer to different types of being. Many of the words used for men in these poems do not necessarily refer to human beings exclusively and appear to apply unproblematically to other types of creatures. This is most obviously true of the word *maðr* itself, which occurs most commonly in gnomic statements and elsewhere with the impersonal function of ‘one’. It is clearly used in this way to refer to gods as well as men. Thus in *För Skírnis*, Freyr declares his feelings for Gerðr exceed those of *manni hveim, ungom*, ‘any man, young’ (7.2–3) before him, and in *Hyndluljóð*, Heimdallr is described as a *naðgofgan mann*, ‘spear-magnificent man’ (35.6). The ambiguity of the word is most in evidence in a couple of stanzas from *Grímnismál* and *Sigrdrífumál* that contrast humans with other kinds of beings (31.6 and 18.8). Here they are called *mennzcir menn* for the sake of clarity.

This ambiguity is also evident in a number of words used synonymously with *maðr*, which are similarly applied to non-human beings in the Poetic Edda. *Halr*, another term that occurs in gnomic pronouncements, is used in *Hymisqviða* by the giant Ægir in his description of Þórr as an *orðbæginn halr*, ‘a contentious man’ (3.2). Óðinn too aligns himself with *halar* in *Hávamál* when he quotes a maxim about the relationship between men and women:

Morg er góð mær, ef gorva kannar,
Hugbrigð við hali;

‘Many a good girl when you know her better is fickle of heart towards men’ (102.1–3).

He then exemplifies it with an episode from his own experience:

þá ec þat reynda, er iþ ráðspaca
teygða ec á flærðir flióð

‘I found that out when I tried to seduce that sagacious woman into shame’ (102.4–6).

The woman here is Billing's girl, most likely a giantess,⁵ and this reference to her illustrates the gnomic observations about the falseness of both sexes in love (Larrington 1993: 1–48), demonstrating an underlying that the relationships between genders are fundamentally the same for different types of beings.

The application of the word *seggr* is similar to that of *halr*. In *Völundarqviða* it is used separately to refer to human men (6.5) and to Völundr himself (7), who is also called *vísi álfa*, 'prince of elves' (32.2). In one case *seggr* is possibly used collectively to refer to both men and gods. Frigg puts a stop to the exchange of insults between Loki and Óðinn in *Lokasenna* when they begin to reveal information that is too damaging by saying that their deeds should not be spoken of before *seggiom* (25.3). In its immediate context, this could refer to the assembled gods but it might also refer to the human audience of the poem.

Elsewhere in *Lokasenna* another common word for men, *old*, refers unambiguously to the Æsir. When Loki arrives uninvited at their feast, Bragi confronts him and declares that the Æsir know *hveim þeir alda*, 'which men' (8.5) they should invite to their feast. Later in the poem, Heimdallr warns Loki against drunkenness with a gnome that would not be out of place in *Hávamál* or *Sigrdrífumál*.

Þvíat of dryccia veldr alda hveim,
er sína mælgí né manað.

'For too much drinking makes every man not keep his talkativeness in check' (47.4–6).

There is no sense that the phrasing of this precept should prevent it from being applied to a god, whose divine nature does not shield him from the consequences of over-imbibing. The gods are accused of and admit to all kinds of human weaknesses and taboos in the course of the poem and would perhaps benefit from *Hávamál*'s wisdom as much as any human audience. Stanzas 12, 13 and 14 of *Hávamál* all use the word *gumi* for those who should avoid drunkenness. It occurs relatively infrequently outside of *Hávamál* in the Poetic Edda and is never directly applied to a non-human character, but there are instances in which it has an impersonal function similar to that of *maðr*. Rather than setting up a dichotomy between standards of behaviour for divine and human characters, perhaps Óðinn means to boast that he in particular is able to function above this advice. Another possibly ambiguous usage occurs in stanza 26 (4–6) of *För Skírnis*. Skírnir threatens Gerðr, saying:

þar scaltu ganga, er þic gumna synir
síðan æva sé

'There you shall go, where the sons of men will never see you again'.

Her removal to *hel*, worded very similarly to other death threats, separates her not just from men but from the living more generally. Even if it is men as such that are meant, the repeated use of this and other similar formulae with reference to supernatural beings as well as human characters underlines their common mortality.

This is also evident from the use of another common man-word *firar*, which literally means something like 'living beings'. It is used to refer collectively to Þórr and his human servant Þjáfi, for example, in *Þórsdrápa* (82.2). In the opening stanza of *Völuspá*, the *völva* asks for attention as she relates *forn spiðll fira*, 'ancient histories of the living' (1.7), and then goes on to begin her account with her first memories among the giants, well before the advent of man. The use of *firar* in *Alvíssmál* is particularly interesting, as words for different kinds of

⁵ She could also conceivably be a dwarf (Lindow 2001: 79–80).

beings must have been at the forefront of the poet's mind. The lists of poetic vocabulary for various natural features and phenomena contained in this poem are ordered according to the various types of creatures said to employ them. When Þórr first addresses Alviðss, he asks *hvat er þat fira*, 'what sort of being is that' (2.1), who seems to him *þursa líki*, 'the likeness of an ogre' (2.4). In his reply Alviðss reveals his name and confirms that he is a dwarf (3). Þórr then goes on to quiz him about poetic *heiti* because, he says, Alviðss knows about all kinds of *firar* (9.2), those who live *heimi hveriom í*, 'in each of the worlds' (9.6). The wisdom that the dwarf Alviðss then rattles off to impress Þórr takes the form of lists of *heiti* paired with the category of creature to which they are ascribed.

The one exception to this pattern in *Alviðssmál* occurs in stanzas 14, 18, 20, 26, 32, 34, which also include a line identifying a term with a place, rather than the types of beings that inhabit it. The poetic synonyms in these lines all alliterate with *hel*. The composition of the lists is not completely regular and while variation appears to be the ideal, repetition is allowed for the sake of the alliteration. Thus *menn* and *halir* are used in the same stanza (28), as are *Æsir* and *upregin* (10). Though apparently acceptable, however, *halir* is only used once. The apposition of those who live in *hel* with the various types of creatures living in other worlds thus appears to be deliberate. Their characterization as dead can be taken as an identification as fundamental as the racial identifications of living creatures. Unlike other beings, they are defined above all by their geographical location. The word *hel* is used almost invariably in eddic poetry to denote the place rather than the mythological figure, although this sense is well attested by early skaldic verse (Abrams 2006).

Indeed, the distinction between the dead and the living appears to be more important in some ways than the distinctions between the racial classification of beings. All are portrayed as geographically separate in *Alviðssmál*, but there are some indications elsewhere in the *Edda* that more separates the realms of the living from that of the dead than from each other. The way the relationship between the different *heimar* in the mythological landscape is envisaged by the eddic poems is not entirely clear and is not necessarily consistent.⁶ *Heimr* can simply have the sense of 'home' and is commonly compounded with the names of various classes of beings. The prophetess in *Völuspá* remembers nine *heimar* (2.5) and the giant Vafþrúðnir accounts for his knowledge about the secrets of gods and giants by claiming that he has been to all nine and beyond into Niflhel (43): the portion of *hel* in which the dead reside. The use of the word *heimr* elsewhere in explicit or implicit contrast with *hel* lends support to the idea that the realm of the dead is something fundamentally separate from that of all living beings.

When Óðinn has need to consult the dead in *Baldrs draumar* to get information that he cannot otherwise access, he commands the *völva* to tell him the news from *hel*, because he already knows what is happening in *heimi* (6). This use of *heimr* on its own to refer to the world in which all the living dwell also occurs elsewhere. Brynhildr's instructions for her funeral are her final wish *í heimi*, 'in the world' (65.3) in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* and to go from *heimi* is a common expression for dying. It is most often used, of course, with reference to human characters, but they alone do not populate *hel* and similar expressions can equally apply to other types of being. For example, in *För Skírnis*, Skírnir threatens the giantess Gerðr with a fate worse than death that will leave her *horfa heimi ór, snugga heliar til*, 'facing out of the world, hankering towards hell' (27.3–4) and in *Lokasenna*, Þórr threatens to strike Loki with his hammer and send him *í hel* if he does not stop speaking (63). Humans and supernatural beings all face death and many of the same conditions in life.

Among the divine Óðinn appears to be unique in his wisdom, not least because of his ability to access sources normally beyond the reach of all living beings. He is able, for instance, to continue to exploit the counsel of the dead Mímir, by conversing with his disembodied

⁶ For full discussion see Clunies Ross 1994: 50–6; and Lindow 1997: 13–20.

head. The peculiarity of this ability is highlighted by those occasions on which he is called upon to act on behalf of others who need the information that the dead possess. The *völva* of *Völuspá* begins her address with an invocation that *allar helgar kindir*,⁷ ‘all the sacred people’ (1.1.–2) should listen to what she has to say and the broad scope of her revelation does indeed encompass the fates of all. As the poem progresses, however, it becomes evident that it is Óðinn who has prompted her to speak.⁸ Despite the potential hostility of her position (Quinn 2002: 160–2), he manages to secure her cooperation with gifts (29) and possibly the use of some magical ability, and once she finishes her prophesy she *mun sæcqvaz*, ‘will sink down’ (66.8).

The parallels between this narrative and *Baldrs draumar* suggests the ability to consult the dead may be particular to Óðinn.⁹ Here too he is dispatched on behalf of the larger group when *æsir allir*, ‘all the Æsir’ (1.1–2) meet in council. In this case he is also aided by the physical ability to reach *hel* (and its knowledge), which his possession of the supernaturally gifted Sleipnir apparently affords him. The significance of this detail is underlined by Snorri’s account of Baldr’s death in *Gylfaginning* (ch. 49), which claims that Hermoðr was lent Sleipnir when he volunteered to undertake the journey to *hel* in order to secure Baldr’s release. Serious obstacles are alluded to as Óðinn rides into *hel*: as he passes a bloody dog, he is described as *galdrs fǫður*, ‘the father of magic [spells]’. The challenges continue once he has reached *hel* and he must draw on all his skill to extract the desired information, first he must locate her grave, then raise her with the use of a *valgaldr*, ‘corpse-reviving spell’ and finally employ the sort of deceit typical of his wisdom contests in order to secure her cooperation. Like so many others, she does not recognize the pseudonyms he gives and reluctantly proceeds to answer his questions.

The realm of the dead, physically distanced from the living and sometimes associated with the hostile forces of the giants,¹⁰ is clearly associated in Old Norse mythology with the most valuable wisdom. Óðinn’s particular ability to access it thus undoubtedly does much to increase his own status as a figure from whom wisdom may be sought. This ability comes at the price of extraordinary and potentially compromising sacrifices on his part. The most extreme example is only referred to in the mysterious stanza 138 of *Hávamál*. Here Óðinn prefaces a boasting account of his most precious wisdom with the tale of how he acquired it hanging, wounded by a spear,

oc gefinn Óðni
siálfr siálom mér,
á þeim meiði, er mangi veit,
hvers hann af rótom renn.

‘and dedicated to Odin, myself to myself, on that tree of which no man knows from where
its roots run’. (138.5–9)

While there is debate about how exactly this scene should be interpreted, the description of the tree strongly implies that it is Yggdrasil and that the knowledge he gains is located in the underworld (Schjødt 2008: 178). This tendency to resort to extreme measures in order to at-

⁷ The Hauksbók redaction omits *helgar*. On the significance of this see Quinn 1990: 303 and 2000:79–80.

⁸ Dronke notes that her use of the plural verbs in stanza 28, even as she addresses Óðinn by name and as þú demonstrates her awareness that he asks on behalf of all of the gods. (1997: 51)

⁹ In his analysis of the practice of consulting the dead in these and other eddic poems, John McKinnell (2005: 214) observes that the protagonist in each case is either Óðinn himself or a character with Odinnic connections, and suggests an association with the cult of Óðinn.

¹⁰ This is not to say that the giants are to be identified with the dead but that they (along with the dwarves in particular) have functions that bring them within the same semantic field (Clunies Ross 1994: 247–56).

tain otherwise inaccessible wisdom is mocked by the *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá* (28), who reveals that she is aware that he has previously sacrificed his own eye at the well of Mímir in order to gain knowledge. Although he is not omniscient, Óðinn can offer something that goes beyond the commonplace, even though not all can succeed in grasping it and the effort entails great risk.

Several of the frame narratives of the wisdom poems play on this idea that not all participants in the scene or indeed members of the audience will benefit equally from wisdom revelation. What sets them apart, however, is not their divine or human natures but their own intellectual engagement and ability to correctly interpret what they hear. Lars Lönnroth's concept of the 'double scene' is useful here for explaining exactly how the context of wisdom revelation in the poems and the context of the poems' actual performance relate to one another. He observes that eddic poetry frequently makes use of settings, such as a hall, that while fantastic and even supernatural in their poetic context are readily analogous to the scenes in which the oral performance of poetry was likely to have taken place. One of the most popular motifs, and a favourite in the wisdom poems, he identifies is what he terms the Ulysses or Widsith Motif, which involves Óðinn or a great hero arriving in disguise as a wanderer (Lönnroth 1979: 95–7). This has the advantage of inviting the audience to identify the performer with the traveller and to create a context for didacticism that grants it mythic significance, by placing the scene at hand into the context of greater mythological or legendary narrative (Lönnroth 1971: 8). The fundamental similarities between the worlds of all living beings are an essential part of what allows these poems to function so effectively, by allowing the possibility that man can attain the heights of Óðinn's divine wisdom.

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Germanic alliteration and oral theory

Michael Schulte, Dept of Language and Literature, Volda University College, Norway

Introduction

Among the most debated issues and points of disagreement concerning oral theory have been 1. the problem of the seemingly mechanistic nature of formulaic analysis, 2. the adequacy of the ‘formulaic density criterion’ which assumes that a high degree of formulaic features signals an oral composition, and 3. the notion of ‘transitional texts’ which reveal signs of both oral and written performance (e.g. Foley 1988). Under this focus, early law rules for instance can be interpreted as ‘transitional texts’ incorporating an array of oral compositional features.

In a Nordic setting, the question arises as to whether early Scandinavian *written* texts such as runic inscriptions as well as eddic and skaldic poetry can be construed as ‘transitional texts’ bridging the gap between orality and literacy. A diagnostic criterion being at the forefront of many studies is alliteration including the use of alliterative formulae like ON *rúnar reginkunnar* or *iqrð ok upphiminn*.

The present paper has a twofold aim. Part 1 is a general discussion of alliterative structures in runic inscriptions. Although it is largely disputed whether these runic artefacts constitute highly evolved verseforms or loose metrical organizations, the marked feature in terms of historical poetics is the proto-long line (Lieberman 1998: 98–100). While the claim of ‘higher’ verseforms in Early Runic is indeed unwarranted, the alliterative structures play a prominent role for the diachronic assessment of formulaic verse patterns.¹ In this connexion, I shall address the problem of dating alliteration in Germanic (cf. Salmons 1992: 163–165).

In part 2 the discussion moves on to law rules and legal texts which are at the core of the present study. When it comes to an assessment of formulaic and rhythmic structures, philological studies vary largely as to their conclusions. Some scholars take such diagnostic features as direct evidence for an ‘oral origin’ of the text, whereas others regard them as recent stylistic markers, deliberately introduced for reasons of style and other purposes. Stefan Brink (2005: 116) summarizes divergent scholarly opinions regarding the Dala Law, to be addressed below.

A case in point is the Forsa ring which will be scrutinized in the following. Brink (1996, 2008), taking Liestøl (1979) as his point of departure, identifies Forsa as an early legal document with a law rule. General claims about the oral background of Old Germanic legal texts are customary. The present study aims at testing linguistic expectations regarding legal texts and other allegedly oral-based text types against the background of the Forsa ring. In addition I shall adduce comparative textual evidence from other oral traditions to shed light on the related issues of oral composition and performance.

¹ Oral theory reckons with an array of diagnostic features, as summarized by Claire Norton (2008: 28): “a prevalence of paratactic construction; additive rather than subordinative tendencies, and rather ambiguous syntax when subordination does occur; a preference for aggregative rather than analytic thought; an extensive use of direct speech and dialogues; considerable repetition and redundancy; direct addresses to the audience by the implied scribe or author; orthographic and grammatical variation or inconsistency; apparently incoherent phrases and passages, confusion as to who is doing what to whom; a preference for episodic, rather than linear narrative; the presence of standardised themes, digressions, and formulaic or colloquial language; a high portion of proverbs, aphorisms, epithets, clichés and alliteration; and a tendency towards conservatism and homeostasis.” Alliterative listing techniques in the eddic lays, for instance, are said to stress the mnemonic requirements of oral delivery and memory storage (see Jackson 1995).

Alliteration in runic inscriptions

It comes as no surprise that several alliterative formulae such as the *igrð-upphiminn* duad occur both in poetry and in law texts, e.g. in Tryggðamál.² There are a number of studies with alliteration at their forefront.³ In a recent study, I argued that we are probably witnessing a state of metrical indeterminacy with a fluid transition from prose to verse (Schulte 2007: 58–60). Also note that alliteration is a feature of everyday speech, and word pairs, proverbs and formulae feature alliteration, e.g. Modern German *Himmel und Hölle*, or Modern English *heaven and hell*. Compare the expression *Mæþ lagh skal man land byggæ* in the prologue to Jyske lov and Hälsingelagen. This general view seems to be directly corroborated by Early Runic inscriptions. I allow for a longer quote by Anatoly Liberman who summarizes Olga Smirnitskaia's research on this issue (Smirnitskaia 1994 I: 135–149):

Predictably, in trying to determine whether the most ancient runic texts can be regarded as primitive verse, Smirnitskaia looks at compound names and alliteration. She shows that the accentual rhythm of the runic formula is that of loosely connected separate words. It resembles the rhythm of the short line, for it also depends on the number of words, but it remains language rhythm rather than verse rhythm and is sensed only because runic formulas are extremely elementary and must have been easy to reproduce. Alliteration in them has no structural function; it does not form a regular scheme, and no words are brought into prominence at the expense of others. It only adds expressiveness to formulaic words. Alliteration [...] can be extended to cover the entire inscription, or it can throw into relief strings of various length. (Liberman 1998: 98f.)

As for the earliest evidence, Salmons (1992: 164) mentions the name triad *Ingvaeones–Erminones–Istvaeones*, found in Tacitus' *Germania*, as “a possible example of alliteration from the first century of our era”. A prototype of the alliterative long line is attested on the Gallehus gold horn (KJ 43; early 5th century) and the Pforzen belt buckle (late 6th century), but an earlier candidate with a similar scheme is the Thorsberg chape (KJ 20) from 200 A.D.⁴ Summing up, alliteration is in evidence since the beginning of runic writing, but a ‘high’ metrical status of the Early Runic inscriptions does not follow.

Long-term transmission of formulae: Noleby–Sparlösa–Hávamál

The fact that Noleby's *rūnō raginakundō*-formula is rehearsed on the Sparlösa stone (Vg 119) and in Hávamál stanza 80 (*rúnar reginkunnar*) has given rise to diverse metrical claims. The Noleby inscription is dateable to the late 5th century. Stressing the formula's direct transmission, Mees (2007: 219) offers the following view: “The *Hávamál* stanza seems thematically archaic much as is the metrical form at Noleby, and suggests a model for how certain kinds of (presumably Odinic) rune-lore were transmitted from early ritual metrical use into the poetry of the Edda.” In my view, however, Noleby testifies to a rather basic alliterative pattern as compared to Hávamál 80. Hence I fully subscribe to Hans-Peter Naumann (1998: 703): “Der sich anbietende Hinweis auf Hávamál 80, 1–3 (*rúnar reginkunnar*) verbürgt zwar das Nachleben einer Alliterationsformel, besagt aber nichts über die Vershaftigkeit von Noleby und entfällt daher für die metrische Kontrolle.”

² See Schulte 2007, 2008. On Tryggðamál see Vogt 1936: 184. This attestation is probably from the mid-14th century or later; see Knirk *et al.* 1989: 442.

³ See e.g. Ehrhardt 1977, Fehr 1936, Kabell 1978, Kühnel 1978, cf. also von See 1980 and Salmons 1992.

⁴ See Grønvik 1985: 191, Seebold 1994: 72 note 7, also Schulte forthcoming b.

By way of conclusion, neither Hávamál 80 nor the Sparlösa stone (Vg 119, around 800 AD) from Västergötland can support the metrical structure of Noleby. Like the *iqrð/upp-himinn*-formula, the *rūnō raginakundō*-formula provides an example as to how basic alliterative patterns are developed and extended over a period of at least six hundred years (cf. Schulte 2007, 2008). Alliterative sequences thus constitute basic formulaic elements, or ‘Versatzstücke’, to be adapted in eddic poetry and runic legends among other things. As argued already, the notion of metrical indeterminacy involves alliterative, stylized prose rather than any versification

The linguistic evidence of the Forsa ring

It has long been noted that Old Germanic legal documents and law rules, including Old Frisian texts, exhibit rhythmic alliterative structures akin to poetry.⁵ Compare the following statement where Joe Salmons comments on Markey’s *North Sea Germanic Reader* (Markey 1976: 239f.):

Markey notes the presence of a variety of particularly complex forms of alliteration in Old Frisian legal texts, presumably reaching back to the oral legal tradition where alliteration is often regarded as a device which aided memorization of texts. This includes conjoined alliterative pairs, alliteration spread over entire sentences, and so forth. That is, not only does alliteration give every indication of being extremely old in Germanic, it is also highly developed in even archaic texttypes. (Salmons 1992: 163 note 38)

Brink (2008: 29), following Liestøl (1979), interprets the Forsa ring (around 800–900) as “the oldest law-rule in Scandinavia.” If this assessment is valid, aspects of oral theory can be tested on this inscription which clearly predates Grágás, Hednalagen, Hälsingelagen or Jyske lov (see Schulte 2009). Given that Brink’s reading (based on Liestøl 1979) is correct, Forsa provides us with a good candidate for a ‘transitional text’ in Foley’s sense (Foley 1988). The inscription on the Forsa ring reads as follows (my reading and interpretation is based on Liestøl 1979, cf. Brink 1996: 28, 2008: 28):

Forsa inscription (Liestøl 1979):

: uksatuiskilanaukauratuastafatfurstalaki :
uksatuaukaurafiuratabrulaki :
: inatpripialakiuksafiuraukauratastaf :
aukaltaikuiuarRifanhafskakiritfuriR
: suapliupiRakuatliupritisuauasintfuraukhalkat :
inpaRkirpusikpitanunratarstapum :
: aukufakRahiurtstapum :
inuibiurnfapi :

Normalisation (Brink 2008: 29; cf. Wessén and Holmbäck 1940):

Oxa tvisgildan ok aura tva staf at fyrsta lagi,
oxa tva ok aura fiura at aðru lagi,
en at þriðia lagi oxa fiura ok aura atta staf,
ok alt æigu i værr, ef hann hafsk ækki rett fyriR,
svað liuðir [sic] æigu at liuðretti, sva vas innt fyrr ok hælga.
En þæirR gærðu sik þetta Anundr a Tarstaðum
ok OfagR a Hiortstaðum,

⁵ Hans Fehr, for instance, in his *Dichtung im Recht* (1936: 15) formulates the following set of questions: “Waren die ältesten Rechtsquellen der Germanen in dichterische Form gekleidet? Ist das älteste Germanenrecht ein poetisches Recht? Ist die “Dichtung im Recht” die germanische Urform?” His answer is at least in part affirmative.

en Vibiorn faði.

Translation (Brink 2008: 29):

‘One ox and two **aura** [in fine] [to?] **staf** [or] **aura staf** [in fine] for the restoration of a cult site (**vi**) in a valid state for the first time; two oxen and four **aura** for the second time; but for the third time four oxen and eight **aura**; and all property in suspension, if he doesn’t make right. That, the people are entitled to demand, according to the law of the people that was decreed and ratified before. [...].’

On closer inspection, the Forsa inscription exhibits alliterative structures, rhythmic organization and repetitive patterns which support the general assessment, as summarized by Salmons (1992: 163) in conjunction with Old Frisian legal traditions. In my opinion, the Forsa ring lends weight to the notion of oral composition and transmission since its structure is akin to other Old Germanic law documents, with alliteration and other structuring devices at its core. Another strand of evidence is provided by the long-term transmission and transformation of alliterative patterns such as the *iorð/upphiminn* and *rúnar reginkunnar* formulae (cf. Schulte 2007, 2008; see above). As a direct corollary, this short inspection weakens larger claims of alliterative or rhythmic patterns being a recent innovation, contrived for stylistic or literary reasons, among other things; cf. the discussion concerning Old Swedish law texts in Brink (2005).

Dala Law

Brink (2005: 116) mentions Dala Law (Bb 46) as a bone of contention regarding the oral legal tradition. As expected with oral composition, law rules are very much built up around precedents (Vansina 1965: 161). This implies a high degree of involvement and empathy, but a low level of abstraction. By the same token, Ong (1982) and Goody (1987) stress the general reliance on “examples” in oral culture (cf. Melve 2001: 20). As Brink (2005: 116) puts it, “The stranger or more unique the case, the more easily remembered it is.” Incidentally, Smirnitskaia, who has been mentioned already, correlates this dependence on precedence to the overall history of Germanic verse: “This verse is not unlike the law of ancient Teutons who were aware only of individual rules tied to concrete situations, but not of law as such. Both Germanic legal thought and alliterative verse are based on precedent.”⁶ This can be exemplified by Dala Law (Bb 46):

Marght ær ilz øki.	A lot of bad things happen.
Oc warder hani manz bani.	Even a rooster (cockerel) may be a man’s slayer.
La bilder a wægh,	A blade lay on a wall.
fløgh wp hani oc a bild nipir.	A rooster flew up and [sat] down on the blade.
Fiol nipir bildir oc i quild kalli.	Down fell the blade and into the belly of a man,
Døþ hafþi þæn karl af.	and he was killed by it. (Trans. Brink 2005: 116)

However, there is no consensus as to whether this coherent, rhythmic structure is due to an oral composition and/or performance, as Ståhle (1954: 138f.) argues, or whether the passage is of young age (e.g. Utterström 1978: 199). Contrariwise, Nils Jørgensen (1987: 167) confirms its high age in claiming that the Dala Law represents the earliest stage of all the Scandinavian provincial laws. Under the present focus, Dala Law is in line with the compositional

⁶ See Liberman 1998: 93f. [Smirnitskaia 1994 I: 46f.].

structure of Forsa which means that underlying alliterative patterns are old and can “appropriate” or “canonize” more and more structures (see Liberman 1998: 93). Once these compositional structures are firmly established in Scandinavian traditions, new material can be realigned and accommodated according to the same principles even in a literacy culture. If I understand Brink (2005: 95–101) correctly, this is what he labels “reminiscences of orality in written law.”

Conclusion

The two law rules addressed in this paper testify to an array of features that are best accommodated in a framework of oral composition and/or performance. This applies both to structure and content, in particular an avoidance of abstract thought and generalization; cf. the ‘oral’ criteria listed by Goody (1987) and Ong (1982). Moreover, it seems undisputable that the textual structures of Dala Law (Bb 46) and Forsa ease memorization by means of several mnemonic aids, in particular alliteration and varying repetition (*G varierende Wiederholung*). If these textures are construed as ‘catenary structure’ on the micro-level, the same textual organisation is evident on the macro-level of oral composition. What this implies is ‘canonical parallelism’ in both ritual speech and traditional oral poetry (cf. Connerton 1989: 60, with abundant references). There are noteworthy parallels between different oral traditions with regard to textual structure. Bloomfield (1916: 5), in his *Rig-Veda Repetitions*, argued that the ‘catenary structure’ of Vedic texts is “analogous to so-called parallelism in Hebrew poetry”, but numerous other traditions of parallelism and repetitive patterns, such as the Pāli-Canon, the Qur’an or the Kalevala, are in evidence.⁷ Similar techniques are met in the Poetic Edda, e.g. in the listing techniques of Rúnatal (see e.g. Jackson 1995). In a broader perspective, the recurrence of a standardized body of formulae and the ‘catenary structure’ of oral texts bring about a high degree of formalisation. It is obvious that these formalised structures are not exclusive to one particular oral tradition. Contrariwise, they persistently recur even in folk traditions, for instance in ancient Maya and Aztec literature.

The notion of oral theory is well-known from studies on Old Germanic verse (e.g. Harris 1983, Acker 1998, Gunnell 2008). These literatures thus draw on a common ‘pool’ of canonical techniques related to oral performance, alliteration in Germanic being one of them.⁸ In conclusion, ancient Scandinavian law texts show an array of features that can reasonably be explained as reflexes of oral legal tradition. The evolution of these formulaic patterns which are liable to linguistic change, forms an integral part of Nordic language history – for instance compare the spread and transformation of the *rūnō raginakundō* formula on the Noleby stone, the Sparlösa inscription, and in the eddic *Hávamál*.

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⁷ See in general Lang & Sauer 1987, Connerton 1989: 112 note 28 with further references.

⁸ Contrariwise, the marked focus on exact recitation and phonetic details is typical for the Vedic traditions, and it is shared only by a few cultures, in particular the Muslim (Arabic language-using) societies (see Norton 2008, Schulte forthcoming a).

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Saga Accounts of Violence-motivated Far-travel

John Shafer, University of Durham, England

In my PhD thesis I trace the patterns of motivation in saga accounts of Scandinavian far-travellers. My term “far-traveller” is not a translation of the Old Norse-Icelandic word *viðförli*, a word that primarily denotes a great extent or distance of travel. My term carries with it the notion of crossing an imagined frontier: from “inside” the large area in which people interact in an essentially Norse culture to “outside,” where the inhabitants and customs are distinctly “other.” Also, as Sverrir Jakobsson notes, “A common characteristic of the persons called by the byname *viðförli* is that their journeys took them partly or exclusively to the East” (Sverrir 2006: 936), while I use “far-travel” to refer to journeys in all cardinal directions.

One group of motivations for far-travel centres on violence: many saga characters travel from Scandinavia to a distant land or distant lands as a direct result of their involvement in or desire to escape acts of violence. In this paper I examine some of these accounts in *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur* and trace in them two additional narrative patterns. The first is a pattern of expanding concentric circles of violence-motivated travel, in which saga characters move outward from their point of origin in discrete journeys following successive acts of violence. Far-travels are often the last in a series of such expanding circles of violence-motivated travel. The second narrative pattern illustrates the “moral geography” of the medieval saga-writers’ mindset, according to which the different cardinal directions in which saga-characters choose to travel are not spiritually or morally equivalent. Travels south and east from Scandinavia take one closer to the moral centre of the world, Jerusalem, and travels north and west take one away from it.

My approach to the material is fundamentally literary rather than philological or historical, and my methodology is based on identifying and analysing these literary motivations and patterns. A story must make sense to its hearers and readers, and the motivations of that story’s characters, who are created by what they do and say, must be logical or natural enough to forestall disbelief in the audience. Motivations are also important to the meta-narrative: a storyteller’s motivations, for example, can drive a plot and carry characters from one place or action to another independently of the internal logic of the narrative. Patterns too are an essential part of storytelling, particularly in such an integrated body of stories as the sagas. Patterns forge connections between narratives and characters and suggest modes of thought and authorship, creating a framework in which an audience’s expectations can be fulfilled or transgressed.

West

Eiríkr rauði’s long journey westward from Norway to Greenland is the prototypical example of the pattern of expanding concentric circles of violence-motivated travel. The various accounts of his life (*Landnámabók*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, and *Grænlandinga saga*) agree that he and his father initially leave Norway for Iceland *fyrir víga sakir* (ÍF 1: 130). Once settled at Hornstrandir in Iceland, Eiríkr again comes into conflict with his neighbours, is again involved in some killings, and leaves the area to re-settle on two islands in Breiðafjörður in western Iceland. Finally, Eiríkr kills two of his new neighbour’s servants (sons, according to *Eiríks* and *Eyrbyggja saga*) following yet another dispute, and after the Þórsnes assembly outlaws Eiríkr, he sets out west to as-yet unsettled islands in the west of which he has heard. The saga-writers do not comment on the bold or foolish optimism of this choice, nor the specific reason Eiríkr decides to sail west across uncharted waters rather than any other direction.

Presumably he does not go east to mainland Scandinavia because it is now closed to him after the original violence there.

Eiríkr's far-travel to Greenland is thus the final logical step in a succession of violence-motivated movements. He is involved in three discrete violent situations, and three times as a result he moves westward to an island. It is also notable that the final time Eiríkr begins a journey westward to a supposed island, Vínland, there has been no intermediate act of violence, and Eiríkr fails to complete that journey. In *Grænlendinga saga* he quits the expedition just before embarking after experiencing what he considers to be a bad omen, while in *Eiríks saga* he sets out with the others, but the convoy meanders around the Irish Sea and must return to Greenland without having reached its destination (ÍF 4: 249, 212–14). Eiríkr, it seems, is fundamentally unable to engage in far-travel outside the pattern of violence-motivated movement.

In *Fóstbræðra saga* a great deal of the intra-Scandinavian travel is motivated by acts of violence. In one interesting example, one of the foster-brothers, Þorgeirr, prevents a friend of his named Veglágr from being hanged, after which he takes Veglágr first to his foster-brother Þormóðr's home in another part of Iceland and afterwards as far as Orkney. The motivation for these travels is to escape execution or vengeance, but Veglágr is killed in Scotland anyway (ÍF 6: 188–91). Though he does not die at the hands of Icelandic avengers, his death, along with Þorgeirr's repeated acts of violence in Scandinavian lands and subsequent violent death, is indicative of a problem with violence-motivated near-travel: the claustrophobia of the Scandinavian world. Violence motivates men to travel to escape its consequences, yet men do not escape. Violence-motivated far-travel to the west is thus the result of a logical progression in which the narrative must gradually expand its boundaries to encompass the perpetual pattern of violence and vengeance running through the story it tells. For Eiríkr rauði, the centre-point of the expanding concentric circles is in Norway. Here the centre-point is in Iceland, and movement is first regional. Next a journey is made to the British Isles, and violence again follows: travel must then be taken further. The direction it takes is west, to Greenland, where one of Þorgeirr's killers has travelled; the other killer, having stayed behind in Iceland, is killed almost immediately. Þormóðr, now occupying his sworn brother's former place at King Óláfr Haraldsson's side in Norway, decides to travel to Greenland himself. The king immediately identifies Þormóðr's reason for travelling there, asking: "*Hvert ørendi áttu til Grænlands, hvárt ætlar þú at hefna Þorgeirs, svarabróður þíns?*" (ÍF 6: 220). In this purpose Þormóðr is ultimately successful, indicating that the problem of escaping violence sometimes fails to be solved even by travelling a great distance.

Examples of violence-motivated far-travel to Greenland are not exclusive to Íslendingasögur. In an example from *Morkinskinna*, a wealthy Norwegian man named Þrándr gains the favour of King Magnús inn góði and the disfavour of King Haraldr harðráði by exchanging cloaks with Magnús. After assassins sent by Haraldr to murder Þrándr at his farm fail to achieve their goal and are beaten home again, Magnús invites Þrándr to abandon his farm and join his retinue, telling him *at Haraldr konvngr hafði þvngan hvg ahonom. oc hann mondi þar eigi mega víþ halldaz* (*Mork.* 107). Þrándr accepts the offer, and Magnús makes arrangements to take care of Þrándr's farm in his absence. The next spring, however, Magnús says he doubts Þrándr will be safe from Haraldr in Norway, even in Magnús's retinue, and sends him to Greenland and safety. This series of events illustrates clearly the pattern of expanding circles of violence-motivated travel culminating in far-travel, though here only two levels of travel, regional and extra-Scandinavian, are exercised. Perhaps Iceland is considered too sympathetic to Haraldr or too full of his henchmen to make an adequate safe-haven for Þrándr.

North and South

Journeys to the distant north and south trace the pattern of expanding circles of violence-motivated travel less frequently than those to the west. They illustrate somewhat better the concept of the saga-writers' mental moral geography of the world, in which the north is an unholy place occupied by monsters and evil beings of many kinds and the south is a holy place, the moral centre of the temporal world. Far-travel northward (to Finnmörk, Jötunheimar and other wilderness lands populated by monstrous or magical "others") often involves violence of some kind, but the violence is most often a result of the far-travellers' motivations and not the motivation itself. Viking raids among the Lapps, for example, are fundamentally motivated by the desire for profit, as are Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson's mercenary adventures in Kvenland. There is only one clear example of far-travel northward motivated directly by the personal desire to enact a violent purpose. In this simple, self-contained episode, the title character of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* travels north from his foster-home in Norway and avenges his father King Dumbr's death at the hands of a band of marauding trolls led by one named Harðverkr. Bárðr and his half-brother Þorkell sail across Dumbshaf to reach this northern kingdom – identified in some manuscripts as Risaland and in another as Helluland (ÍF 13: 101, footnote) – and burn Harðverkr and thirty ogres (*bursar*) in their hall. Consistent with the moral geography of the world, the wastes of the far north are populated by ogres, and the rule of vengeance applies there with no checks or interfering Christianity.

All accounts of journeys to the distant south (Rome, Constantinople and Jerusalem) also illustrate the concept of the saga-writers' moral geography to a greater or lesser extent. This is especially true of piously-motivated travels to Rome and Jerusalem, such as pilgrimages, quests for absolution and crusades. It is also, however, true of some journeys to Constantinople.

Similar stories of two Scandinavian travellers there, the first to escape a violent act of vengeance and the second to enact that vengeance, are told in the final chapters of *Grettis saga*, often called *Spesar þátr*, and in *Heiðarvíga saga*. In *Grettis saga*, the leader of Grettir Ásmundarson's killers, Þorbjörn ǫngull, flees to Norway due to the unpopularity of the killing in Iceland, but Norway does not seem safe for him either. After commenting that at this time many Norsemen find employment in the Byzantine empire as mercenaries, the saga-writer continues:

Af því þótti Þorbirni fýsiligt at fara þangat ok afla sér svá fjár ok frægðar, en hafa sik eigi í Norðrlöndum fyrir frændum Grettis. Bjó hann nú ferð sína ór Nóregi ok för út í lönd ok létta eigi, fyrr en hann kom út í Miklagarð ok gekk þar á mála. (ÍF 7: 271)

The mixture of motivations suggests rationalisation, ǫngull's desire for wealth and renown foregrounded to play down his desire to escape violent death at the hands of an avenger. Greed for wealth and fame is undoubtedly less distasteful than cowardice. Self-preservation, however, does seem to be ǫngull's primary motivation for fleeing to the distant south, and this motivation is also clearly of first importance to the saga-writer. If the tale of Grettir's kinsman Þorsteinn drómundr's revenge and subsequent romantic escapade in the exotic south is to be told, ǫngull must flee the north and Þorsteinn must follow. This flight and chase to a distant land not only take the pattern of expanding concentric circles of violence in a new direction but also illustrate again the claustrophobia of the Norse world. For some acts of violence, an Icelander can find refuge in Norway: but not for an act of violence so widely unpopular as one in which despicable *seiðr*-magic was used and an innocent man, Grettir's brother Illugi, was murdered. Here the perpetrator must escape Scandinavia altogether.

Like the fugitives to Greenland in *Fóstbræðra saga*, however, Qngull's attempted escape by far-travel is ineffectual: Þorsteinn drómundr kills him as he is showing the other Varangians the sword he took from Grettir's dead body (ÍF 7: 272–3). Yet Qngull's decision to travel to Byzantium to escape vengeance is not necessarily a poor one. The saga-writer twice emphasises how rare Scandinavian vengeance in the distant south is, first remarking that people say Grettir must have been very dear to Þorsteinn for him to have travelled so far for his vengeance, and later observing: *Vitu menn varla dæmi til, at nokkurs manns af Íslandi hafi hefnt verit í Miklagarði, annars en Grettis Ásmundarsonar* (ÍF 7: 286). Violence-motivated far-travel thus pertains only to cases where the scale of violence propelling the travel and the high regard in which the avenger holds the memory of the original victim are proportional to the great distance covered and great effort required for the journey. By contrast, no such comments are made in the accounts of vengeance-motivated travel to Greenland. This factor aptly distinguishes the distant south from the distant west: lands settled by Norsemen are understood to be part of Scandinavia, and they adopt Norse customs (here, customs regarding vengeance). Not so the settled, civilised lands to the distant south: the saga-writer understands that there it is Scandinavians and their customs that are foreign.¹ As suggested above, this act of vengeance is also noteworthy as an indicator of the moral geography of the medieval Scandinavian mind: travels to the south and southeast take one towards the moral centre of the world, the Holy Land, and piety is the characteristic motivation for travelling there. Þorsteinn's successful vengeance is thus remarkable partly because he travels to a "holier" location to enact it, far from the northern periphery of Christendom, where vengeance is both more common and more appropriate.

The holiness of the locale may be the reason the Norseman pursuing a fellow-Scandinavian south in *Heiðarvíga saga* fails to achieve his vengeance. In that saga, Gestr Þórhallason first leaves Iceland for Norway following his slaying of his father's killer Víga-Styrr, and Styrr's son Þorsteinn pursues him (ÍF 3: 241–43). After Þorsteinn catches up with him, Gestr relocates to another part of Norway, but Þorsteinn follows and makes another attempt on Gestr's life. Jón Ólafsson writes:

Gestr sér, at hann má eigi við haldask í Nóregi fyrir umsátrum Þorsteins, ok ferr at vári komanda suðr í Miklagarð ok gengr þar á mála með Væringjum; ætlar sik þar heldr óhultara verða. Þorsteini kemr njósn af þessu, ok ferr sama sumar út til Miklagarðs. (ÍF 3: 243)

Like Þorbjörn Qngull and Þorsteinn drómundr, Gestr and Þorsteinn trace the pattern of growing concentric circles of violence-motivated far-travel. Here the first two movements, regional and international, have been reversed: Gestr first abandons Iceland for Norway before changing locations within Norway, finally moving outside Scandinavia altogether. The accounts of vengeance in *Grettis saga* and *Heiðarvíga saga* diverge when the pair reaches Constantinople. Jón informs that during one of the games or wrestling matches customary for the Varangians and Norsemen,² Þorsteinn draws a short sword (*sax*) from under his cloak and strikes at Gestr's head. As before he misses his mark and only wounds Gestr on the shoulder. After intervening on his attacker's behalf when the Varangians wish to execute him according to their law, Gestr finally convinces Þorsteinn to give up his quest for vengeance, saying it is clearly destined not to succeed (ÍF 3: 244).

¹ Blöndal postulates that the Varangians had the right to exercise regimental discipline; though the Norse ethos of vengeance for personal injuries and disgraces was no doubt recognised, miscreants among their ranks were probably judged with typically harsh Byzantine military discipline (Blöndal 24, 118–19).

² Jón distinguishes between *Væringjar* and *Norðmenn*, indicating he is fully aware that in the 11th century there were non-Scandinavian Varangians in Byzantium, e.g. Russians and Englishmen. Jón, an experienced saga copyist, says the phrase is common in sagas. See ÍF 3: 243 (footnote), Blöndal 200.

Þorsteinn may indeed be fated not to kill Gestr. Since, however, Gestr's flight to Constantinople takes him not only far from Scandinavia but also close to the centre of holiness, the location itself may simply not allow the commission of a violent act without proper justification. While Þorsteinn drómundr is justified in avenging Grettir's shameful murder, Þorsteinn Víga-Styrsson, attempting to avenge a violent man who arguably brought about his own death, lacks justice on his side. The moral geography of the world thus mandates what sorts of actions may be performed where.

In a third example of violence-motivated far-travel south to Byzantium the avenger, Icelander Þormóðr Eindriðason, commits his act of vengeance in the north and flees south afterwards to avoid the repercussions. *Morkinskinna* relates that after Þormóðr kills his kinsman's killer in a fit of uncontrolled rage, the others present, fellow crewmembers on an expedition led by Haraldr harðráði, crowd around to kill Þormóðr. The saga-writer continues:

Magnvs s. Haralldz konungs veitti Þormodi oc bad honom griða oc bad honom griða oc bavð settir þui at Þormoðr var ahans scipi oc varþ setz amalið oc siþan for Þormodr svdr til Danmerkr oc þaþan vt iGrikland. (*Mork.* 233–34)

Once in Greece, he takes service with the emperor. Þormóðr's departure from Haraldr's company and possibly from all of Scandinavia is presumably part of the settlement by which he is granted his life; in any case, his flight from the north to the south is clearly directly motivated by his violent act of vengeance.³ Though in each of these three examples the characters' flights to the distant south are motivated by vengeance, mercenary employment is in each case a clear secondary motivation. This is only fitting: Norsemen characterised by adherence to the code of ethics advocating violent retribution are well suited to military service. Characters motivated to far-travel by piety, like many of the Jerusalem- and Rome-pilgrims of other sagas, tend to eschew military service once in the south.

East

Violence-motivated travel to the east manifests itself most often as the exile of a ruler fleeing a dangerous situation in his Scandinavian homeland. The most well-known of these rulers is Óláfr Tryggvason. Each of his sagas narrates his exile from Scandinavia as a small boy, forced to stay away from Norway on account of his enemies there. Following Norwegian regional king Tryggvi's murder, his pregnant widow Ástríðr flees along with her foster-father Þórólfr and his young son, intending to go into hiding at the home of her father, Eiríkr of Ofrustaðir. During this flight she gives birth to Óláfr; Oddr Snorrason's saga records that this occurs in a boathouse and that the baby is wrapped in swaddling clothes (*sveipt klæðum*), details suggestive of Christ's nativity (ÍF 25: 131). Oddr, Snorri and the writer of *Mesta* record that the new-born child is sprinkled with water. Ástríðr's company reaches her father's home to spend the winter. On learning of the approach of Gunnhildr's emissary, Eiríkr sends Ástríðr east to the home of his friend Hákon gamli in Sweden. Their pursuers failing to apprehend them, Ástríðr and her companions stay with Hákon two years. Ástríðr decides to travel further east with her child to stay with her brother Sigurðr in Russia, but the convoy of merchants with whom she travels is attacked by pirates, and she and the child are separated and taken into slavery. Passing through a succession of masters, Óláfr is eventually spotted by Sigurðr, freed, and taken to Russia to be fostered.

There are two distinct perspectives on the motivating factors that take Óláfr from Hákon gamli's protection in Sweden to exile in Russia. In the first perspective, human agents decide

³ An abbreviated version of these events appears in *Ljósvetninga saga* (ÍF X: 103). Snorri relates the episode in his *Haralds saga* but does not mention Þormóðr's flight south to Byzantium (ÍF 28: 165).

to remove Ástriðr and Óláfr from Scandinavia and take them to distant Russia to protect them from the violence of their enemies. In Oddr's version Hákon gamli decides to send the pair east, while in the other two sagas the decision is explicitly Ástriðr's. From this perspective Óláfr's exile is part choice, part chance: while it is Ástriðr's choice to take Óláfr to the distant east, her plans are frustrated by free-booting slave-traders, only to be realised in the end when Sigurðr finds the boy and takes him to Russia himself.

In the second perspective, Óláfr could never have avoided being carried to Russia. Oddr and the writer of *Mesta* both include an episode prior to Ástriðr's departure from Sweden in which the Russian king Valdimarr's mother, a pagan prophetess (*spákona*), divines at a Yule-tide feast that a prince born that year in Norway will come to Russia and be fostered there (ÍF 25: 143–44, *Mesta* 80–1). Further, she accurately predicts some of the details of the rest of Óláfr's life, such as his too-short reign of Norway. From this perspective it is inevitable that Óláfr will be taken to Russia to be fostered, and the decisions of the far-travellers (i.e. Ástriðr and Þórólfr) are secondary consequences of that fate. In a later passage in both Oddr's saga and *Mesta* Russia is said to be inhabited by many "seers" (*spámenn*) who perceive that the radiant, auspicious fetches or guardian spirits (*hamingjur* in Oddr, *fylgiur* in *Mesta*) of a young, distinguished foreign person have appeared in their land, and the parallel with Christ is further pronounced when they say that the bright light of these portents stretches over all of Russia and the eastern part of the world (ÍF 25: 150, *Mesta* 104–5). Once again the implication is that Óláfr's exile in Russia is not a matter of mere human motivation – that of his mother or his uncle or Hákon gamli – but something that is ordained by God or fate and is visible in the atmosphere to those with prophetic powers.

This view of his exile in Russia relates to its failure to adhere to the pattern of expanding concentric circles of violence-motivated travel. A story in which a character directs his own life according to his own purposes may expand spatially to accommodate the ever-growing consequences of the character's successive actions, and far-travel due to violence is often the culmination of many individual instances of violence followed by flight. A Norwegian prince ordained before his birth by God to bring Christianity to multiple Scandinavian lands, however, is drawn from his turbulent homeland to a distant safe-haven with the inevitability of God's will, much as Christ was removed to Egypt to protect him from the violence of the malicious King Herod. Óláfr's exile in the distant east is not a culmination but an incubation, as God protects and prepares his servant for the tasks of his adult life. This second perspective does not erase violence as a motivation for Óláfr's far-travel eastward: it is simply God, the supreme saga-writer, rather than any human agent who is motivated to move his young protégé such a great distance to protect him from violence.

The most obvious difference between Óláfr's eastern exile and that of his later royal namesake is that Óláfr Haraldsson travels to the distant east as an adult. Having struggled for ten years to keep his grip on Norway's throne, Óláfr is finally forced to flee on account of the overwhelming power of Hákon jarl. Snorri writes in his *Heimskringla* version of the saga:

Gerði konungr þá bert fyrir vinum sínum, at sú var ætlan hans at fara þá ór landi í brot, first austr í Svíaveldi, ok gera þá ráð sitt, hvert hann ætlar eða snøri þaðan af, en það svá vini sína til ætla, at hann myndi enn ætla til landsins at leita ok aptr til ríkis sins, ef guð léði honum langlífis. (ÍF 27: 327)

Óláfr's journey is thus envisioned beforehand as exile: present circumstances force him to leave, but he intends to return. Working his own way east across Norway and Sweden, Óláfr eventually sets sail the next summer for the court of King Jarizleifr and Queen Ingigerðr in Russia, where he is welcomed and given land to cover his expenses (ÍF 27: 328). Snorri concludes the chapter by listing the reasons why the Norwegian people revolted against Óláfr,

reiterating the exilic nature of his sojourn in Russia. Further reiteration comes later when Björn stallari, one of those who had opposed Óláfr before, regrets his disloyalty to the king, travels eastward to see Óláfr in Russia, and tells the king that Hákon jarl has gone missing and Norway is now leaderless. Snorri writes that at these tidings Óláfr's Norwegian followers are glad and turn their homesick minds to the return journey (ÍF 27: 338). Once again, the context in the east is very much exilic: Óláfr's men do not wish to remain in Russia but choose to because they feel compelled to stay. *Fóstbræðra saga* also mentions St Óláfr's exile briefly, the Flateyjarbók version naming Russia as the location of that exile (ÍF 6: 260, footnote). After avenging the death of his foster-brother in Greenland, Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld goes to Norway and joins Óláfr's retinue, ultimately joining the king in his exile. In this case Þormóðr's loyalty to or love for the holy king is the primary motivating factor for his far-travel, so his is a self-imposed exile.

Óláfr's own exile is also, in a sense, self-imposed. There are no fetches or portents heralding his sojourn in Russia; like some of the far-travellers to the west and south, he simply flees the danger when it threatens him. If divine purposes make themselves known at all, it is not to keep Óláfr in eastern exile but to send him back to Norway. King Óláfr Tryggvason comes to Óláfr in a dream and urges him to re-take his kingdom or die in the attempt, despite Óláfr's own inclination to abdicate his royal rights and travel southward to Jerusalem, perhaps to enter an order of monks (ÍF 27: 339–40). Obeying the ghostly king, Óláfr does return west and attempt to reclaim his kingdom, and at the battle of Stiklarstaðir his life ends where his path to sainthood begins.

Two final exiles to Russia are Óláfr's half-brother Haraldr Sigurðarson and future jarl of Orkney Rognvaldr Brúsason, both of whom survive the battle at Stiklarstaðir and, having fought on the losing side, must seek refuge in the distant east. Quoting the first-hand account of the skald Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, Snorri reports that Rognvaldr carries the young Haraldr away from the battlefield and smuggles him to a remote farmhouse in a forest, at which Haraldr recovers from his battle-wounds and is secretly escorted east to Sweden (ÍF 28: 68–9). *Heimskringla* and *Orkneyinga saga* relate that Haraldr, Rognvaldr and others who escaped the battlefield at Stiklarstaðir sail east to Russia that summer. They arrive at the court of King Jarizleifr, who gives them good welcome on account of his earlier royal guest (ÍF 28: 70, ÍF 34: 53). The party's exile in the east is not a time of idleness: Snorri reports that along with another exiled Norseman Haraldr takes charge of Jarizleifr's defences and travels *viða um Austrveg*⁴ before going south to Byzantium (ÍF 28: 70). Quoting a contemporary verse by Arnórr jarlaskáld, *Orkneyinga saga* relates that Rognvaldr joins the other Norsemen in the defence of Russia, fighting many battles around Novgorod (Hólmgarðr) on the Russian king's behalf (ÍF 34: 54).

Rognvaldr also engages in peace-making during his Russian exile. Both *Orkneyinga saga* and *Heimskringla* relate that two of St Óláfr's former enemies travel east to make amends to the young prince Magnús and petition Jarizleifr to allow them to make Magnús king of Norway in defiance of the ruling Knýtlinga. The pair enlist Rognvaldr's assistance and that of the eleven greatest men among the Norwegians, and Jarizleifr grants their request, Magnús ultimately becoming king of Norway (ÍF 34: 54–5, ÍF 27: 414–15). What is interesting here is that the Scandinavians, however powerful they may be in their homelands, must apply to the Russian king for permission to make their own choice for king. This accords with the observation in all three sagas of Óláfr Tryggvason that it is law in Russia that no foreign person of royal birth is allowed to remain there without the king's consent (ÍF 25: 149, ÍF 26: 232, *Me-*

⁴ Various meanings of this term are outlined by Sverrir Jakobsson (2006), but here *Austrveg* clearly means Russia and neighbouring lands rather than the more distant, more fantastic lands visited by Yngvarr víðförla and his comrades.

sta 87). When Scandinavian rulers are exiled in the east, it is the eastern rulers have final authority over them.

In summary, saga-accounts of violence-motivated travels follow distinct literary patterns. Journeys to the distant west, north and south are connected to feud-violence, often the last in a series of consecutive acts of violence and abandonment of regions that progress outward from a central point. For these far-travellers, the decision to cross the boundary between the area of Norse familiarity and the “outside” is driven by pragmatism: they become explorers of uncharted waters to find rumoured western islands or mercenaries in the exotic south only after Scandinavia is too dangerous to hold them. Their movement illustrates the saga-world’s moral geography: paganism or evil characterises the distant north and west, holiness the south and east. Violence-motivated journeys to the distant east are connected to the grander feuds between Scandinavian rulers and rulers-to-be. The national and often international scale of these feuds necessitates that those fleeing must travel far immediately, with none of the intermediate instances of violence-motivated travel. The east being according to the moral geography more holy than Scandinavian lands, these royal exiles may be taken there by God’s will and all at least enjoy the hospitality of Christian hosts.

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On Typology of the Name-Giving Formulas in the Sagas

Tatiana Shenyavskaya

The paper deals with the structure and semantics of the name-giving formulas in the *Íslendingasögur* with regard to their compositional function and describes the structural and functional changes of such formulas in *Sverris saga* caused by genre transformations.

One of the peculiarities of the *Íslendingasögur* is the non-fixed point of view of the narrator. This determines the composition of both the saga as a whole and the episode, which is the main narrative unit. The “camera” of the narrator (or the narrative focus) passes on freely from one scene to another. Scenes form episodes. More or less independent episodes constitute a complete saga. They are not connected by a common plot. The overall saga structure is determined only by the logic of the feuds as the dominant concern. In this narrative it is necessary to use special compositional signals to draw attention to the scene-shifts and other changes in the narrative structure. The most important of them are name-giving formulas as they introduce new characters. The introduction of new characters in turn is almost always connected with the beginning of a new story line.

Parataxis both in syntax and juxtaposition of events is one of the most important features of the saga style. It characterizes the saga narrative technique as ultimately oral by origin. At the same time the sagas do not simply record a developed oral tradition, but canonize it in accordance with their own narrative rules. Thus, the order of components in the name-giving formulas is functional. For example, it can distinguish the characters according to their role in the saga. The initial position of personal names in the formulas with the verb *heita* ‘to be hight, to be called’ serves as a means of singling out the characters that are particularly important for the saga. The formulas with the reverse order of the components introduce less important characters.

Unlike the *Íslendingasögur*, *Sverris saga* describes nearly contemporary events. It is obviously written by someone sympathetic to the king, but the strict demands of the genre ensure a high degree of impartiality. This inevitably causes functional and sometimes structural changes of some narrative elements. As all the characters introduced in *Sverris saga* by means of the name-giving formulas are incidental, the distribution of such formulas bears no relation to the role of a character in the saga. However they serve to emphasize the most important detail of an episode for the readers to pay particular attention to.

Presenting the main pretenders in the twelfth-century Norway *Sverris saga* depicts imposture through the opposition between a true and adopted name put into the verbs *heita* og *kalla* which reflect two sides of naming. The verb *heita* is used when the name is true or supposed to be true, while *kalla* ‘to call, to name’ refers to the public opinion. It is not enough if a pretender merely takes a name that gives him right of succession to the throne. His right to bear this name must be recognized at least by some part of the society. The same concerns to the kinship, and in this connection it is very important which of the genealogies is accepted as authentic.

Per sortes ac per equum. Lot-casting and hippomancy in the North after saga narratives and medieval chronicles.

Leszek P. Ślupecki, Rzeszów University, Poland

Introduction

Divination was (and sometimes still is) a method to foresee the destiny of individuals and communities¹. In institutionalised form it was performed in regular times at fixed places in connection to religious practices, especially feasts and sacrifices. In that way divinations develop into oracles. There were two kinds of divinations. Marcus Tullius Cicero in dialogue *De divinatione* (I, 18, 34: 1960, 250) distinguish between artificial divination (*artificiosa divinatio*) based on interpretation of lots, signs, presages, omens etc., and natural or intuitive divination (*naturalis divinatio*) build on inspiration of the practitioner through trance and visions, including those in dreams (Ślupecki 1998: 11–13). Both kinds of divinations overlaps to some extent, a good example might be here “artificial” interpretation of “natural” dreams by using of Dream books².

In this paper I am going to write about two kinds of “artificial” divinations, cleromancy and hippomancy, in two different but comparable fields of religious beliefs, Old Norse (as presented in saga stories) and Old Slavic (as described in medieval chronicles).

Lot-casting

The starting point for the analysis of Old Norse cleromancy must be the detailed description of the Germanic ritual of drawing lots in chapter 10 of Tacitus’s *Germania* (1937, 129) and an earlier relation by Gaius Julius Caesar (*De bello Gallico*, I, 53: 1987, 25). These accounts converge with the early mediaeval sources concerning Continental Europe (like Alcuin’s *Vita Willibrordi*, I, 10: 1851, col.700, and *Vita Willehadi* 3: 1928, 57) and Scandinavia (Rimberti *Vita Anskari*, 18–19 and 26–27).

But even the ancient sources indicate that drawing lots was only the initial part of a longer oracular procedure (Ślupecki 1998: 103–128), and that some confirmation of the result was sought in other types of divination, e.g. ornitomancy or hippomancy, as mentioned by Tacitus. Lots were particularly favoured in war affairs: they decided about initiating and directing military campaigns, about accepting or avoiding battles, about the sacrifices due to the gods before the battle and about the thanksgiving offerings due afterwards.

The material form of lots and the ritual was not always the same. The lots could serve for casting or drawing. The shape of lots is described in Tacitus, Lex Frisonum, Saxo Grammaticus’ and also in Pretorius’ relation concerning the Baltic peoples, written in the 17th century, but presenting some astonishingly archaic elements (Mierzyński 1896: 68; Ślupecki 1998: 109–111). Lots for drawing were called *hlutir* (sing. *hlutr*) in Old Icelandic. The shape of the casting of singular lot (Icelandic *hlautteinn* and *blótspann*) is unfortunately not so well documented.

¹ Divination predict destiny, not simply the future. One of the main points in genuine divinations and oracles is the stress put on what must happen because of fate, but without saying how and when. So prophecies telling precisely about the time when something should happen are usually literary creations of late period lacking on feeling how “true” prophecies should be constructed.

² Old Icelandic literature at its very early stage became to be familiar with the famous *Somniale Danielis* which was the most popular Medieval Dream book, see Turville-Petre 1966: 343–354 and Turville-Petre 1968: 19–36; cf. L.P.Ślupecki 1998: 27–52.

Teinn, hlautteinn

In *Lex Frisonum* (14, 1) specially prepared lots are called *tenos*. The corresponding Icelandic word *teinn* appears in *Hymiskviða* (1). To interpret this stanza we have to decide whether the act of foretelling described there is based solely on lots or it is supplemented with divination from sacrificial blood. The latter interpretation can be supported by Strabo's (*Geography* 7, 2, 3: 1961: 169–171) relation about fortune-telling from blood practised by the Cymbres. The word *hlaut*, used in *Hymiskviða*, means 'sacrificial blood' and if we accept the traditional interpretation, it is the only trace of divination from blood preserved in Norse texts – NB it is known that such practices were cultivated among the Slavic Abodrites, close neighbours of Norse peoples (Helmold, *Chronica Slavorum* I, 52: 1963, 196–199). It is possible, however, to amend the text by changing *hlaut* to *hlutr*. The two words are etymologically related; the basic meaning of *hlutr* is 'lot', while *hlaut* 'sacrificial blood' is an innovation limited to Scandinavia, unknown in other Germanic languages, which may indicate that for the Norse peoples lots and offerings were somehow specially linked. An explanation of this fact may be sought in the fortune-telling practices of the Cheremis, who dipped the tokens in blood before the drawing ritual (Holmberg 1926: 134–135 and 151–152; cf. Ślupecki 1998: 114–115).

Bearing in mind the uniqueness of the mention about divination from blood, it seems permissible to amend the first stanza of *Hymiskviða*. Such a step is additionally motivated by the fact that *Völuspá* 63 mentions a magic object, called in different manuscripts either *hlauttvidr* or *hlutvidr*³.

A similar analysis can be applied to the name of another ritual object, *hlautteinn*. Sagas describe it incorrectly as a counterpart of the Christian sprinkler (*aspergillum*), serving to sprinkle temple walls with the blood of sacrificed beings (Snorri Sturluson, *Hákonar saga goða* 14: 1979, 167–168; *Eyrbyggja saga* 4: 1935, 9). The proper interpretation of the kenning *hlautteins hreytir* appearing in one of skalds Þorvaldr Koðránsón stanzas (Skj. B1, 1912: 105) meaning "the one casting or tossing the *hlautteinn*" (it is a term applied to a person serving the gods), suggests that this object functioned in the context of lot-casting (de Vries 1956: 417; Ślupecki 1998, 113). Nevertheless, we cannot deny that lots were strongly associated with blood and offerings. Similar associations are evident in the sources concerning the Slavic and Baltic peoples.

Blótspánn, spánn

One of the two types of rituals involving lots was designated by the formula *fela blótspánn* ("to cast a sacrificial lot", literally 'chip'). The structure of this term is analogous to that of the word *hlautteinn*, one element refers to a wooden token, the other to the offering ceremony. *Blótspánn*, exactly like *hlautteinn* and *hlautvidr* functions only in the singular – NB in Caesar's famous saying *alea iacta est* the die is also singular (Ślupecki 1998: 115) – which means that it was a single token, as evidenced by *Hervarar saga* 6 (1960: 25) and especially by *Gautreks saga* 7 (1944: 24–25). The latter source clearly distinguishes two ways of divination by lots: one involved a single *spánn*, the other employed several lots (*hlutir*). The *blótspánn* was cast, while *hlutir* were rather drawn (although there the verb *hlutfalla* appears). In *Gautreks saga* the *spánn* is firstly cast to disclose the will of Odin, who demands a human sacrifice. Then there is a lot-drawing ceremony, which points to king Vikarr⁴.

³ In *Codex Reginus* it is written as *hlautvið*, in *Hauksbók* as *hlutvið*, see Pipping 1926: 115, and Ślupecki 1998: 113.

⁴ We may analyse also other Scandinavian accounts of casting the *blótspánn* (and *spánn*). A similar ritual of casting a lot (called *spann* in German sources) was practised by the Baltic peoples, see Ślupecki 1998: 117–119.

Hlutir

Lots (*hlutir*) were drawn (*upp taka*) from a sheet of cloth into which they had earlier been placed; those procedures were described by the Old Icelandic formula *bera hluti i skaut*. The formula appears e.g. in *Grágás* (*Þingskappa Þáttur 27*, *Grágás* 1992: 401–402). It was a method of choosing one out of many options (people, etc.). According to *Fagrskinna*, in such a way the scald Sighvatr was selected to fulfil the unpleasant mission of warning King Magnus against turning into a tyrant⁵. The tokens had to be specially marked (*markadir*). The clever marking of lots is the core of Snorri Sturluson's tale about Haraldr Harðraðe's trick. Haraldr outwitted a Byzantine general by marking his own token identically with the rival's one (Ślupecki 1998: 119–121).

Scáro á scíði

Lots (*hlutir*) may have been marked with runes. It is difficult to decide whether Germanic peoples applied them already in the times of Tacitus, but it is very likely that they were in early medieval Scandinavia. Such marking, along with the contrast between the white, debarked, and the dark side of the twigs used as tokens, offered quite a wide range of combinations. There was also a custom of repeating the drawing, usually three times.

Alternatively, the lots may have been only notched (as in *Lex Frisonum*). That primitive mode of marking appears in *Völuspá* (20), where the Norns sitting at Urdarbrunnr shape human lives by carving notches on wooden sticks (*scáro á scíði*). This archaic account has an interesting Slavic counterpart. Khrabr Charnoresiets (9th c. AD) in his apology of the Slavonic alphabet states that before Cyril and Methodius's mission Slavs did not have any books (it means: writings), and only with marks and nicks did they count and foretell the future (Kujev 1967: 188; cf. Ślupecki 1998: 122).

Tafl

It might seem that lot-casting and drawing can only uncover the already settled course of events, and that the result, i.e. one of the several possibilities (people, cases, etc.), chosen by the fate, has to be humbly accepted. Divination by lots was usually treated in that way. Nevertheless, there were some attempts at altering the destiny. One of them was a game (or a group of games) called *tafl* (*hneftafl*, later *hnefi*), in which the movements depended on the configuration of dice (in the Middle Ages the moves in chess also depend on results of casting a dice!). Such a game was often treated as a pre-figuration of reality, as is the case in *Fridthjofs saga ins froekna* 3 (1901: 8–9). The same motif appeared earlier in the descriptions of Continental Germanic customs, e.g. by Paulus Diaconus (*Historia Langobardorum* I, 20).

Tafl was the game of rulers, kings, heroes (cf. *Rigspula*, 41), and most importantly, the game of gods. *Völuspá* (8) says that at the beginning of times the gods happily played with a set of magic gold *tafl*, which, however, was soon seized by three Giantesses and was to be regained by the new generation of gods after the *ragnarök* (*Völuspá* st. 61). I assume, after A.G. van Hammel (1934: 236–237) that the gold *tafl* of the Aesir were a magic tool which allowed the gods to shape the world's destiny. But I differ from van Hammel in interpreting the three Giantesses that deprived the gods of this valued instrument as the Norns rather than unnamed evil forces (Ślupecki 1998: 122–123).

⁵ *Fagrskinna* 48 (1984, 212). The same story recorded also Snorri Sturluson in *Magnus saga ins goða* 15–16 (1951: 26–27).

Lytir. Lots, offerings and sanctuaries

The sources frequently bring out a connection between divination by lots and offerings, which indicates that this method of fortune-telling was closely associated with the religious cult. The ritual was sometimes performed *ad hoc* (e.g. before a battle, as is evident from many Scandinavian accounts), but sometimes also in sanctuaries (cf. Tacitus's relation). The association of lot-casting with cult places is visible in various Scandinavian accounts, e.g. in Uppsala after *Ynglinga saga* 38 (1979: 70). The most interesting story involving this motif is found in *Hauks þáttur hábrókar* (Flateyjarbók, 1860: 579–580) and concerns a king of Uppsala, Eric, who was said to worship a god called Lytir. Although the text itself is late, the figure of Lytir finds a strong confirmation in place-names. The most convincing etymology of this name, proposed by Lennart Elmevik (1966: 47–61), suggests that he was a god "forecasting the future (deciding about things) by lots". After *Hauks þáttur* Uppsala can be identified as the centre of Lytir's cult, while the name can be interpreted as a cognomen of Frey.

Hippomancy

No sources confirm straightforwardly that the Scandinavians practised hippomancy. It was, however, known to their closest neighbours, i.e. the Slavs and the Balts, as well as to the Continental Germanic tribes in ancient times. Therefore, I hypothesise that hippomancy might have been applied also in Norse fortune-telling. Such a hypothesis support a wide range of comparative data.

The oracular gift ascribed to horses

Tacitus (*Germania* 10) claimed that only Germanic peoples used horses for divination. This statement is not exact. Horses were regarded as oracular creatures also by the Greeks, Romans, Celts and Persians, but all those peoples used them for fortune-telling *ad hoc* only (Ślupecki 1998: 129–133). In the institutionalised ritual form hippomancy was practised in ancient times only by Germanic tribes, and in the Middle Ages by the Slavs and Balts, unknown to the Roman author. Thus, the use of hippomancy was confined to the Baltic Sea basin, and this was the area where the tradition of such rituals was best preserved, or rather where beliefs concerning horses developed in this specific way.

Tacitus: *Germania*, ch. 10

Let my survey of sources concerning hippomancy begins with *locus classicus*. In the analysis of Tacitus's description it should not be overlooked that he presented hippomancy as a means of reconfirming the results indicated by lots. Such a relation between the two methods of divination is evident in mediaeval Slavic rituals (Ślupecki 2006: 225–226; Ślupecki 2008: 241–256). According to Tacitus (*Germania* 10, 1937: 129), divination involving horses was performed in sanctuaries or holy groves, and the ritual itself consisted of the horses' drawing a wagon around an unspecified area. The carriage was accompanied by the king and a priest walking next to it as *ministri deorum*. Apparently, the seats on the wagon were reserved for gods.

The holy carriage (Þáttur Gunnars helmings)

Holy carriages, on which gods were thought to travel, are known from various religions (Ślupecki 1998: 133). As to Germanic peoples, the wagon in which the goddess Nerthus was driven should be mentioned (Tacitus, *Germania* 40), together with excellent archaeological findings of luxuriously ornamented carriages discovered in sacrificial milieu. In this context,

it is interesting to note a story from *Flateyjarbók* (1860: 337–339) telling about a Norwegian outcast, Gunnar helmingr, who supposedly seduced a priestess of Frey (what pointed for Uppsala) and together with her made a ritual drive around the country, substituting for the god's statue in the carriage. Although the account is late, it contains reliable archaic details (Krappe 1928/29: 226–233).

Freyfaxi

In Germanic mythology horses were connected to Wodan/Odin (cf. the association of Wodan with horses in 2nd Merseburg incantation and on bracteates) and to Frey. Mediaeval Scandinavian sources link them mainly to Frey (Ślupecki 1998: 235–136). *Flateyjarbók* (1860: 402), which is a rather late source, mentions Frey's hof in Trondheim, in which the god's horses were bred. Allegedly, the sanctuary – if existed – was the seat of an oracle, but our source does not directly relate about the divination with horses. However, when Olaf Tryggvason destroyed the sanctuary, he mounted Frey's stallion, which was clearly meant to break the taboo, as the sacred horses were not to be ridden (an analogous ban is described in the sources concerning the Slavs, as well as the ostentatious acts of breaking the taboo by missionaries (Ślupecki 1994: 56; Ślupecki 1998: 145). The horses devoted to Frey were called Freyfaxi (or Faxi). They are mentioned in several sagas, e.g. in *Vatnsdoela saga* 34 (1939: 90–91). In *Hrafnkels saga freysgoða* 2–3 and 6 (1950: 99–105, 123–124 and passim) the motif of Freyfaxi and the ban on riding them is crucial for the plot. Particularly intriguing is the description of killing the Faxi (Scovazzi 1960: 32–33; cf. Ślupecki 1998: 137–139), which shows obvious parallelisms with the sacrifice of a horse (aśvamedha), well known from Hindu and Roman sources (Dumont 1927; Gonda 1960: 168–173). A confirmation that such sacrifices were practised in Scandinavia comes also from other sagas, and first of all from the so-called verses about *völsi* (Ślupecki 2004: 95–114). Similarly, in *Örvar-Odds saga* 2–3 and 31 (1943: 288–289, 390) and in some versions of a related story preserved in Rus' (*Povest' vremennykh let*, sub anno 912, 1926: 32), Faxi is killed, but in this variant it also causes the death of its master (Ślupecki 1998: 139–143). Interestingly, the Freyfaxi is usually described as a white horse with a stripe of another colour along the mane or backbone (*foxottr*). The name Faxi suggests that its mane was not cut. We can compare this information with what Saxo Grammaticus XIV, 39, 9 (1931: 465) wrote about Svantevit's horse from the Slavic Arcona: It was forbidden to tear hair from its mane and tail and to ride it. So in case of Freyfaxi horses we meet some taboos similar to those applied to Slavic holy horses. First of all: sacred horses were not to be ridden by men!

Hippomancy among the Slavs and Balts

The Slavs bred sacred horses in their major sanctuaries (Radogoszcz, Szczecin, Arcona⁶), and used them in divination to decide about war campaigns. As in Tacitus's relation about Germanic tribes, the Slavs performed divination by lots before acts of hippomancy. In Radogoszcz (Thietmar VI, 24: 1953: 348–349) the rituals start with digging a little hole in the ground to take lots from the earth. The hole in my opinion (Ślupecki 2006: 225–226; Ślupecki 2008: 242–256) may have corresponded to the Roman *mundus* and was a point giving access to subterranean powers. After lot-casting the lots were put back to the hole and covered with sod. Then the horse was used. Differently as in Tacitus, Slavic sacred horses did not draw carriages and they were saddled, but not ridden, so the place in the saddle was reserved for the

⁶ About Radogoszcz (Riedegost) see Thietmar, VI, 24 (1953, 348–349); about Szczecin see Vita Prieflingensis, II, 11 (1966: 42–43) and Herbord II, 32–33 (1974: 123–126); about Arcona see Saxo Grammaticus XIV, 39, 9–10 (1931: 465–467). General investigation of the topic in Ślupecki 1998, 143–150.

god. The act of divination, performed in front of the temple, consisted in walking over spears stuck in (or arranged on) the ground. Good or ill fortune was predicted depending on whether the horse stepped over the spears with the right or left leg (or whether it touched them with a hoof or not). In Arcona (Saxo Grammaticus XIV, 39,9: 1931: 466) (and probably in Radogoszcz) the sacred horse was white, in Szczecin – black (Herbord II, 33: 1974: 125). To come to the Balts, *Chronicon Livonicum Vetus* (I, 10: 1857, 52–54) describes how divination with a horse saved the life of a certain missionary. In that case, the horse was walked over one spear and the result depended on which leg stepped over it first.

Per sortes ac per equum. The horse, lots and the Slavic word *źreb*

In Radogoszcz the sacrifices to be offered to gods were chosen *per sortes ac per equum*. A special relation between divination by lots and hippomancy is confirmed by the history of the Slavic word *źreb*. The word referred to: 1. a fragment of the village community land allocated to an individual on the basis of drawing lots (Latin *sors*); 2. a token, used for instance for land portioning. Furthermore, in Polish there is the word *źrebię (źrebiec)*, designating a young horse, undoubtedly a diminutive of the lost form **źreb* (horse). It seems, thus, then at some time the concepts of ‘lot’ (*źreb*) and of ‘horse’ (**źreb*) were expressed with the same term. The extension of its use to ‘horse’ may have originated from the fact that this animal had a role in oracular practices, which also involved lots (Matusiak 1911: 193–241; Słupecki 1998: 150–151).

Was hippomancy known in Scandinavia?

In conclusion, I would like to stress parallelisms in Slavic and Germanic beliefs connected with horses: the ban on riding sacred stallions and the ban on cutting their hair. There are also some similarities in the type of matters settled by lots in Scandinavia and by both lots and hippomancy by Slavs: in both cultures they concerned the undertaking and directing military campaigns and choosing what or who is to be offered to the gods. On the other hand, Norse peoples preserved the tradition of the sacred wagon, alien to the Slavs, whose divine horses carry saddles, a historically later invention. I also bring out some interesting differences between various nations as far as the role of horses in rituals is concerned. For instance the Slavs according to our present knowledge never sacrificed horses⁷, while the Romans and the Hindu, who practised such offerings, did not develop hippomancy, cultivated by the Slavs. Germanic peoples in ancient times knew both such types of rituals involving horses. Some striking similarities appears however between ancient Roman ritual of horse sacrifice (*equus october*) and Slavic procedure of hippomantic divinations⁸.

To sum up, the close neighbourhood of Scandinavia to the Slavs and the analogy to the customs of ancient Germans lend some support to the risky claim that hippomancy may have been practised in the Norse religion.

⁷ The only written account comparable in a way to horse sacrifice is a story in Cosmae Pragensis *Chronica Boemorum* (I, 11) about Czech army sacrificing before war expedition a donkey, what seems, however, to revert a serious pagan ritual into a mockery about it.

⁸ After Polybius’ (*Historiae* XII, 4b: 1960, 316–319) the Romans, when beginning a war or deciding about important matters, on the field glossed as τὸ Καμπῶ (obviously Campus Martius) speared a war horse and predicted the success from the way the sacrificed horse fell. The circumstances – divination about military affairs, an oracular animal, and the most important instrument used in the ritual (a spear) was the same among the Romans in ancient times and by the Slavs much later. See Słupecki 2006: 226; cf. Dumézil 1966: 217–229.

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Fornaldarsögur and the concept of literacy

Terje Spurkland, University of Oslo, Norway

The notion of *literacy* is constantly spreading among scholars dealing with the medieval text culture. One reason for this might be that the interaction between oral and literate modes of communication always has been a focal point in the discussion about the composition, transmission and reception of texts in the Middle Ages. The whole thing started with Milman Parry and Albert Lord's work on Homeric text and their study of the formulaic quality of diction in Greek epic. One main result of their studies is the oral-formulaic theory stating that oral poetry is different from written poetry in that oral poetry is composed by formulas as a consequence of oral performing. In 1982 Walter Ong published his book *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word*. He stressed the differences between orality and literacy to the such an extent that they appear as dichotomies, as two rigidly differentiated entities each with distinct sets of cognitive and literary traits. Other representatives of this "Great Divide Theory" is the classicist Eric Havelock and the social anthropologist Jack Goody. They regard the dichotomy as an evolutionistic relationship; literarisation is supposed to be one main reason for the cultural and technological progress of pre-literate or oral societies.

Orality – aurality – literacy

It is not so easy to advocate The Great Divide theory when dealing with the Middle Ages. The main reason for this is that the only access to medieval orality, be it from the pre-literate or literate period, are written sources, manuscripts and runic inscriptions. It would therefore be impossible to stick to a dichotomic relationship between orality and literacy for this period. It is after all a question whether "orality" is valid as a medieval category in the meaning of Walter Ong and the social anthropologists. Oral traits or residues in the transmitted texts, yes indeed, but a dichotomy between medieval orality and literacy, no way. The best we can say about such a relationship, is that it is intertwined. The concepts of literacy and orality might still be important when dealing with communication in the Middle Ages, as long as we stress the interaction between oral and literate modes of this communication, emphasizing the difference between the composition, transmission and reception mode of the texts and how these different modes in varying degrees might relate to orality and literacy. A medieval written text may or may not have an oral forerunner, of which we have no evidence but a later written version, of which we do not have the original but a later transcript of a transcript of a transcript; and this text witness was in the end publicly read or orally performed. The oral and literate mode of composition, transmission and reception was intertwined indeed.

Joyce Coleman (1996) is a scholar who particularly has taken the consequences of the supposed interface between medieval orality and literacy.

What one finds in later medieval England, at least, is a state of acute mixedness, manifested both in the voiced textuality of the read aloud manuscript and in the interactions of that mode of reception with private reading as ascribed by authors to themselves or to their audiences. (27)

To sort out this mixedness Coleman introduces the concept of *aurality*, "i.e., the reading aloud of written literature to one or a group of listeners" (1). This concept of aurality is supposed to combine the two poles of orality and literacy. Aurality is on the one hand distinguished from orality by its dependence on a written text as the source of the public reading. Orality in this connection is understood as a tradition based on the oral performance of bards or minstrels. On the other is hand aurality distinguished from literacy in that aurality defines literature as a

social event. “The experience of reading a book by oneself differs materially from that of sharing it with others.” (28). Coleman stresses this understanding of aurality as a social event; it offered “the basic advantage [...] of a shared enjoyable, social experience” (31). In this way aurality becomes “like and not like private reading, and like and not like bardic or minstrel performance” (32). What Coleman is doing with her concept of aurality is attaching a label to Michael Clanchy’s very heavy emphasis on the pre-literate habits of mind that persisted long after documents became common (278) and the spoken word which caused reading to be coupled more often with speaking aloud than with eying script (Clanch 1993:278, 232). The concept of aurality thus becomes an alternative to the Great Divide theory and a connecting link between orality and literacy.

But that is not all that is to be said about this matter. There is a problem that aurality refers both to oral activity, i.e. speaking, and visually scrutinizing of texts. To solve this problem Coleman suggests a more fine-meshed vocabulary to designate the various modes and channels by which medieval literature was composed, communicated and received. Texts composed in performance with the help of standard formulas and themes are *oral-formulaic*. Texts composed in writing but presented orally from memory would be *memorial*. Reading aloud to one or more people, not just to oneself, is *public reading*, while *private reading* is reading to oneself, whether muttering the words or absorbing them in silence. These four different ways of communicating and receiving a text correspond to cultural modes listed as *orality*, *memoriality*, *aurality* and *literacy*. In this way Coleman has labelled the merging intermediate phases between orality and literacy. *Memoriality* should designate the implications of delivering vernacular texts largely from memory and *aurality* should indicate the experiencing of literature through public reading.

Wedding entertainment AD 1119

Coleman elaborated her model primarily for Middle English literature, Chaucer in particular. The question is whether it is adequate for the study of saga literature. I would tentatively give an affirmative answer to that question, especially when it comes to fornaldarsögur. One reason for this is that these sagas are supposed to have been largely based on oral narratives (Kristjánson 1997:342). There are lots of meta-commentaries in the fornaldarsögur that relate both to the composition, submission and reception of the stories. Last but not least, there are some instances in the saga literature where the performing of a story is part of the main action. The most conspicuous description of “story telling” we find in *Þorgils saga ok Haflíða* which is a part of the Sturlunga saga compilation. The account of the entertainment at the wedding in Reykhólar in 1119 has been scrutinized by many scholars in efforts to search out “oral” and “literate” perspectives in the submission of texts in this party. Most scholars have focused just on Hrólfr af Skálmanesi performing the saga of Hrómundr Gripsson, the reference to the later king Sverri’s predilection for this type of “lygisögur” and Ingimundr priests reciting poems and the story of Orm Barreyjarskáld. It is however important to regard these events in relation to the other activities of entertainment in this wedding. According to Ursula Brown (1947-8) the description of this marriage feast is “the fullest and most circumstantial description of an Icelandic feast that we possess” (51). She also states that the recital of the story (“sögu”) of Hrómund Gripsson during this feast is “the earliest mention we have of a recital of a fornaldarsaga which is still extant” (53).

When Joyce Coleman accounts for the implications of her concept of aurality she stresses the feature of aurality as a social event: “aurality offered the basic advantage, as it was perceived, of a shared, enjoyable, social experience” (31). And what could be more shared, social and enjoyable than a wedding feast. If Coleman is right in the social implications she is attaching to her aurality concept, then the situation should have been well prepared for aurality

at Reykhólar in 1119. However, with Coleman's extended vocabulary in mind, the pertinent question would be whether Hrólfr af Skálmarnesi reciting his story manifested "orality", "memorality" or "aurality". To answer that question we have to take a look at other entertaining activities that took place in the wedding.

It was a feast dominated by the spoken word. When the guests had become drunk and the antagonism between different parties emerged on the surface, it did not trigger off any sort of physical combating. They fought out their divergences with words. It is tempting to maintain that lots of illocutionary force were released; and the conventional consequences may be stated as humiliation, mockery or ridicule.¹ What we witness is a *senna* or *mannjafnaðr* the topic of which is the participants' problems of digestion due to lavish consumption. The resulting gastrospasms lead to lots of sounds and a diversity of odours, and they were described in metrical eloquence. Ingimundr prestr took active part in this. The prominent metric form in this battle is the *kviðlingr*, and it seems clear from the context that to have a *kviðlingr* made as a comment to your innermost malfunctions is regarded pure mockery. One of the most prominent guests, Þórðr Þorvalldsson, found the situation too insupportable and left the party in protest:

En þá er Þórðr gekk út, þá var þetta kveðit:-
Goðinn reпти svá, at vér gengum hjá-
stóð á hnakka hý – hverr maðr kvað, fý! ²
Er svá sagt, at Þórðr væri með þessum kviðlingi út leyst. (Sturl. I:19)

It should be clear that this verbal skirmish is a manifestation of orality in Joyce Coleman's understanding of the word. These are oral formulaic texts composed with the help of standard formulas.

After Þórð's leave taking there was "glaumr ok gleði mikil ok skemtan góð, og margskonar leikar, bæði danzleikar, glímur ok sagna-skemtan" (ibid). This is the setting for Hrólfr af Skálmarnesi and Ingimundr prest's reciting of story and poems. To account for this communicative situation we have to sort out some contextual circumstances. The saga author puts lots of efforts in portraying these two persons as very "cultivated". Both in the beginning of the saga where the main characters are introduced and in connection with the wedding feast. When we first meet Ingimundr in the saga he is presented as "fræðimaðr mikill, ok fór mjök með sögur, ok skemti vel kvæðum; ok orti góð kvæði [ok görði hann sjálf]; ok þá laun fyrir útanlandz" (op.cit.8). Before he turns up in the wedding he is portrayed as "it mesta göfugmenni, – skáld gott; ofláti mikill, bæði í skapferði ok annari kurteisi, hinn mesti gleði-maðr, ok fékk margt til skemtunnar. Han var inn vitrasti maðr, ok hélt sér mjök til vinsælda við alþýðu. Hann var ok mikils virðr af mönnum göfgum." (op.cit.16) One could perhaps say that in the last description the author has focused on his social graces.

Hrólfr af Skálmarnesi does not reach up to the standard of Ingimundr, still he is a man of importance. He is presented as "þingmaðr, lögmaðr mikill, ok fór mjök með sakir. Han var sagna-maðr ok orti skipuliga; vel fjár-eigandi ok átti gótt bú." (op.cit. 8). When he is introduced to the wedding he is just mentioned as one among "mart annat gótt mannval" (op.cit. 16).

The performance of sagas is very often put in a social context of entertainment and festivity; just as in this case where it is also referred to as *sagna-skemtan*. The phrase is often translated as the "telling of a story", or, to emphasize the perspective of *skemtan*, an "entertaining

¹ *Illocutionary force* 'The property of an utterance to be made with the intention to perform a certain illocutionary act. *Illocutionary act* 'A performative utterance which involves the production of 'conventional consequences' such as rights, commitments, or obligations.' (Austin 1962).

² The *goði* belched thus as we went by / (his?) downy hair raised on the neck – everyone said "Fie!"

telling” of a story. The expression is however only documented twice; the second instance is in Saga Eiríks Rauða, in chapter 8, where there is a mentioning of the wedding celebration of Þorfinnr Karlsefni and Guðríð, “þar uoru miok taufi uppi hafvd ok sagna skemtan ok margt þat er til hybyla. botar matti vera.” (60)³ However, when it comes to social activities where there is a request for entertainment – *skemtan* – then reciting of stories is included in this notion of *skemtan*. When Sturla Þórðarson left on the sea voyage with king Magnus and his men he was called on to provide entertainment. He was asked by one of the fore-castle men (*stafnbúi*): “Sturla in Íslenzki, viltú skemta?’ ‘Ráð þú,’ segir Sturla. Sagði hann þá Huldarsögu, betr ok fróðlegar en nökkurr þeirra hafði fyrr heyrtr er þar vóru.” (Sturl.II:270). According to Fritzner expression like *hlýða til sögunnar* and *hlýða til skemtanar* are used as synonyms (Fritzner III:308)

The communicative implications of sagna skemtan

How then should we characterize this sagna-skemtan performed by Hrólfr and Ingimundr in this occasion? If we apply Joyce Colman’s terminology we have three options, orality, memorality and aurality, dependent on the ratio of oral and literate modes in this blend. It should be clear from the description of the wedding feast that the spoken word had a prominent position. The term *sagna-skemtan* indicates that entertainment was a main ingredient when a story was told, and this expectation of entertainment made demands on the performance; to make a good oral performance you have to be as free as possible from any written exemplar.

The French novelist and literary critic Maurice Blanchot published in 1959 a series of essays where he under the heading *La rencontre de l’imaginaire* (“encountering the imaginary”) launch a *loi secrete du recit* (the secret law of the narrative):

Le récit n’est pas la relation de l’événement, mais cet événement même, l’approche de cet événement, le lieu où celui-ci est appelé à se produire, événement encore à venir et par la puissance attirante duquel le récit peut espérer, lui aussi, se réaliser. (Blanchot 1969:13)⁴

To obtain such an approach between the event and the narrative you have to be independent of a written exemplar when telling your story. I do not think that Hrólfr, nor Ingimundr, brought with them books to this wedding to hold in readiness just in case someone should ask them to read a story. I do not think that the sagna-skemtan in this occasion consisted of public reading of a written text. However, Hrólfr might still have based his performance on a written exemplar, an exemplar which he had left at home; he recited the story as he had memorized it from this exemplar. This situation corresponds with Coleman’s memorality, the delivering of vernacular literary texts largely from memory. If this be the case we have to surmise the existence of a written version of a saga of Hrómundr Gripsson as early as 1119. Or, to be more specific, the writer of Þorgils saga ok Hafliða might have surmised the existence of a written Hrómunda saga in 1119 when he put Þorgils saga in writing some time after 1237. The dating of the saga have a terminus post quem 1237 due to the reference to king Sverrir and bishop Magnús Gizurarson who died in 1237.

In her paper from 1947–8 Ursula Brown seems inclined to identify the wedding version with the later fornaldarsaga since she refers to the the telling of the story during the feast as

³ It is only the Skálholtsbók version which has this description. Haukr did not pay that much attention to what went on in the wedding. He states only that “var þa avkin veizlan ok drvckiþ brvllaup þeira” (60)

⁴ “Narrative is not the recounting of an event, it is the event itself, the move towards the event, towards the place where it is called to take place; an event still to come, and by the magnetic power of which the narrative itself also may hope to come true.” (My own interpretation of the original).

“the earliest mention we have of a recital of a fornaldarsaga which is still extant” (53). Most scholars today seem to agree that the saga of Hrómundr Gripsson referred to in *Þorgils saga* is not identical with the fornaldarsaga we know from manuscripts from 17th century and later. This saga is supposed to have been based on a collection of rímur, *Griplur*. Hrómundr Gripsson is known from a younger version of Landnámabók, he came from Telemark and is supposed to be the great grandfather of Ingólfr Arnason. It is to be noted that the same persons who are mentioned in the wedding version of *Hrómundar saga*, also take part in the extant fornaldarsaga: Hröngviðr vikingr, Ólafr Líðsmanna-konungr, the beserk Þráinn and the story of a breaking of a cairn (haugbrot). The story of Hrómundr is also known from other, younger oral transmissions, the story is known from several ballads of Norwegian, Swedish and Danish origin. Despite of the fact that all known versions of the story about Hrómundr Gripsson are late, it should be evident that when a 13th writer refers to it in his saga about Þorils and Hafliði this must have been a well known story. The saga writer might have expected that his contemporaries were interested in hearing that the story was told, who told it and that it later was told to king Sverrir with great success.

It is therefore most likely that Hrólfr af Skálmarnesi did not have any written exemplar as a source for his story about Hrómundr Gripsson. It might well be that he knew the story only from oral tradition as he earlier had heard it be told by others. We are then dealing with orality, in Joyce Coleman’s understanding of the term, performance of texts without any dependence of a written example; texts composed with the help of standard formulas and themes. If we should open for the possibility that the writing down of vernacular sagas was on the go as early as 1119, it would be impossible to decide whether the reciting of the story of Hrómundr Gripsson in 1119 was done in communicative circumstances labelled as *orality* or *memoriality*. But it might be a little too early to count on written vernacular sagas in the early 12th century. It seems however, that the author of *Þorgils saga* wants the audience to believe that Hrólfr’s reciting of his story was based on a written exemplar and he attributes this exemplar to Hrólfr himself: “Þessa sögu hafði Hrólfr sjálfr samansetta” (Sturl. I:19–20). The key words here are *setja saman*, “put together” in the meaning of compose, lat. *componere*. Most scholars interpret the expression as “put together in writing” Hermann Pálsson put it that way in 1962:

Þetta er lærdómsorð og er eins konar þýðing á latnesku söginni “compono”, og merking þess gerir það mjög ósennilegt, að hin samsetta saga Hrólfs hafi ekki verið rituð. (52)

It should be clear, however, that lat. *componere* might also refer to an oral composition. Even if *setja saman* is a calque of Latin *componere*, this is no argument for the view that the putting together had to be in writing. Hermann Pálsson has been criticized for his view, there is at least one instance in which *setja saman* is applied to a poem and fornaldarsögur do not fall into any of the different kinds of literature written in the Icelandic language that are listed in the *First Grammatical Treatise* (Tullinius 2002:53). We might therefore conclude with Torfi Tullinius that

nothing in the passage from *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* proves the existence of written legendary sagas at the beginning of the twelfth century, and that there is no proof to the contrary either. The burden of proof is on those who believe in such an early appearance. (ibid)

It should be noted that *setja saman* in the Old Norse sources in most instances refers to putting together in writing. The most cited example is from the preface of Snorri’s Edda. *bók þessi heitir Edda, hana hefir saman setta Snorri Sturluson eptir þeim hætti sem hér er skipat*. The Uppsala manuscript (Codex Ups. DG 11 4^{to}) is normally dated to early 1300. It might

therefore be contemporaneous with *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, a period in which the common meaning of *setja saman* is compose in writing. The author of the saga might have had the idea that the writing down of sagas was a common activity in the period he was writing about, early 12th century. He used the expression *setja saman saga* just to give the impression that Hrólfr had written the saga he was reciting. The intention of the author of the saga was therefore to give the impression that Hrolfr's reciting of the story of Hrómundr Gripsson was an instance of memoriality. I disregard completely the possibility of aurality; the way the wedding feast is described gives no clue to infer that Hrólfr was dependent of a written manuscript when he was telling his story. There were no favourable conditions for public reading in this wedding. We may therefore conclude that from the point of view of the author, from a 13th or early 14th perspective that is, the reciting of the saga as a part of the wedding entertainment might represent an instance of memoriality, where Hrólfr himself had written the exemplar. From an early 12th century perspective, however, it is too early to allow for any written exemplars as a source for the reciting of the story, then we are dealing with orality.

Reading material for a journey at sea?

The story in *Íslendingasaga* about Sturla Þórðarson accounting the story about the troll wife Huld, when he was on the voyage with the levy fleet with king Magnus, has many similarities with the story about Hrólfr af Skálmarnesi and his the performance in the wedding at Reykhólar. Before knocking the ship's crew asks for some entertainment ("En er menn lágðusk til svefns, þá spurði stafnsbúi konungs, hvern skemta skyldi.") and Sturla was urged to meet this wish ("Sturla inn Íslenzki, viltú skemta?") He then told the story about Huld "better and more cleverly than any of them had ever heard it earlier". When the queen, who followed Magnus on this trip, heard about Sturla's successful reading of this saga she sent for him to reiterate it in her presence: "sendi dróttning eptir Sturlu; það hann koma til sín ok hafa med sér trollkonu-söguna" (Sturl. II:270). This statement has led scholars to maintain that this is the oldest account of a written fornaldarsaga. No written saga about Huld is known today, but she is mentioned in *Ynglingatal* and *Háleygjatal*, she is also mentioned in several genealogies. Since Huld is present in differently traditioned contexts that might indicate that there once was a saga about her. The question is, however, how likely is it that Sturla brought with him books when he was out at sea with the levy fleet of the king? I find it unlikely that Sturla brought with him reading material for a journey. I would therefore leave out the possibility of aurality in this situation; we are dealing with either memoriality or orality.

There is, however, one issue that is most important in this respect. Not only do we know the author of *Íslendingasaga*, he is also in identical with the character who is supposed to have performed the story about Huld. Sturla Þórðarson is relating a self biographical anecdote about his sea voyage with the king. At best there is a mixture between fact and fiction in his account; he gives detailed reports of episodes where he himself was not present. Like for instance when he renders the dialogue between the queen and the king about Sturla's qualities as story teller. It was this episode that lead the king to commission Sturla to write the saga of his father, Hákon Hákonarson; it might therefore have been important for him to portray himself in the most favourable way. But why should he give the impression that he brought books with him, if *hafa med sér trollkonu-söguna* is to be understood that way? The reason might be that Sturla wanted to gave a picture of himself that was very "literate", he was a man of letters, a *bene litteratus*, like the father of his commissioner; he went nowhere without a book. It that case Sturla's intention is to give us an impression of aurality.

Another possibility is that the sentence *það hann koma til sín ok hafa med sér trollkonu-söguna* does not mean that the queen asked him to bring with him a book with the story, but that she asked for him and he had to be prepared to retell the story about the troll wife. "Bring

the story with you” does not necessarily refer to the written exemplar. In that case, Sturla is either performing a story he once has read, a manifestation of memoriality, or he is retelling a story that once was on everybody’s lips, an instance of orality.

Conclusion

Very often when new theoretical perspectives are called upon to throw a new light on old problems the result might be that we are just saying the same thing with new words, the wrapping might be different but the contents is much the same; we are pouring old wine in new bottles (cf. St. Mark 2:22, St. Luke 5:37). This is frequently the case when it comes to the notion of *literacy*. The term is difficult to escape when dealing with medieval communication. It is, however, necessary to have a conscious comprehension of the notion; one must express explicitly how the term is to be understood, and all its notional implications. If one uses the term *literacy* just like that, without defining it, or relating it to a theoretical frame work, then at best it is only the wrapping which is new.

It should also be clear that the Great Divide theory, implying a dichotomy between orality and literacy, is impossible when it comes to the study of medieval script culture. Since our only access to medieval orality are written manuscripts, orality and literacy are closely inter-related. Medieval texts should always be studied in an interface between orality and literacy.

Joyce Coleman has taken the consequences of this intermixture and put names on it with her notions of *orality*, *memioriality*, *aurality* and *literacy*. My attempts to discuss two saga texts in a perspective of these four notions will hopefully show the possibility of making the relationship between the oral and the written in the Middle Ages more explicit. In that case we have fulfilled the Master’s word that new wine must be put into new bottles.

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Aspects of editing skaldic verse.

The case of *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*

Rolf Stavnem, Scandinavian studies, Aarhus University, Denmark

This paper will discuss certain aspects of the editing of skaldic verses in The Sagas of Icelanders by examining two stanzas in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*. It is based on my preliminary editing of the stanzas in this saga for Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, vol. V: Poetry in Sagas of Icelanders.

One of the numerous skalds mentioned in the Old Norse literary tradition goes by the name Hávarðr halti [the lame] or Hávarðr Ísfirðingr [from Ísafjörður]. Snorri quotes a *helmingr* by Hávarðr in *Snorra Edda* (*Edda* 1998: 7), and the saga about Hávarðr (*Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*) quotes another 13 or 14 stanzas by him, depending on how the material is interpreted.

As a rule Old Norse sagas present verses quoted in saga narrations as genuine, old and traditional, thus indicating that they have been preserved in oral tradition until the sagas were composed several hundred years later. The reliability of the tradition was taken almost for granted by a scholar as influential as Finnur Jónsson, although he as well as many other scholars often pointed out on the basis of linguistic evidence that a number of verses could not have been composed by skalds from the Viking age. Such stanzas have accordingly been labeled as *uægte* [spurious] and this notion is still in currency; for example Kari Ellen Gade has recently called them “thirteenth-century forgeries” (Gade 2000: 51).

The division of verses into spurious and genuine is explicitly practiced in Finnur Jónsson’s *Skjaldedigtingen* A and B, the standard edition of skaldic verse from 1912-15. Not until the upcoming volume V, Poetry in Sagas of Icelanders, in the series Skaldic Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages, has been published will we know exactly how that issue will be handled there. What is certain at this point is that the grouping of verses according to attributions found in sagas is maintained, although the impression of reading poetry of historical poets, which is provided by the *Skjaldedigtingen* will undoubtedly be less apparent if visible at all.

And with good reason, as very few, even in the days of Finnur Jónsson, would regard *Hávarðar saga* as a reliable source for the life of the historical man called by that name, although some of the information from the saga about him is confirmed by *Landnámabók*. *Hávarðar saga* was object of intense scholarly debate some decades ago concerning its value as a historical source, and the conclusion was not surprisingly that it in this respect was quite unreliable (e.g. Björn K. Þórolfsson 1923: xxxviii). Nonetheless this is the very same text that we today need to treat as our primary source for the origin and attribution of the verses, and although the historical authenticity of the verses is not the main issue any longer, the attribution of verses to an allegedly historical person and skald is still in currency.

If we leave aside the question of authenticity and instead imagine possible scenarios of the transmission of the verses, we may consider the following three possibilities:

1. The verses were part of saga prose from the beginning
2. The verses were composed as an independent whole and were later used as basis for saga prose
3. The verses were imbedded into already existing saga prose either as new creations or as samples originally belonging to another a tradition.

In regarding the stanzas or the majority of them as genuinely old, it seems reasonable to argue that they were accompanied by explanatory prose, by some scholars termed *Begleitprosa*, in their oral transmission, thus favoring the possibility here called a). Firstly, most of the verses are situational and it seems natural for somebody quoting the verse also to narrate

the background situation for the verse. Secondly, the prosimetrum form seems to be old and traditional (cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 2000: 181) and there is every reason to believe that the audience expected this mode of narration.

The main problem with this possibility is that in many instances verse and prose in a saga narrative do not fit very well together, and this seems to open up for the possibilities b) and c). Several scholars (von See 1977, Poole 2000, Marold 2000) have shown that verses imbedded in prose in many cases seem to stem from another context, for example as part of longer poems that form a poetical context significantly different from the saga context. Furthermore, we find plenty of verses that are quoted in different contexts in various versions of the same saga, or verses that are ascribed to more than one skald. Certainly, we could blame the oral transmission for this confusion. On the other hand, we cannot rule out that the saga author made what he felt were corrections of the transmitted material, either because he misunderstood the content and the original context of the verses, or because he ignored it for a narrative context that he felt was more correct or fitting for his audience.

In any case we have to take into account that saga authors at times disposed rather freely over the material.

The story of Hávarðr is about an old man's revenge over his son's killer, a reckless chieftain. Hávarðr claims compensation several times, mainly because he has been told to do so by his wife, and each time he is sorely humiliated by the chieftain, and gets so depressed that he stays in bed for long periods. His wife plans a revenge action herself, and when she addresses Hávarðr in his bed demanding that he kills the chieftain, he immediately jumps out of bed and at the same time recites a stanza, his first in the saga. It is apparent that a bloody revenge is more to Hávarðr's taste than claiming money, and his wife must have realized this. Hávarðr's reaction shows that he possesses the old-school Viking spirit and that an old-fashioned fight is more to his liking than talk and negotiations. Furthermore, the fact that he recites a stanza at this point is a clear indication of his revived spirit and battle mood.

In the stanza he says roughly: "Eigi hefr síðan komit mér svefnar á augu [...] síz þeirs létu Ólaf allsaklausan falla" [No sleep has to come to my eyes, since men killed my completely blameless son] (Hávarðar saga 1923: 25).

His wife responds by saying that he is telling a big lie, and that he did get some sleep in those three years that have passed since the killing of their son: "Þat er víst, segir hon, at þetta er allmikil lygi, at þú hafir aldri sofit á þrim arum" (Hávarðar saga 1923: 25).

The response is interesting: Hávarðr's wife is reacting very literally to the emotional statement. This could be the narrator's attempt to endow the scene with a comical effect, but it could also be his way of elaborating on a certain phrase in the stanza in order to integrate the stanza into the story, a phenomenon that von See (1977) gives several examples of.

This might indicate that the story was created on the basis of a stanza existing before the composition of the saga, possibly a stanza that was part of a longer poem. On the other hand, the stanza could equally have been handed down with *Begleitprosa*, a sketchy narrative of the situation, which was enlivened with dialogue by a narrator that either did not fully understand the pathos of the stanza or deliberately made the scene comical.

The story continues with the narrator stating that as a reaction to her response, Hávarðr recites another stanza, which is as follows:

Ákat hægt af hœgu
– hljóð veiti mér sveitir –
enn í elli minni
ívegstafi segja,
síz vel hressan vissak,
vápna Njörð at jörðu,

minn vas sonr at sǫnnu,
snjallr aflstuðill, fallinn.

[It has not been easy for me and with ease, still in my old age, to tell of great deeds (lit. honour-staves), may men grant me silence, since I learned that my son, the manly Njorðr of weapons, truly the wise power-pillar, has fallen to the ground] (*Hávarðar saga* 1923: 26).

The reading follows Björn K. Þórolfsson's edition from 1923, and in his edition of the verses he relies heavily on Finnur Jónsson (1909). The verses have furthermore been examined in several articles, and the general conclusion is that the verses are in a bad state; several are difficult if not impossible to restore. The one quoted above, however, does not pose any heavy semantic problems, and the various manuscripts all contain versions of this stanza that do not differ in any significant way. Nevertheless, all previous editors (Gísli Brynjúlfsson 1860, Finnur Jónsson 1909 and 1912–15 (the verses only), Björn K. Þórolfsson 1923, Íf VI 1943 (ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson), ÍS vol. II (ed. Bragi Halldórsson et. al) have accepted an emendation in the first line: *Ákat* [I have not] is an emendation of *Áttak* [I had] which stems from Gísli Brynjúlfsson 1860. He does not offer any explanation in his otherwise thorough commentary of the verses. Finnur Jónsson (1909) also offers a thorough commentary of all the verses in the saga and in his introductory remarks he says that many of the mistakes found in the saga are simple misreadings “som kan rettes ved første øjekast og ved et pennestrøg” [that can be corrected with a simple glance and a stroke of the pen] (Finnur Jónsson, 1909, 86). About the abovementioned correction he says that it “så at sige giver sig selv,” [is self-evident so to speak] (ibid. 89). But neither does he offer any specific argument for the emendation.

What is the reason for the emendation? Semantically and metrically there is nothing wrong with the stanza as it is. Apparently the only evident reason for the emendation must be that the manuscript reading of the stanza is incoherent with the prose: Hávarðr states in the stanza that it was easy for him to tell of great deeds, thus speaking about the past, whereas according to the saga, he has not done anything yet. With the emendation his verse is about coming events and everything falls into place.

The peculiarities of this verse do not stop there. In the second line the skald comes with a traditional bid for attention from the audience: “May men grant me silence.” According to the prose context only Hávarðr's wife is present. This seems to confirm that the stanza is put in the wrong place, or that the saga narrator follows his own course. If that is the case there is evidently no reason to accept the emendation. Read out of context the verse is hardly recited as an excuse for not being able to perform great deeds, rather it is by a man who is proud of his deeds, even though he is old. And it is hardly recited as a respond to his wife ordering him to get out of bed; rather it is a self-conscious poem about brave deeds spoken to a gathering, presumably inside a hall.

The reason for this emendation thus seems to be the lack of coherence between prose and poetry. The lack of coherence in this particular stanza, however, seems to be the general tendency and not an exception in *Hávarðar saga* and has been pointed out several times (e.g. Björn K. Þórolfsson 1923: xxi; Holtsmark 1928). Thus, in order to maintain the verses as authentic as possible we should certainly avoid emendations based on the prose context.

Let us consider a few examples from the saga regarding coherence between poetry and prose. Hávarðr and his compatriots are rowing a boat and Hávarðr is asked to recite a stanza: “Þá mælti Hallgrímr ok bað Hávarð kveða vísu nokkura” (*Hávarðar saga* 1923: 36). There is no obvious connection between prose and poetry; the stanza could have been recited in any situation. In stanzas 6–8 Hávarðr is asked about the outcome of a fight. These stanzas are to

be understood as reports of killings, a type of stanza that is found in most sagas. The content is very standardized, and nevertheless the few pieces of exact information in them are not in accordance with the saga narration. In stanza 8 there is a reference to a son of Geirdis, but there is no Geirdis in the saga. And in stanza 7 it is stated that four men have been killed, but according to the saga the correct number is seven.

As a prelude to these killings, Hávarðr notices some ravens passing by, and twice he recites stanzas about their craving for bloody corpses; in the narration these stanzas function as a foreboding of the murders soon to come. The content of the stanzas are not associated with any particular situation in the narration and they could have been recited anywhere on his way to the fight and in any number without consequences for the sequence of events.

The weak link between poetry and narration should also make us suspicious of the saga's attribution of stanzas. The fourth stanza in *Hávarðar saga* according to editions and main manuscripts is one of the abovementioned stanzas about ravens. All previous editors and scholars commenting on Hávarðr's stanzas consider this particular stanza to be mistakenly attributed to Hávarðr.

The verse is also quoted in *Landnámabók* (Íf I, 202), although its two *helmingar* are found there as parts of two different verses: the first *helmingr* is included in a verse attributed to Þórbjörn þyna, whereas the second is included in a verse attributed to Hrómundr halti, and these two verses are following immediately after each other. It is of course easy to see how confusion could arise between two skalds called by names both beginning with the letter 'h' and with identical nicknames. These two verses are also quoted in *Hrómundar saga halta* (Íf VIII, 310), with the only difference that here both verses are attributed to Hrómundr halti.

How do we go about with this verse or these verses? Is it justified in spite of the differences between the various versions to speak about identical verses? There is no doubt a strong connection between the verses when comparing them *helmingr* for *helmingr*, and the differences are hardly significant. On the other hand we could say that in principle the stanza in *Hávarðar saga* is unique in its combination of two *helmingar*, a combination not found in any of the two other texts. It is a matter of definition whether the stanza is unique or a fraud, and how do we define what is unique?

A similar example is found in the stories about Björn Hítðælakappi, stanza 29 in *Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa* (Íf III, 1938) and Björn Breidvíkingakappi, stanza 27 in *Eyrbyggja saga* (Íf IV, 1935). Again we see a good reason for a confusion of tradition as both skalds are called Björn. The background situation is also of the same kind, both have a love affair with a married woman and both recite a stanza when meeting the fruit of that affair, a boy with furious eyes – "ægiligr í augum" – as it is said in both verses. Although a few more lines are very alike the differences between the two verses are of such a kind that no one has treated the two verses as identical, although there has been much speculation over which of the verses is the original and which one is a spin off.

An even more complicated case involves Hávarðr's stanza 11. As Jón Jóhannesson shows in his introduction to the Íf-edition (Íf VI 1950: LXXII) there are clear similarities between this stanza and at least four other stanzas. A comparison between Hávarðr's stanza and a stanza attributed to Grímr Droplaugarson, quoted in *Droplaugarsona saga*, (Íf XI, 1950) stanza 2, will show that the first and the last lines are (almost) identical, whereas the remaining lines have very little in common apart from the typical structure, where the skald is stating that at first people laughed: *hlógu hirðidraugar*, but now matters have taken another direction: *nú mun (tér: Hávarðr) annan veg þjóta*. The similarities between these two stanzas and the remaining three stanzas are of a similar kind. Jón Jóhannesson struggles bravely to solve which one of them is the original but concludes that there are too many uncertainties for the matter to be decided.

When a stanza is dismissed from Hávarðr's oeuvre because it is too reminiscent of a stanza found in another text, we find an echo of the abovementioned idea of spurious and genuine stanzas. The whole idea of spurious stanzas seems to impose modern standards to medieval literature. The saga author was creative in a modern sense of the word although he might have perceived himself as faithful to the tradition. But he also had to be faithful to his audience, which means that the story had to be entertaining and told in the way the audience expected stories to be told in that given period. If some verses were composed in the period where sagas were written down the saga authors must have known about it and since they nowhere mention this they probably did not bother too much as long as the verses served their function in the story (cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 2000, 190).

In writing the saga of this man from Ísafjörður, the saga author would possibly base it on anecdotes and stories, and if he knew that the protagonist was a skald, then he would want to include verses in the saga if these were not already included in the material. He might have known stanzas attributed to this "Ísfirðirðingur" or even better, people who were able to recite his verses. Integrating the verses into the story and creating the necessary situations was not necessarily an easy task but he could rely on standard situations known from other stories and the relatively limited narrative function of the stanzas in Sagas. Furthermore, a substantial number of stanzas must have been transmitted with *Begleitprosa* although this could have been changed drastically to fit the story and in some instances be the cause of discrepancies between poetry and prose.

From the limited material discussed above, mainly examples from *Hávarðar saga*, we have seen examples of

1. Identical stanzas attributed to different skalds
2. A stanza with identical counterparts in two different stanzas and attributed to different skalds
3. Partly identical stanzas attributed to different skalds with similar names and nicknames
4. Partly identical stanzas attributed to five different skalds without any resemblance in their names

Examples like these make attributions of stanzas in *Hávarðar saga* and possibly many other sagas highly uncertain. And to this could be added linguistic evidence indicating that stanzas may often be notably younger than the historical persons to whom they are attributed.

Should this affect the editing of poetry in sagas? The state of research today is that we have no means of deciding whether a stanza is genuine or spurious, and if we by this mean whether a given stanza really was composed by the skald attributed to it or not we will probably never reach a decisive conclusion. To my mind there would be a number of advantages to leaving aside the notion of spurious and genuine stanzas; one is that the idea presumably is anachronistic, as it seems that it was of very little concern to saga authors. Another is that we avoid emendations contrary to the manuscript evidence because certain verses do not fit the assumed original context, or excluding a verse from a skald's oeuvre, also contrary to the manuscript evidence because its resemblance with verses attributed to other skalds do not comply with modern notions of originality.

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Shifting Blame and the Subtle Management of Saga Narrative

Nichole Sterling, Berkeley, USA

Feud in the Sagas of Icelanders involves collective liability. To some extent, all parties involved are responsible for the perpetuation of the feud. Even so, the saga narratives typically direct the audience's expectations and perceptions of individual characters' personal blame in a feud in subtle ways. This narrative control unevenly distributes blame among the characters and results in highlighting the positive attributes of a saga's featured characters as their responsibility for the feud is downplayed. In the give and take between feuding groups, the initial wrongdoer may not be the direct focus of the vengeance that follows. Characters in the sagas can be implicated in feuds through kinship ties or may become targets due to association with others involved in the feud. In physical encounters, first and last wounds become crucial in determining which group began an attack, which individual inflicted mortal wounds, and how punishment should be appropriately meted out. In shaping the way the feud will continue, a mortal wound may be assigned to a character who is not actually responsible for it. This can be seen, for instance, in *Njal's saga* where legal blame for the killing of Hjort is shifted from the Norwegian Thorir to the Icelander Kol Egilsson. In this example, the altered blame gives Gunnar an edge in the legal case that follows. It also simultaneously fuels the feud between Gunnar and his enemies, who resent Gunnar's subsequent success. In addition, shifting blame can allow the main players in the feud to escape retributive justice temporarily through refocusing the opposing group's aggression on another in the next act of the feud. This move is particularly useful when blame is shifted to outsiders, foreigners, and others with more distant ties to the Icelandic kin groups most directly involved in the feud. Thus, the main branch of the family may avoid immediate retaliation in the next step in the feud. Of course, vengeance can generally only be postponed for so long, and retribution will eventually catch up with the main players in the feud. Nonetheless, the shifting of blame, the assigning of wounds, and the deliberate delivery of wounds within physical encounters in the sagas show some of the ways that the targets of vengeance can be managed and the escalation of the feud can be consequently controlled within the structure of the saga narrative.

Sigurðr Fáfnisbani as commemorative motif

Marjolein Stern, School of English Studies, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

Half a dozen Swedish runestones, all from the 11th century, are decorated with scenes from the story of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani. Similar images on late-12th- and 13th-century Norwegian stave-church portals and furnishings had a function in the context of church doctrines and organization and secular politics (Blindheim 1973:24–6; Byock 1990; Düwel 1986:264–70; Nordanskog 2006:221–306) Staecker 2004:68–70). I do not think these interpretations can be applied to the decoration on earlier runestones, which differ greatly in function from the later portals and are a product of a society with a very different political situation and church organization.

This paper, which stems from my PhD research into visual communication on runestones, explores how and why depictions from the Sigurðr story were used on memorial stones and the role of these images in the commemorative tradition of the late Viking Age. The large amount of research that has been done into the Medieval Scandinavian depictions of scenes from the legend of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani shows it is not always clear which images should be included (comp. Blindheim 1973; Düwel 1986; Margeson 1980; Staecker 2004). There is more consensus about which Swedish runestones contain depictions of the Sigurðr story than about some of the other carvings, but the interpretation of certain images and the reason for carving them on commemorative monuments varies. The general explanation is that depictions of Sigurðr must refer to Christ in order to have a function on the memorials (e.g. Düwel 1986:266–70 and refs. there). Alternative explanations are ventured only sporadically and always in very general terms, e.g. that the heroic images were used to glorify the commemorated person (Margeson 1980:208–9) or to show power (Fuglesang 2005:86).

The following table gives an overview of the carvings on the relevant stones and the more controversial interpretations of some images are discussed below. In order to interpret the depictions in their commemorative context, other aspects of the memorials of which the images are an integrated part, are also explored, along with the use of the Sigurðr-motif in contemporary praise- and commemorative poetry.

Table 1.

Monument	Size	Depictions	Inscription ¹
Sö 101 Ram-sundberg	Carving in living rock: 4.7 m wide, 0.7–3.4 m from the ground	Sigurðr stabbing Fáfnir, roasting the heart and sucking thumb (tasting blood), decapitated Reginn and head, smith's tools, horse Grani with treasure tied to tree with birds and snake, Ótr	sirjþr : kiarþi : bur : þosi : muþiR : alriks : tutiR : urms : fur Δ salu : hulmkirs : faþur : sukrupar Δ buata sis Δ
Sö 327 Gök	Erratic rock: ca 5 × 3 m and ca 2.5 m high. Carving: 2.5 × 1.65 m	Cross, Sigurðr with arm-ring stabbing Fáfnir, Reginn with hammer and the heart, decapitated Hreiðmarr/Reginn with arm-ring and head?, head/hand?, smith's tools, horse Grani with treasure tied to tree with snake, bird, Ótr	Upper serpent: [...] (i)uraRi : kaum : isaio : raisti : stai : ain : þansi : at : Lower serpent: : þuaR : fauþr : sloþn : kbrat Δ : sin faþu... Fragment: ul(i) (:) hano : msi +

¹ From the *Samnordisk runtextdatabase*. [] indicates runes lost on the stone, but supplemented from older records. Δ are added by me to indicate elements of the decoration crossing the inscription. On Sö 101 these are respectively the sword, the serpent's head, and the ornamented tip of the serpent's tongue; on all other stones it indicates where the sword pierces the runic serpent.

Gs 2 Österfärnebo (now fragment)	Raised stone was probably ca 2.5 × 1.2 m, fragment is now 0.79 × 1.2 m	Cross/tree, Sigurðr with ring and Sigrdrífa/Brynhildr with horn, figure flanked by figures with sticks/spears?, cock, dog?, crossed legs	[ily]iki : ok : f[uluiki × ok : þurkair [...] ...- × sin × snilan] : kuþ ilubi on(t)[a]
Gs 19 Ockelbo (lost)	Raised stone was ca 2.3 × 1.2 m	Cross?/tree with bird, Sigurðr stabbing Fáfñir, Sigurðr with ring and Sigrdrífa/Brynhildr with horn, cock, drinking figures playing board game, figure with tool?, figure in wagon drawn by animal, figure with stick/spear?, legs, horse?	blesa × lit × raisa × stain × kumbl × pesa × fa(i)(k)(r)(n) × ef(t)ir × sun sin Δ suar × aufþa × fr(i)þelfr × u-r × muþir × ons × siionum × kan : inuart : þisa × bhum : arn : (i)omuan sun : (m)(i)e(k)]
Gs 9 Årsunda	Raised stone: 2.1 × 0.85 m	Cross/tree, Sigurðr stabbing Fáfñir, Sigurðr with ring	(i)nu-r : sun : r[u]þ[u](r) at × [uili](t)... ...[Ris:]t eftir : þurker : bru Δ þu[r : sin : ok : kyþe=lfi : muþur : sina : uk] : eft[i]R : [a]sbiorn : o[k : o]ifub
U 1163 Drävle	Raised stone: 1.85 × 0.86 m	Cross/tree, Sigurðr stabbing Fáfñir, Sigurðr with ring and Sigrdrífa/Brynhildr with horn	uiþbiurn × ok : karlunkr : ok × erinker : ok × nas(i) × litu × ri Δ sa × stii × þina × eftir × eriiþiun × f[a]þu[r × sii × snelan
U 1175 Stora Ramsjö	Raised stone: 1.37 × 0.85 m	Cross, Sigurðr stabbing Fáfñir? flanked by two figures	rune-like symbols

Decorations & interpretations

In contrast to the carvings at Ramsund, with which they are always compared, the carvings on the rock at Gök are not all easy to interpret. The figure holding the hammer has an object in its other hand that is identical to what Sigurðr holds over the fire on Sö 101 (identified by sucking his thumb), which is Fáfñir's heart being roasted. The standing or walking position of the figure on the Gök stone, the hammer and the fact that the heart is not held over a fire make it less likely that this figure is Sigurðr too. Lena Liepe (1989:8–9) has argued this is Reginn, identified by his smith's hammer, after he cut the heart from Fáfñir's breast. The headless figure is also ambiguous. Its parallel on Sö 101 is always identified as Reginn because that is the most obvious interpretation in light of the story as we know it and he is indeed surrounded by his smith's tools. However, since these are depicted closer to the figure with the heart and hammer on the Gök stone, it is more likely that that is Reginn and the decapitated figure someone else. Instead, he can be identified as Hreiðmarr who was killed by his son Reginn for the ring Andvaranaut, shown on his wrist and on that of the sword wielding Sigurðr (Liepe 1989:9). It remains uncertain whether his head is represented by the round object close to him (above the bird) or the object that looks like a combination of a head and a hand.

The figures carrying rings on the standing stones usually face a figure carrying a drinking horn on the opposite side of the cross/tree (except for on Gs 2, where the second figure's outstretched hand is empty, and on Gs 9, where there is no figure facing the ring-carrier). This second figure is depicted with long robes and can be interpreted as female. She also stands still, while the figure with the ring is clearly in motion. This is even the case on U 1175, where the two figures do not have anything in their hands. The scene of the man with the ring and the woman with the horn can be interpreted as the Valkyrie Brynhildr, also named Sigrdrífa, who offers Sigurðr a drink when he wakes her and then instructs him in different kinds of knowledge, after which he gives her the ring Andvaranaut. The figure with the ring is so distinct that he should be interpreted as Sigurðr with Andvaranaut, also without the drink-horn-offering counterparty, like on Gs 9.

Gs 19 from Ockelbo was lost in a fire, but 19th-century drawings and photos show the carvings in great detail. From this we can see there was a depiction of Sigurðr stabbing the serpent with a sword at the top. This and the figures with a ring and a drinking horn are familiar from other stones, but the other carvings are more puzzling. Since no one has been able to interpret these and the images on Gs 2 all convincingly in light of the *Volsung* stories, despite many attempts (see Jansson 1981:35–8, 205–17), I think they may not necessarily all show scenes from the legend of Sigurðr. After all, the Altuna stone (U 1161) is decorated with a clearly identified carving of Þórr fishing for the Miðgarðsormr which is combined with several other images that have hitherto not been interpreted, but are most unlikely to be part of the same story. Of course, this does not make the identification of the depictions of Sigurðr and related figures any less certain.

It is likely that Gs 2 once also contained a depiction of Sigurðr stabbing the runic serpent/Fáfnir at the top, due to the presence of the ring-carrier and his mate (albeit without drinking horn) and the similarities of the other carvings to those on Gs 19. However, since there are no records for the upper part of the stone, it is not certain that it was decorated with clearly identifiable scenes from the Sigurðr cycle, so Gs 2 can only be an interesting parallel to the other raised stones and not a “Sigurðr stone” in its own right.

The images on the Stora Ramsjö stone can only be seen as representing Sigurðr with two other figures because it is likely to be inspired by the Drävle stone. Without that parallel, it would be a weak case of a “Sigurðr stone”, because the central figure is not kneeling down, the object in its hand does not penetrate the serpent, and the other two figures do not carry objects that can identify them, like the ring and horn.

The interpretation of the images and whether they are included as part of the Sigurðr cycle influences the view of what scenes are central to the legend and thus express its main theme(s) (comp. Düwel 1986:238–9, 242–3; Staecker 2004:63). It is likely the story was not told with exactly the same elements throughout Scandinavia through the Viking Age and the Middle Ages, and certain elements need not have had the same connotations either. These carvings, however, are roughly from the same geographical area and period, and we can assume that the Sigurðr story was told more or less uniformly in the eastern parts of 11th-century central Sweden. After all, even though the stones do not all show the same elements, the ones that are certain “Sigurðr stones” all show Sigurðr stabbing Fáfnir, clearly a key-scene; the treasure that lies at the root of events in the shape of Ótr or the otter skin, the ring Andvaranaut, and Grani’s pack; and almost always a scene in which Sigurðr gains wisdom: the roasting of the serpent’s heart and the council of the birds, or Sigurðr with Brynhildir/Sigrdrífa.

The commemorative context

It is unknown how many people were involved in the realization of these monuments and to what extent the decisions about what images and text should be carved were made by the family who initiated the monument and the artist(s)/carver(s). The Gästrikland stones and U 1163 are arguably products of the same “school” or cooperating group of carvers (Jansson 1981: 41, 87). U 1175 is likely to have been influenced by U 1163 (Wessén & Jansson 1958:660) and a similar relation exists between the carvings at Gök and Ramsund (a.o. Brate & Wessén 1963:307–11). It is not within the scope of this paper to enter into this discussion at length, so it is safest for now to assume that a trademark or specialism among a group of carvers could influence the design of a runestone, but that it most likely was the result of the wishes of the commissioning family and the suggestions of the producer(s), with the possibility that both could be influenced by other memorials.

The monuments that are decorated with images from the Sigurðr legend are in several ways “grander” than many other runestones. In Södermanland only 20% and in Uppland 26% of the raised stones are taller than 2 m (Sawyer 2000:25), so the majority of the Sigurðr carvings are of exceptional size (see table above). On top of that, the monument at Ramsund included a long bridge and the memorial from Ockelbo consisted according to the inscription of multiple stones. The monuments that are of more modest dimensions are still decorated with an extraordinary high number of images, adding to the cost of the monuments and making them more prestigious than most and also more exclusive, since approximately only 10% of the Scandinavian runestones are decorated with images other than crosses and serpents (Sawyer 2000:26).

The inscription on the Ramsund rock is easy to read and translates as: “Sigríðr, Alríkr’s mother, Ormr’s daughter, made this bridge for the soul of Holmgeirr, father of Sigrøðr, her husband”. There has been some discussion about which of the men was Sigríðr’s husband and thus the person in whose memory the monument was made, but it is most likely that was Holmgeirr (Jesch 1991).

The beginning of the inscription on the Gök stone is missing, and of the remaining part only the words **raisti : stai : ain : pansi : at : [...] fauþr : [...] : sin faþu[r]** are recognizable and translate as “raised this stone alone in memory of”, “father” and “his father”. The rest of the inscription has only been interpreted by relocating runes to form known names (e.g. by Säve and Bugge, mentioned in Brate & Wessén 1963:310–1). However, the words that *can* be read without changing the runes show immediately that this monument was carved to commemorate the father of the initiator.

Of the Gästrikland stones, Gs 9 is the most complete, although approximately a quarter of the inscription is missing.² The runic inscription is damaged on the right edge and upper corner and the heavily worn runes on the surviving part of the stone are where possible supplemented from older drawings in the transcription (Jansson 1981:82). Not all the names can be recognized with certainty, but the transcription is translated as “Qnundr(?), **ruþur**’s son, in memory of **uilit**[...] [...] in memory of Þorgeirr, his brother and Guðelfr, his mother, and in memory of Ásbjörn and **oifub**”. Consequently, a man erected this monument to commemorate a group of people, including his brother and mother.

The carvings on Gs 19 were badly worn in places at the time of the 19th-century photographs and drawings and even though several words can be supplemented from other records, the latter part of the inscription cannot be interpreted convincingly (see Jansson 1981:200–4 for an overview of attempts). However, this inscription can also easily be identified as a memorial formula, despite the unsolvable second part: “Blesa had these fair stone-monuments raised in memory of his son Svarþoðfi. Friðelfr was his mother[...]”.

Just a fragment of Gs 2 survives, and there are older records for only half of the original, with which the transcription is supplemented. Again, despite the inscription being incomplete, it can be indentified as a memorial inscription: “Illugi and Fullugi and Thorgeirr [...] their able [...] May God help (his) spirit.” It is likely that these three men were brothers who had a monument made for their father or brother, since the adjective *sniallan* is in the sg. ac. m. and tends to be used for male relatives or husbands (Jansson 1981:34–5), but there are other possibilities, like a group of men commemorating their companion or guild-brother, as on Ög 54, Ög Mölm1950;230, U 379, U 391. The adjective *sniallr* is also used on the Drävle stone, which was initiated by four brothers to commemorate “their able father”.

The inscription-band on U 1175 from Stora Ramsjö is filled with symbols resembling runes and punctuation as used on U 1163, + and ×, which do not seem to have any textual meaning. However, they could be meant to *represent* a memorial inscription. After all, stones

² The translations of the inscriptions on the Gästrikland stones are taken from the *Samnordisk runtextdatabase*.

without any inscription but with decoration only, or indeed without any carvings at all, have been interpreted as memorial stones.

Despite the non-lexical inscriptions on U 1175, the puzzling inscription on the Gök stone with the missing beginning, and the missing or uninterpretable parts of the inscriptions on the stones from Gästrikland, there is enough runic material to take into account as part of the context of the images on the stones. The inscriptions show that these stones were carved to commemorate people, almost exclusively family. Where the Christian background is not explicit in the decoration, on Sö 101, it is expressed in the inscription. Furthermore, images from the Sigurðr legend, including the scene of Sigurðr killing Fáfnir, were not restricted to men. A woman commissioned Sö 101 and Gs 9 commemorates three or four men and one woman.³

The use of the word *sniallr* (able, valiant, good) is used relatively often on runestones carved with Sigurðr images; on U 1163 and Gs 2. Also when Gs 2 is not taken into account, the word occurs in only 13 other Swedish inscriptions, one other from Uppland and the rest from Södermanland, always in memory of men.⁴ The inscriptions with *sniallr* on Sö 166, Sö 163 and Sö 320 refer to travels, battles and gold, and on Sö 145 to the possession of lands. Sö 140 also contains a possible invocation to Þórr. The inscription on Sö 11, commissioned by a couple in memory of their *sniallan* son, contains the phrase **kuþ hialbi antu** (God help his spirit), like on Gs 2. U 960, also in memory of a *sniallan* son, ends with **kuþ × tr...**, after which the rest of the inscription is missing. None of the stones are especially decorated like the “Sigurðr stones”, but four contain crosses (Sö 144, Sö 166, Sö 70, Sö 163). These inscriptions suggest that the term *sniallr* was mainly used on stones with a clear Christian background, and was applicable for men in a context of heroism, ownership and status.

Scandinavian sources that are closely related to these runestones, both in function and chronology, are the poems composed by Icelandic skalds in the late 10th and 11th centuries in praise and commemoration of Norwegian rulers. In a few of these poems, references are made to stories from the Sigurðr cycle.

In each of the four surviving stanzas of Illugi bryndælaskáld’s *Poem about Haraldr hárdráði* (1st half of 11th century) memorable heroic events from king Haraldr’s life are mentioned in combination with episodes from the legend of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani. The king’s battles are linked to Sigurðr stabbing Fáfnir: *menskerðir stakk sverði myrkaurriða markar*, “The neck-ring-diminisher [generous man] stabbed the dark forest-trout [serpent] with his sword”. His journey to the east is paired with Sigurðr roasting the heart: *eiskaldi gramr beisku mildr helt orms of eldi*, “The generous lord held the bitter heart of the serpent over the fire”. Haraldr’s undertakings among the Franks are mentioned alongside Sigurðr’s quest for Brynhildr: *fljótrett at bý snótar vasa döglingi duglum*, “It was not a speedy ride to the woman’s dwelling for the capable king”. And finally Haraldr’s victory in the Southlands (Saxony in Germany) is paired with king Atli’s invitation to Högni and Gunnar: *mögum heim sem frögum sonr Buðla bauð sínum*, “Buðla’s son [Atli] invited his kinsmen/brothers in law, as we heard” (ed. st.1: Faulkes 1998:88; st.2–3: Jónsson 1912–15 A.I:384, B.I:354; st.4: *Íslenzk fornrit* 28:75–6; my transl.). The first two stanzas undoubtedly mention the stabbing of Fáfnir and the roasting of the heart by Sigurðr, but the other two references are more ambiguous and are largely interpreted as describing scenes from the *Völsung* cycle in light of the first two.

In the first *Lausavisa* stanza by Þorfinnr munnr (d. 1030) in praise of king Oláfr Haraldson (St Oláfr), a scene from the story of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani is described. According to the prose in the *Legendary Óláfs saga helga* the king requested Þorfinnr to compose a poem

³ The female involvement within these particular monuments even surpasses the general representation of women in the runestone raising custom (see Sawyer 2000:20, 38).

⁴ On Sö 88 it refers to the makers of the monument rather than to the commemorated person.

about his wall hangings, possibly part of a tent, on which this scene was depicted (Heinrichs 1982:138–139). In the first stanza Sigurðr killing the serpent Fáfnir and roasting the heart are described: *Geisli stendr til grundar / gunnar, jarðir, munna / ofan fellr blóða á báðar / baugs, seiðs [or bæenseiðr], en gramr reiðisk; / hristisk hjorr í brjósti / hringi grænna lyngva, / en folkþorinn fylkir / ferr við steik at leika*, “Das Schwert steht bis zum Grund der Mundes. Von Oben fällt das Blut auf beide Schwertschneiden. Der Fürst wird zornig. Das Schwert zittert in der Brust der Schlange, der kampfesmutige Fürst bereitet den Braten” (ed. Jónsson 1912–15 A.I:315, B.I:292; transl. after Düwel 1989:232 and Heinrichs 1982:139).

In the late-10th-century *Sigurðardrápa*, Kormákr Ögmundarson praises Sigurðr Hákonarson Hlaðajarl’s generosity and battle-skills and concludes each half-stanza with a *stef* briefly mentioning a mythological scene. All of these refer to one of the gods, except for the second one in stanza 6, which mentions a scene from the Sigurðr story: *vá gramr til menja*, “Gramr [a ruler or the name of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani’s sword] won treasure”. (*Íslensk fornrit* 26:168; my transl.).

It is stated in the prose context of Þorfinnr munnr’s poem that he describes actual depictions of the scenes he mentions and it has been argued that Illugi and Kormákr also saw depictions of the stories they refer to as they composed their praise poems in their king’s hall (e.g. Lie 1965). However, there is no indication for this in the prose context or in the vocabulary of the poems themselves. In a way it is irrelevant, for even if they were inspired by depictions of the stories they mention, it does not make it less significant that they referred to scenes from the Sigurðr cycle in their praise poems. Apparently, the association with Sigurðr’s heroic deed of killing Fáfnir, the acquiring of wisdom through the dragon-blood, gaining treasure, and possibly the more tragic events that followed involving Brynhildr, Högni and Gunnar, was a strong tool in poetry that aimed to glorify and preserve the memory of a ruler. This was clearly also the case when those kings were Christian, and there seem to be no indications that the references to Sigurðr Fáfnisbani in these poems should be taken as allusions to Christ.

Conclusion

We can see from the dimensions of the monuments, the elaborateness of the decoration, and the contents of the inscriptions that the stones carved with Sigurðr depictions were made on the initiative of rich families, some with an active interest in Christian ideology and ethics, who felt the need to honour their loved one(s) with highly exclusive monuments which, more than average, simultaneously displayed their own social status and wealth. But what was the reason for choosing scenes from the Sigurðr cycle?

A very practical reason for the popularity of the image of Sigurðr stabbing the serpent carrying the inscription with his sword might be its suitability as an aesthetic tool to emphasize certain words. This is the case on all the stones of which (records for) the relevant part of the inscription survived. The sword is carved between **fur** and **salu** on Sö 101, before **sin faþu[r]** on Sö 327, in the middle of **brupu[r]** on Gs 9, between **sun sin** and **suarauþpa** on Gs 19, and in the middle of **risa** on U 1163. Four times the emphasis is placed on the commemorated person, of which once on their soul, and once on the act of raising the runestone.

However, the meaning of the images must have been the most important reason for carving them on these monuments. Sigurðr stabbing Fáfnir with his sword is of course an heroic deed, but it is clear from the additional carvings that the images not just refer to a story about a hero killing a monster. The ring that the figures on the raised stones carry and that Sigurðr and the headless figure on the Gök stone wear on their wrists represents the treasure, which is also present as pack on the horse’s back and as represented by Ótr on both the Sörmlandic stones. The scene of Sigurðr and the Valkyrie exchanging the toast and the ring when he acquires wisdom from her has a parallel on the Ramsund monument in Sigurðr tasting Fáfnir’s blood

while roasting his heart, after which he is able to understand the birds. The depiction of the bird and the heart on the Gök stone can be seen as references to this as well.

The story of Sigurðr might be about the cycle of deceit, treachery and revenge that involved several generations as result of the treasure, but since all the Sigurðr stones contain the heroic scene of Sigurðr stabbing Fáfnir, the treasure and thus wealth in some shape or form, and all but one a scene in which wisdom is acquired, it seems that these themes in particular are referred to on the memorial stones. Taking the context of these images on runestones into account shows that the depiction of Sigurðr was perfectly acceptable in a Christian context (in fact it only occurs as such), very appropriate on prestigious monuments that were concerned with commemoration and displaying wealth and social status and that it was not unsuitable for women.

It is remarkable that the praise poems mentioning the Sigurðr cycle refer to the same elements as the runestones: Sigurðr stabbing Fáfnir, roasting the heart (leading to the gaining of knowledge), acquiring treasure, and possibly to Sigurðr's relation with Brynhildr/Sigrdrífa (through which he gains wisdom) and Högni's and Gunnar's fate at Atli's. This confirms that these elements of the story and the corresponding themes of heroism, acquiring wisdom and wealth, and the tragic consequences of this were current and suitable for commemoration and glorification of a person and propagating status and wealth in the Christian late-Viking-Age, also without necessarily referring to Christ.

The four mid-to-late-10th-century Manx crosses (or what remains of them) and the 9th- and 10th-century Gotlandic picture stones with depictions from the Sigurðr cycle lack inscriptions, but were also carved in a context of commemoration (Margeson 1983:101–5; Andrén 1989). The crosses contain the same elements of the story as the Swedish runestones and the praise poems, but the picture stones from Gotland seem to have told the story with help of slightly different elements. The arguments put forward in this paper may, upon closer consideration in the future, also shed more light on the visual communication employed on these related monuments.

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Is Óðinn really ‘alles fader’?¹

Mathias Strandberg, Dept. of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University, Sweden

Óðinn is famous for many things, one being the multitude of names by which he appears in the myths.² I have come to take a particular interest in a well-known group of dithematic Óðinn names appearing in eddic poetry, Snorra Edda and a few scaldic stanzas. These are the names that contain the second member *-fǫðr*; they may be exemplified by *Alfǫðr*, *Herfǫðr* and *Valfǫðr*. In this paper, the main focus will be on *Alfǫðr*.

What attracted my interest about these names was the peculiar looking second member, which with few exceptions does not appear elsewhere.³ Various attempts have been made to account for its form, but the question of the semantics has consistently been left out of the discussion, which has reduced the explanatory value even of the morphologically most compelling approaches. I will return to this below.

A glance in the major lexica of Old West Norse will give the impression that the semantics of the *-fǫðr* names is unproblematic and needs no particular attention. *Alfǫðr*, for example, is simply translated into ‘alle Tings Fader’ by Johan Fritzner⁴ and into ‘alles fader’ in *Lexicon poeticum*, where *Herfǫðr* is similarly translated into ‘hærenes, mændenes (menneskenes) fader’.⁵ Of *Valfǫðr*, Fritzner gives the translation ‘de faldnes Fader’⁶, whereas in *Lexicon poeticum* it is simply transposed into ‘Valfader’.⁷

The translations referred to above rest on two assumptions, namely that 1) the *-fǫðr* names contain a semantic relationship between the members and can be given a meaningful interpretation and that 2) *-fǫðr* is synonymous with *faðir*, simply meaning ‘father’. I think both of these assumptions are uncertain and would especially like to question the latter.

The ultimate source of the idea that the *-fǫðr* names can simply be interpreted as ‘such and such a father’ (depending on the first member) may possibly be Snorra Edda. Through the words of Hár, Snorri explicitly explains the Óðinn name *Alfǫðr* thus: “Ok firir því ma hann heita Alfaðr, at hann er faðir allra goðana ok manna ok allz þes, er af honvm ok hans krapti var fvllgert”.⁸ In a later passage⁹, Snorri relates, this time through Þriði, that “Óþinn h(eitir) Allfǫðr, þvíat hann er faðir allra goða; hann h(eitir) ok Valfǫðr, þvíat hans oska synir erv allir þeir, er ival falla [...]”.¹⁰

It is widely agreed that the notion of Óðinn as a patriarch of the Norse pantheon is a late addition of Christian origin to the god’s complex character.¹¹ In the paragraphs of *Gylfaginning* where Óðinn is described, he is expanded into a full-fledged heathen parallel to the Christian god.¹²

The present paper is based on a forthcoming article by the author (Strandberg forthc.).

¹ ‘alles fader’ is the translation given by *Lex. poet.* (p. 7) of the Óðinn name *Alfǫðr*.

² Cf. Falk 1924, who takes an impressive 168 Óðinn names up to discussion.

³ “Später und selt.” (Noreen 1923: § 420 Anm. 2), it was secondarily detached from compounds and used as a simplex.

⁴ Fritzner 1: 37.

⁵ *Lex. poet.*: 245.

⁶ Fritzner 3: 845.

⁷ *Lex. poet.*: 589.

⁸ SnE 1931: 17. “And this is why he can be called All-father, that he is father of all the gods and of men and of everything that has been brought into being by him and his power.” (Edda 1987: 13.)

⁹ SnE 1931: 27.

¹⁰ “Odin is called All-father, for he is father of all gods. He is also called Val-father [father of the slain], since all those who fall in battle are his adopted sons.” (Edda 1987: 21.)

¹¹ See e.g. Ström 1985: 119 f. and further Beck 2007: 13 with literature.

¹² Cf. Finnur Jónsson 1923: 682, Beck 2007: 13 with literature.

Lifir hann of allar aldir ok stíornar ǫllv ríki s(inv) ok ræðr ǫllvm lvtvm, storvm ok smám [...] Hann smíþaþi himin ok iorð ok lopt ok alla eign þeirra [...] hann gerþi maNinn ok gaf honvm avnd þa, er lifa skal ok alldri tynaz, þott licamiN fvni at moldv eþa breNi at ǫskv; ok skolv allir menn lifa, þeir er rett erv síþaðir, ok vera með honvm sialfvm [...]”¹³ (SnE 1931: 10 f.).

It is obvious that Snorri’s explanation at least of *Alfǫðr* is merely an attempt on his part to interpret an Óðinn name that is not readily understandable to him, and he does so in accordance with his own (Christian) frame of reference.

Snorri’s anachronistic rationalisation has been heedlessly adopted as a realistic explanation of the Óðinn name *Alfǫðr* by modern day scholars. The curious form of the second member has been blatantly ignored and its meaning ‘father’ has been taken for granted. In some cases, this has led to premature conclusions regarding the age of the name. Thus, Falk concludes that *Alfǫðr* cannot be “noget meget gammelt navn for Oden som jo ikke tenktes som altets skaper”.¹⁴ It would have been more fair to conclude that, if the name is old – and it may very well be –, Snorri’s interpretation of the name cannot reflect its original semantics.

The semantics of the *-fǫðr* names cannot be seriously investigated until the meaning of the second member has been established, and this cannot be done without first establishing what kind of a formation we are dealing with: we need to address the etymology of *-fǫðr*.

Konráð Gíslason is to my knowledge the first scholar to take an interest in the question. He analyses *-fǫðr* as a syncopated form of *fǫður* (oblique form of *faðir*)¹⁵, but motivates neither the stipulated sound change nor the use of an oblique form in the nominative; his suggestion is most unconvincing.

The first serious attempt to etymologise *-fǫðr* was to my knowledge made by Andreas Heusler, who in the form saw a Norse cognate to the Latin accusative *patrem*.¹⁶ This is a phonologically viable option, but Heusler is, like Konráð Gíslason, obliged to presuppose that an accusative has come to be used in the nominative, which is doubtful.

The discussion is taken to an entirely new level by Patrick Henry Hollifield, who only very briefly touches upon the Old Icelandic dithematic Óðinn names ending in *-fǫðr* in a long article on vowel raising in unaccented syllables in Germanic. He mentions that

o-grade is found in Indo-European in the suffix in the words for father, mother, etc., used as second member of a compound, as for example, in Gk. *ἀπάτωρ*, ved. *tvátpitāras* etc. The phenomenon is seen in Germanic in OIc. nom. gen. dat. acc. sg. *-fǫðr*, used as a second member of a compound, e.g., *Valfǫðr* [...].¹⁷

Hollifield reconstructs the Proto-Norse form of *-fǫðr* as *-faður*, which is a result of a collapse of the Proto-Germanic singular genitive, dative and accusative forms. It is probably these forms that are intended when Hollifield thereafter – without mentioning which form is which – gives three Proto-Germanic reconstructions: **-faðariz*, **-faðari* and **-faðaru*.¹⁸ In any case, **-faðariz* cannot be the nominative, since this should contain a long **ō* in the penultimate syllable and originally have been *-fabōr* (from PIE. *-ph₂tōr*). As I understand Hollifield’s theory, one must presuppose that this form was discarded through analogical levelling within the paradigm and was replaced by the oblique form. This would give a Proto-Norse paradigm

¹³ “He lives throughout all ages and rules all his kingdom and governs all things great and small [...] He made heaven and earth and the skies and everything in them [...] he made man and gave him a soul that shall live and never perish though the body decay to dust or burn to ashes. And all men who are righteous shall live and dwell with him himself [...]. (Edda 1987: 9.)

¹⁴ Falk 1924: 3.; cf. Ström 1985: 119 f.

¹⁵ Konráð Gíslason 1889: 247–51.

¹⁶ Heusler 1932: § 240 Anm.; cf. Grønvik 1992: 11.

¹⁷ Hollifield 1984: 40.

where all forms in the singular would be *-faður*, which would yield the attested Old Icelandic form *-fǫðr* in all cases. Deviating case forms, such as genitive *-fǫðrs*, may be explained as secondary analogical developments.¹⁸ (See table 1 below, where “→” indicates analogical development and “>” a development through sound change.)

Table 1. Development of the *-fǫðr* paradigm

Proto-Germanic		Proto-Norse		Old Icelandic
NSg. <i>*-faþōr</i> ¹⁹	→	<i>*-faður</i>	>	<i>-fǫðr</i>
Gsg. <i>*-faðariz</i>	>	<i>*-faður</i>	>	<i>-fǫðr</i> → <i>-fǫðrs</i> , <i>-fǫður</i>
DSg. <i>*-faðari</i>	>	<i>*-faður</i>	>	<i>-fǫðr</i> → <i>-fǫður</i>
ASg. <i>*-faðaru</i> ⁿ	>	<i>*-faður</i>	>	<i>-fǫðr</i> → <i>-fǫður</i>

Hollifield’s comparison between Old Icelandic *-fǫðr* and Greek *-πάτωρ* is compelling; not only does it work out phonologically (with one substantial analogical development presupposed) – it is paralleled by cognates in other Indo-European languages. This makes Hollifield’s solution superior to that which has recently been suggested by Xavier Tremblay.

According to Tremblay, *-fǫðr* can be reconstructed in Proto-Norse as nominative **faðruz*, containing the *u*-suffix found in Greek *Ἀπατούρια*, a derivation of *ἀπάτωρ*, and in the Gothic plural nominative *broþrjus*.²⁰ In comparison with Hollifield’s, Tremblay’s suggestion seems ill-founded; it lacks the support of both cognates and completely parallel formations. I will therefore disregard Tremblay’s suggestion in favour of Hollifield’s.

However, there is one important detail that Hollifield leaves out of the discussion: the semantics. Greek compounds with the second member *-πάτωρ* are almost exclusively possessive, i.e. bahuvrihi compounds.²¹

In order for Hollifield’s theory to hold, one must hypothesise that the Old Icelandic *-fǫðr* names – or at least some of them – may originally have been bahuvrihi compounds, contrary to the traditional interpretations given in lexica and elsewhere.

To test this hypothesis, the *-fǫðr* names must be analysed etymologically with focus on the semantics of their first members and the formation of the compounds. The tentative possessive semantics suggested should then preferably be checked against the mythological record to see if any external support for them may be garnered.

Within the scope of an undergraduate project in comparative Indo-European linguistics, I have carried out an investigation as outlined above. The results – which will be presented in their entirety in a forthcoming article²² – were largely inconclusive, but revealed some interesting possibilities, some of which I will present below. The account will focus on the name *Alfǫðr*, which in the end turned out to be the compound which could most plausibly be interpreted as a bahuvrihi compound. I will first discuss the etymology and semantics of the first member and then, based on this discussion, experiment with tentative interpretations of the compound as a bahuvrihi.

Alfǫðr is taken up to etymological discussion by Falk in his comprehensive work on Óðinn names.²³ According to him, the name as it is handed down cannot be very old, since Óðinn was not originally conceived of as “altets skaper”. Instead, he suggests that the first member, *all-*, is developed from *ald-*, stem of *ǫld* ‘Mennesker, Skare af mennesker; Menneskeslæggt,

¹⁸ Strandberg (forthc.): 94.

¹⁹ In consistency with Hollifield’s reconstructions, the post-Vernerian form **-faðōr* could be given instead.

²⁰ Tremblay 2003: 58, 126 note 44.

²¹ In the cases where a *-πάτωρ* compound is endocentric, this seems to be the result of a reinterpretation (Strandberg forthc.: 95 note 3).

²² Strandberg forthc.

²³ Falk 1924: 3.

Tidsalder'.²⁴ If this is correct, *Alfǫðr* would be a by-form of *Aldafǫðr*.²⁵ Falk's suggestion is not impossible, but it seems like an unnecessary step to analyse the first member as *ald-* when *al-*, an extremely common first member of compounds in Old Icelandic, is readily available. Falk's motivation seems to be his preconceptions of the semantics that would result from such an analysis: *Alfǫðr* would, understood as an endocentric compound, mean 'father of all', which cannot be an old conception of Óðinn.

The most commonly held view is that the first member of *Alfǫðr* is *al-* 'all, whole, every', which is usually seen as a form of the pronoun *allr* occurring as first member of compounds. The relation between *al-* and *allr* has been conceived of in various ways²⁶ and depends of course on what etymology is assumed for each of the words. Judging from the earliest attestations of *Alfǫðr*, the first member is *al-*; forms with *all-* occur first in Snorra Edda. I will therefore focus on *al-* in my discussion and disregard a contingent connection between the same and *allr*.

Most etymological lexica are short-spoken about *al-*. Jan de Vries²⁷ simply refers to *allr*, which he seems to perceive as a *no*-adjective²⁸, although he does not discuss to what root it is formed. Bjorvand & Lindeman²⁹ speak of a Proto-Indo-European demonstrative pronoun characterised by an **l* and list quite a few examples of formations from various Indo-European languages which they maintain "hører hit", e.g. Old Latin *ollus* 'ille'. Vladimir Orel³⁰ says of Proto-Germanic **alaz* that it is "[u]sually compared with Toch B *āl* 'entire, uncastrated (?)', and to Lat *ollus* 'ille', OIr *oll* 'amplus'", but considers it more likely to be "immediately derived from **alanan*". As to the semantic development, he compares with Latin *totus* 'all', formed to the root **teu-* 'to swell'. Such a semantic development requires the middle voice meaning of the verb, i.e. 'to grow, to be nourished' etc. – cf. the Gothic present participle *alands* 'sich nährend'.³¹ Furthermore, it presupposes an original meaning 'grown, nourished' of **alaz*. Reasonably, this must have gone via an intermediate stage where it meant 'big' before finally the meaning 'all, whole, every' could result.

This intermediate meaning 'big' is in fact claimed by Harald Bjorvand & Fredrik Otto Lindeman³² to be attested in Old Icelandic *Alfǫðr*, which they translate 'store far', i.e. 'big father'. As no other examples are mentioned, however, one wonders on what grounds Bjorvand & Lindeman make their claim, although their interpretation eliminates the problems that afflict the traditional interpretation of *Alfǫðr* as meaning 'father of all' (see above). A parallel is also drawn with Old Irish *oll-athair* 'stor-far', a byname of the god Dagda.³³

There are other possibilities that could be taken up for discussion as regards the first member of *Alfǫðr*, but I will not bring them up here.³⁴ Instead, I will turn to the discussion of possible interpretations of *Alfǫðr* as a bahuvrihi compound.

²⁴ Fritzner 3: 1083.

²⁵ Cf. SnE 1848: 37 note a.

²⁶ See e.g. Feist 1939: 40 with literature.

²⁷ de Vries 1962: 4.

²⁸ de Vries 1962: 7.

²⁹ Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007: 39.

³⁰ Orel 2003: 13.

³¹ Feist 1939: 34; LIV: 262.

³² Bjorvand & Lindeman 2007: 39.

³³ Even if the relationship between the first members (*al-* and *oll-*) is disregarded, the ambiguity of *-athair* (which could correspond to Old Icelandic *faðir*) makes it uncertain whether there is any relation between *Alfǫðr* and *oll-athair*.

³⁴ The reader may instead refer to Strandberg forthc. However, I would here like to briefly mention one formal possibility regarding the interpretation of the first member of *Alfǫðr* that is not discussed therein. A placename element **al* corresponding to Gothic *alhs* 'Tempel' (Feist 1939: 37) has been discussed for a number of Scandinavian placenames. In a 2004 article, Lennart Elmevik has questioned the traditional interpretation of this element as 'helgedom' and posited a primary sense 'skydd, värn', from whence 'inhägnad, stängsel' (Elmevik

If the first member is the *al-* that frequently occurs as first member in Old West Norse compounds, and this means ‘all, whole, every’, *Alfǫðr* may be interpreted as ‘having all fathers’, ‘having everyone as father’ or ‘having a whole father’. Neither of these options is satisfactory; according to Snorra Edda³⁵, Óðinn has only one father, Borr, and to point out that someone has a “whole father” seems unmotivated and strange.

However, if the meaning ‘big’ is assumed for *al-*, which has been suggested by Bjorvand & Lindeman and which can at least be theoretically inferred as an intermediate stage in the semantic development (see above), a much more plausible meaning is obtained: ‘having a big father’. Unfortunately, what little we learn from Snorra Edda of Óðinn’s father, Borr, does not include information on his stature. In fact, not much is told about him apart from the fact that he begot Óðinn with the giantess Bestla. If we choose to interpret *Alfǫðr* as meaning ‘having a big father’, we will have to make do with speculation as to whether it is a reasonable interpretation or not.

More comprehensive – but still quite short-spoken – is the account in Snorra Edda on Óðinn’s grandfather, Buri. He is described as “fagr alivm, mikill ok mattvgr”³⁶, that is “beautiful in appearance, big and powerful”.³⁷ This would undeniably fit better with the characterisation ‘big’. The question is: could *-fǫðr* in *Alfǫðr* possibly refer not to Óðinn’s father, but his grandfather? This ultimately depends on the semantics of *faðir*.

The most common meaning of the word is ‘biological father’, but it also appears with the meaning ‘ancestor, forebear’, e.g. *Adam faðir alls mannkyns*.³⁸ Erik Jonsson³⁹ also asserts in his lexicon from 1863 that *feðr* can mean ‘Forfædre’ in the plural, but he gives no examples. The use of the word *father* in the sense ‘ancestor, forebear’ is paralleled in other Indo-European languages, such as Sanskrit⁴⁰, Greek⁴¹ and Latin⁴² and may well be *ursprachlich*.

It does not seem unreasonable to tentatively interpret *Alfǫðr* as ‘having a big ancestor, of great ancestry’. The account on Buri in Snorra Edda provides potential mythological support for this hypothesis. It is also possible that *al-*, which should at one point have meant ‘grown, nourished’ etc. alludes to the myth of Buri’s nascence, of which it is related in Snorra Edda:

Næst var þat, þa er hrimit dravp, at þar varð af kýr sv, er Avðhvmla h(et), en iiii. miolkar rVNV or spenvm hennar, ok fæddi hon Ymi. Þa mælti Gangleri: Við hvat fæddiz kýrin? Har s(egir): Hon sleikti hrimsteinana, er saltir voro, ok hin fyrsta dag, er hon sleikti steinana, kom ór steininvm at qveldi manz har, anan dag manz havfvð, þriþia dag var þar allr maþr; sa er nefndr Bvri [...]. (SnE 1931: 13 f.)⁴³

Buri gradually ‘grows’ out of the salty stones through a process that takes three days. This may be viewed as support for my hypothesis.

2004: 53). Thus, if the first members of *Alfǫðr* is understood as **al-*, corresponding to goth. *alhs*, *Alfǫðr* may be interpreted as having a father who has/endows with protection.

³⁵ SnE 1931: 14.

³⁶ SnE 1931: 14.

³⁷ SnE 1987: 11.

³⁸ Fritzner 1:364.

³⁹ Jonsson 1863: 117.

⁴⁰ Monier-Williams 1899: 626.

⁴¹ Liddell & Scott 1940: 1348.

⁴² Georges 1918 2: 1506.

⁴³ “The next thing, when the rime dripped, was that there came into being from it a cow called Audhumla, and four rivers of milk flowed from its teats, and it fed Ymir.” Then spoke Gangleri: ‘What did the cow feed on?’ High said: ‘It licked the rime-stones, which were salty. And the first day as it licked stones there came from the stones in the evening a man’s hair, the second day a man’s head, the third day there was a complete man there.’” (Edda 1987: 11.)

Naturally, one cannot leave the other eight *-fǫðr* names out of a discussion like the present one. In my study⁴⁴, I concluded that these (*Alda-*, *Her-*, *Herja-*, *Herjans-*, *Hlé-/Hlæ-*, *Sig-*, *Val-* and *Valsfǫðr*) are more difficult to interpret as bahuvrihi compounds and are perhaps more plausibly interpreted as endocentrics – if they are to be considered intelligible at all. If *-fǫðr* is to be viewed primarily as a second member of bahuvrihi compounds, these eight *-fǫðr* names must in consequence have been formed later than *Alfǫðr*. It is not impossible that they were modelled on *Alfǫðr* and formed through free combination of first and second members as a means of creating additional Óðinn names. This is, of course, difficult to prove, but it is interesting to note that *al-* is the only first member of a *-fǫðr* name that does not appear in any other Óðinn name in some form.⁴⁵ *Alda-* appears in *Aldagautr*, *her-* in *Herblindi*, *Herteitr*, *Hertýr*, *hlé-/hlæ-* in *Hlé-/Hlæfreyr*, *sig-* in *Sigþér*, *Sig-Gautr*, *Sigmundur*, *Sigtryggr*, *Sigtýr*, *Sig-Þrórr* and *val-* in *Val-Gautr*, *Valkjósandi*, *Valtýr*, *Valþøgnir* and possibly *Valtamr*.⁴⁶ The first members may possibly have been gathered from these names and combined with the second member *-fǫðr* as a means of serving the stylistically conditioned variation that is a hallmark of Germanic poetry⁴⁷ and that has obviously been exemplarily productive in the case of the hundreds of names in Old Icelandic for Óðinn.

I am aware of the problems of my suggestion regarding *Alfǫðr*. It builds to a good extent on theoretical inferences and more or less speculative assumptions. The semantics of both compound members are far from self-evident; for the first member, *al-*, a theoretically inferred sense ‘big’ must be assumed, and for the second member, *-fǫðr*, one must assume a secondary and in Old Norse rather weakly attested sense ‘ancestor, forebear’. As conclusive evidence in any direction is difficult to obtain, the scientific value of the suggestion may be questioned. The hypothesis that *Alfǫðr* is the primary formation among the *-fǫðr* names also defies testing given the current source situation.

In any case, I hope to have drawn attention to a hitherto neglected problem that is both important and interesting, and, as it turns out, rather difficult to solve. When working with names on Norse mythological characters, or indeed any Old Norse names – translating them, drawing conclusions based on or revolving around them and so forth – one cannot simply ignore the etymology, as has clearly been done in the case of the *-fǫðr* names in the past.

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⁴⁴ Falk 1924: 16–33.

⁴⁵ That is, if *herja-* and *vals-* are viewed as variants of *her-* and *val-* respectively. It should be noted that *Valsfǫðr* is a *varians lectio* of *Valfǫðr*, whereas this is not the case with *Herja-* and *Herfǫðr*.

⁴⁶ Strandberg forthc.: 115 with literature.

⁴⁷ Cf. RGA 32: 72 ff.

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Though this be madness, yet there's method in't: aspects of word order in skaldic kennings

Ilya V. Sverdlov, Canada

Skaldic verse is considered notoriously difficult to read. The so-called *skýringar* supplied in editions normally rearrange the verse – and also kennings – so that a skaldic text has a ‘standard’ word order, as if it were a prose text. Without such a procedure the modern reader often has real trouble piecing the words together: their order in original verse is strikingly different even from conventional Old Norse texts. The following example, from a verse (Skjald-edigtning, B, vol. 1, 302, 2, 1) by Þórðr Særeksson, an 11th century Icelander, is notorious. I provide a word-by-word translation, with corresponding words marked identically:

ok gimslöngvir <ganga>
gífrs hlémána drifu
nausta blakks <it næsta>
[Norðmanna] {gram} <þorði>

and fire-thrower <to go>
of witch of protector-moon of blizzard
of ship-shed of horse <very near to>
[of Norsemen] {prince} <dared>.

This looks unreadable, and for a reason, as the ‘correct’ word order, i.e. one parsable for a modern reader, is different (the markup is preserved) – “and **thrower** of fire of blizzard of witch of protector-moon of horse of ship-shed <dared> <to go> <very near to> {prince} [of Norsemen]”. There are several levels of complexity to this sentence, which looks quite syntactically simple when rearranged in such an explanatory manner.

Everything from “thrower” to “horse” constitutes a kenning, indeed, the longest known – seven-element¹ – kenning of skaldic poetry, and it parses as follows: horse of ship-shed is ship, protector-moon of ship is shield, witch of shield is axe, blizzard of axe is battle, fire of battle is sword, thrower of sword is warrior. This the correct parsing order for this kenning, and if we number the corresponding constituent heitis from 1 (*slöngvir*) to 7 (*naust*) so that the correct order will be graphically represented by the sequence 1–2–3–4–5–6–7, we’ll notice that the real order of those constituent elements in the verse appears to be quite garbled, as we should represent it as follows: 2–1–4–5–3–7–6. Not a single heiti is found, in the actual verse sequence, at a place where the order of kenning extension calls for it to be.

In addition to this phenomenon, called order inversion, there is also stranding, i.e. the kenning elements do not go one after another, but are interspersed with other words of the sentence, in this case the infinitive *ganga*, which is itself a part of a stranded verb phrase, *þorði ganga*.

It is intriguing to try to look a bit closer at such syntactic distortions with the aim of finding if not actual rules but at least tendencies which skalds employed in generating these sequences. It may well turn out that, for all this apparent bizarreness, at least some of those orders are not as controversial as they seem. In what follows I will present some observations on types of constituent element order observed in a representative sample of five- and four-heiti long kennings for warrior.

It would have been glorious indeed if we could discuss the skaldic preferences for arranging constituent heitis in seven-element kennings – for the number of possible different orders for such kennings would have been 7!, that is, 7 multiplied by 6 by 5 by 4 by 3 by 2 by 1, and it equals 5040. Unfortunately, Þórðr Særeksson was the only skáld ever to extend his kenning to seven constituent elements. The same goes, it seems, for six-element kennings – I’ve only

¹ Well, *eight*-element if we count in the epithet *hlé-*, which is not what is called ‘a constituent heiti’ for this kenning.

got one in my sample, by Þórarinn loftunga (Skjaldedigtning, B, vol. 1, 299, 8), the order of elements in which, for record, is 2 – 1 – 4 – 6 – 5 – 3 (only one of 720 mathematically possible). We cannot possibly infer much from these two kennings, yet still we might notice the pair 2 – 1, which begins both. This order should actually be considered normal and appropriate – even though the pair alone, without accounting for the rest of the kenning, is unreadable, it still follows the normal dependency order for Old Norse, where a dependent element in compounds and many word combinations will be to the left of the core element, cf. such words as *lögmaðr*, *hermaðr* or combinations as *Egils saga*. This pattern is amply observed in other long kennings.

The number of possible orders for a five-element kenning is 5!, that is, 120. There are 21 five-element kennings for warrior in my sample. It is still not nearly as numerous as one would like, yet we can see some patterns. These 21 kennings use 16 different element orders to arrange their heitis. Most of these, obviously, are used only by a single kenning, but there are two orders that have two kennings each, and one order that has 4 kennings to its credit. Here's a summary table, orders are sorted by element number:

Table 1. Orders of elements for five-heiti kennings.

Order no.	Order scheme	No. of kennings
1	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	1
2	1 – 4 – 2 – 5 – 3	1
3	1 – 5 – 3 – 2 – 4	1
4	1 – 5 – 4 – 2 – 3	1
5	1 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2	2
6	2 – 1 – 3 – 5 – 4	4
7	2 – 1 – 5 – 4 – 3	1
8	3 – 1 – 5 – 4 – 2	1
9	3 – 2 – 1 – 4 – 5	1
10	3 – 2 – 5 – 4 – 1	1
11	5 – 1 – 4 – 2 – 3	1
12	5 – 2 – 1 – 4 – 3	1
13	5 – 3 – 4 – 2 – 1	1
14	5 – 4 – 1 – 3 – 2	1
15	5 – 4 – 2 – 1 – 3	2
16	5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1	1

Despite this part of the sample being somewhat small, several observations can be made. Firstly, surprisingly, we've got two 'conformant' orders, nos. 1 and 16, i.e., ones where elements go in correct dependency sequence – one starts with element no. 1 and goes up to element 5, while the other goes in opposite direction. Order no. 16 – which one is apt to call 'skýringar order' as it is the one used to parse kennings in traditional commentaries – is in a kenning by Kormákr Ögmundarson (Skjaldedigtning, B, vol. 1, 83, 59, 7), while order no. 1 is in a kenning by the anonymous author of *Gyðingsvísur* (Skjaldedigtning, B, vol. 2, 598, 5, 5).

Secondly, it's intriguing to see the abundance of orders where the 2 – 1 sequence, the one that we noticed in 7- and 6- element kennings, is observed – eight out of sixteen, for a total of 12 kennings out of 21. The last two elements of the kenning also follow this pattern – there are nine orders that have a 5 – 4 sequence, for a total of 14 kennings. We can add to this total the 7–6 sequence observed in the longest kenning, where two last elements in the kenning extension chain too follow the general Old Norse rule of placing the dependent element first. It is indeed interesting – the last two elements of each extended kenning constitute a simple kenning, readable and parsable on its own, without any need to assemble other elements. All orders that have two or more kennings to them, have the 5 – 4 sequence. It seems as if there is a slight penchant to keep the only really easily readable and parsable part of a long kenning

intact. Indeed, there are 4 orders which combine both of these sequences, 2 – 1 and 5 – 4, for a total of 7 kennings, and one of them, no. 6, is the richest order in this part of the sample with 4 kennings to it.

Thirdly, it should probably be considered surprising that no five-heiti kenning here begins with element no. 4 – statistically we could have expected to find at least one order starting with it. One may be somewhat tempted to hold the above-mentioned influence of normal Old Norse compound rules to be responsible, but the comparative sizes of the sample and of the total number of possible orders are such that this is just a random coincidence. Indeed, in the case of four-element kennings next to be discussed, there’re a lot of them that start with the penultimate element coming first.

Patterns observed for element orders in four-heiti kennings are a bit more conclusive. The number of possible different order – 4! – is much smaller, only 24, yet, to compensate it, four-element kennings in my sample are much more numerous – there are 170 of them, seven times the number of orders. The results are interesting. The core fundamental of skaldic poetry – endless variation – ensured that they tried out any possible variant of element distribution, leaving out of use only five orders: kennings with elements arranged in sequences 1–3–2–4, 2–3–4–1, 3–4–1–2, 4–1–2–3, and 4–2–3–1 are not found at all. All other orders have been in use, sometimes often, but there are two of them that clearly dominate the distribution. Here’s the summary table:

Table 2. Orders of elements for four-heiti kennings.

Order no.	Order scheme	No. of kennings
1	1–2–3–4	2
2	1–2–4–3	12
3	1–3–4–2	2
4	1–4–2–3	1
5	1–4–3–2	12
6	2–1–3–4	2
7	2–1–4–3	61
8	2–3–1–4	1
9	2–4–1–3	1
10	2–4–3–1	10
11	3–1–2–4	1
12	3–1–4–2	2
13	3–2–1–4	10
14	3–2–4–1	2
15	3–4–2–1	2
16	4–1–3–2	2
17	4–2–1–3	6
18	4–3–1–2	5
19	4–3–2–1	36

Orders nos. 7 and 19 account for 97 kennings out of total 170, that is, for 57%. Four other orders – nos. 2, 5, 10, and 13 – account for another 44 kennings and 25%. The rest, although used, is clearly marginal.

Some of those marginal orders are found in kennings that feature what I like to call “chimaera compounds”, of which Egill’s *dalmiskunn* in *dalmiskunn fiska* is probably the most well-known example²: e.g. order no. 16 is observed in Grettir’s kenning (Skjaldedigting, B,

² These are, in fact, *more* unreadable than the likes of *gim-slöngvir*. The latter, even though unparsable without assembling the rest of the kenning, are, in a way, correctly-formed compounds, as the first element is directly depending on the second one. It is, so to say, half a chimaera. The likes of *dalmiskunn* are full-blown chimaeras as they amalgamate into a single, morphologically unified compound, two elements that are not bound by a di-

vol. 2, 473, 44) *hjör-gæðir hriðar hlunns*, where *hjör-gæðir* is a chimaera, as *hjörr* ‘sword’ depends directly on *hrið* ‘storm’ (and not on *gæðir*), which depends on *hlunnr* ‘staff’, which finally depends on the root *gæðir* ‘caretaker’. Another marginal order, no. 11, is observed in a kenning which conceivably features the ultimate example of heiti stranding – it is a kenning *varr-lautar viggs lundr* by Hallfróðr Óttarsson vandræðaskáld (Skjaldedigting, B, vol. 1, 161, 19), where a naked stem *varr-* is put, all alone, unumlauted, without even a case marker-turned-interfix, in line four, whereas the *lautar* it depends upon remains in line one (indeed, all four heitis are put in four different lines here).

On the contrary, the two dominant orders preserve the already mentioned sequences of 2–1 and 4–3 (the equivalent of 5–4 in the case of five-element kennings) intact. Many of those do, indeed, have those respective pairs of elements merged into compounds – but these would then often undergo some stranding as they generally occupy two different lines in the verse, e.g. *haukborðs hydr-geymir* in *Plácítúsdrápa* (Skjaldedigting, B, vol. 1, 613, 27), with *hydr-geymir* located in line one and *haukborðs* in line four. There are, however, cases when all four elements are squeezed in one *vísuorð*, cf., again, Grettir’s *blakk-poll byrjar skikkju* (Skjaldedigting, B, vol. 2, 465, 11), arranged according to the mightiest order no. 7.

Orders no. 1 and no. 19 are, on the surface, what we would like to call a ‘conformant’ orders, i.e. where all elements go one after another in correct sequence. However, we see that order no. 1 is very marginal with only two kennings using it (1%), whereas no. 19 is the second most powerful order (21%). That would mean that although order no. 19 looks good both to us the researchers and to skálds, it does so for different reasons. We would probably rather see it as a mirror of order no. 1 – whereas the material, it seems, shows that it is indeed a mirror, but of the order no. 7. It also seems to show that there are different rules for each level of kenning extension (or, rather, same rules that produce different results depending on the number of elements-heitis available) and that, so to say, four-element kennings are not simply three-element kennings enlarged or appendaged with an additional element – if that were the case, order no. 6 would have been a dominant and not a very marginal one that the table shows it for. It also appears that the normal Old Norse compound models are at least partly responsible for the dominance of orders nos. 7 and 19; other factors that make no. 7 the preferred one – when, on the surface, no. 19, ‘*skýringar* order’ for four-heiti kennings, seems to be more in line with the principles of Old Norse and, wider, Germanic compoundization – need to be further investigated. It may appear that, although skaldic kenning is structurally built as a good old Germanic compound word (Sverdlov 2006:5ff), its status of a language structure that, to use a phonological metaphor, neutralizes the difference between compounds and word combinations, allows it to utilize different syntactico-morphological strategies on different levels – after some heitis have coalesced into ‘true’ compounds (‘true’ only at superficial morphological level, as they, more often than not, are in fact nothing but chimaeras, see above), the results may be arranged according either to compound or word combination rules, depending on the number of elements in a kenning and other factors like metrical intentions of the speaker.

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rect dependence link – *dal-* depends directly not on *miskunn* but on *fiska*.

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Centre and Periphery in Icelandic Medieval Discourse

Sverrir Jakobsson, Hugvísindastofnun, Háskóli Íslands, Iceland

This paper deals with the status of Iceland within the medieval European world-system, as defined by the catholic literary elite of the Middle Ages. According to the hegemonic medieval world-view in the Roman Catholic world, Iceland was situated on the periphery, far from the sites of Christian world history. This point of view is reflected in Icelandic sources that deal with foreign places and events, such as the ones connected with the lives of the apostles and the most important saints of Christendom. It is quite different from the world-view of an isolated culture, as traditionally defined by anthropologists. Such cultures tend to view themselves as the centre of the world, and other cultures as peripheral (See f. inst. Kearney 1996). In contrast, Icelanders appropriated a world view that entailed that their own society was a marginal and peripheral one. This they sought to mitigate, using several strategies.

The object of this paper is to debate the extent to which proximity to the centres of power and historical sites within catholic Christianity was seen as symbolic capital in medieval Iceland, and to use this perspective to re-evaluate the importance of travel and pilgrimage (On symbolic capital in Icelandic medieval society, cf. Torfi H. Tulinius 2000, Viðar Pálsson 2003). What was the significance of the journeys to meet foreign dignitaries and how did these journeys affect the participants? The role of foreign travel as a self-civilizing mission, and as a way to gain in status by relationship to noble people, is of particular note in this context. In what sense was foreign travel conceived of as an education in particular manners, and how did it affect the social status of the travellers?

Our ideas about the world view of particular cultures, how it functions and by what processes it is shaped, are too often subject to simplified models and theories that emphasize the isolation of cultures at the expense of their interaction. It is the purpose of this paper to deconstruct such ideas and, in the process, offer a new insight into the status of medieval Iceland within the realm of Christianity, a periphery with a complex identity that very much depended upon interaction with other societies.

The Centre of the World

In the 12th century, as written culture was beginning to gain ground in Iceland, the literary neophytes of Iceland came into contact with the hegemonic world-view which was predominant within the international clerical elite of the Roman catholic world. Learned descriptions of the world circulated among Icelandic scholars, and as they were copied down the status of Iceland within the world at large was described and defined.

Within the geographic treatises that were copied down by Icelanders, based on foreign models but adapted to an Icelandic audience to greater or lesser degree, the main emphasis was usually on the Mediterranean regions, as they were thought to be the centre of the world in both symbolic and geographical sense. In the 12th-century *Leiðarvísir* by the abbot Nicholas, Jerusalem is defined as

agièzt borg allra i heimi, of hana er hvervetna sungit um alla kristni, þviat þar ser enn stormerki pislar Cristz. Þar er kirkia su, er gròf drottins er i, ok stadr sa, er cross drottins stod, þar ser glògt blod Christz á steini, sem ny-blètt sé, ok sva mun vera til doms-dags, þar na menn liosi a pascha aptan or himni ofan, hon heitir Pulkro kirkia, hon er opin ofan yfir grofinni. Þar er midr heimr, þar skinn sol iamt or himni ofan of Iohannis messu.

[...] the greatest city in the world. Its praises are sung throughout Christianity, as there one can still see the great signs of the passion of Christ. There is the church where the tomb of the Lord

is located and the place where the crucifix stood. There the blood of Christ can be seen on a rock, as if newly bled, and thus it shall be until Doomsday. There one can spot a light coming from the sky on Easter afternoon. It is called the church of Pulchro, it is open over the tomb. There is the centre of the world, there the sunlight is equal from the sky on midsummer night.] (Alfræði islenzk 1908, pp. 21–22)

It should be noted that the centrality of Jerusalem was not only symbolic but also very literal, as can be seen by the reference to ‘natural phenomena’, such as the position of the sun at the summer solstice. This belief in the absolute centrality of Jerusalem is shared in some other sources, but not all of them. In the prologue to the Prose Edda it is the continent of Asia that is at the centre of the world; geographically, materially and symbolically:

‘í þeim hluta veraldar er öll fegrð ok prýði ok eignir jarðar-ávaxtar, gull ok gimsteinar; þar er ok mið veröldin; ok svá sem þar er jörðin feagri ok betri öllum kostum en í öðrum stöðum, svá var ok mannfólkit þar mest tígnat af öllum giptunum, spekinni ok aflinu, fegrðinni ok allz konar kunnostu.’

[In that part of the world, there is all the beauty and ornament and abundance of the fruits of the earth, gold and jewellery. Also, the centre of the world is there. And in the same way as the lands is more beautiful and bountiful there than in other places, so the people there were most highly respected for all their qualities, the wisdom and power, beauty and all sorts of knowledge.] (Edda Snorra Sturlusonar 1931, p. 3)

This description of Asia appears in the context of the euhemeristic explanation of the origin of the ancient gods, who are depicted as unusually gifted humans. One part of their superiority is the glory of their ancestral lands.

Whether the actual centre was located in Jerusalem or in Asia minor was perhaps a subject for dispute, but the general trend was very clear. The great cities of Christendom, Jerusalem, Rome and Constantinople, were located at this centre and the main events from sacred and secular world history, as it was known to the Icelandic literary elite, had taken place in this region.

In contrast, Iceland was far removed from these events. In the second Guðmundar saga, Iceland is depicted as being on the outermost margins ‘of the Northern continent [i.e. Europe]’ and the writers of saint’s lives often emphasize that they are a long remove from the place and events in the stories they are narrating (Cf. Biskupa sögur 1858–1878, 1, p. 559; Postola sögur 1874, p. 513). This belief became a topos in learned circles, that Iceland was situated at the remote and northern margins of Christian civilization.

As a result of this learned consensus, the dominant world-view among the Icelandic literary elite was *allocentric*. The people who had a stake in Icelandic textual culture had a deep sense of belonging to a bigger unity, but at the same time, they were aware of their marginal situation within this unity. The important people and places of world history and topography were situated in distant locations, and this distance had to be abridged. Now, we must examine the strategies used by Icelandic savants for that purpose.

Small Worlds and Civilizations

If there was a widespread belief in the situation of Iceland as the outpost of Christianity, the nature of this collectivity that Icelanders belonged to and yet were remote from, is a matter of prime importance. What kind of a social system was Christianity, and what kind of categories can be used to define centrality and marginality within that system?

Questions concerning peripheries and centres have been central to the studies of developmental theorists for the past decades. Usually, however, their focus has been on economic relations between areas. In his seminal study on world-systems, Immanuel Wallerstein defines a world-system as ‘an economic but not a political entity’ in contrast to political empire whom he regards as ‘primitive means of economic domination’ (Wallerstein 1974, p. 15). According to Wallerstein, an economic system depends upon a system of government which directs the flow of economic goods from the periphery to the centre.

The medieval period, in Wallerstein’s view, is characterized by the absence of such a system. In the 12th century there existed ‘a series of empires and small worlds’ (Wallerstein 1974, p. 17). Since then Janet Abu-Lughod’s study of the medieval world-systems has modified this simplistic picture of the medieval economy. In the view of Abu-Lughod there were a number of such world-systems in the 13th and 14th centuries, but no single system exercised a hegemonic power over the others (Abu-Lughod 1989, pp. 32–38). A more radical revision of Wallerstein’s thesis has been suggested by Andre Gunder-Frank who sees the world-system as a far older entity than argued by Wallerstein. Within this system, from from 1500 BC to 1800 AD, China, India, Central Asia, South-East Asia, and the Middle East were the main players of the global trade. These five regions also had the world’s highest standards of living, most advanced technology, greatest industrial and commercial enterprises, the most sophisticated government and the best infrastructure in roads, bridges, canals, river and seaborne transportation (cf. Gunder Frank 1998).

This revision of history leaves Northwest Europe as a very marginal area in economic terms throughout the bulk of history, but not even from Wallerstein’s eurocentric perspective, can Europe be regarded as anything more than an economic backwater during the Middle ages. The approach adopted by Gunder Frank is indeed refreshing, but it offers little insight into how relations within this backward region might be defined. As already granted by Wallerstein, Northwestern Europe was never a subsistence economy, as its social relations grew out of the disintegration of the Roman Empire. ‘The myth of the Roman Empire still provided a certain cultural and even legal coherence to the area. Christianity served as a set of parameters within which social action took place. Feudal Europe was a “civilization”, but not a world-system.’ (Wallerstein 1974, p. 17–18)

It is to this murky type of entity, ‘civilization’, that we now must turn. It is the cultural and legal coherence provided by the myth of empire, and the parameters set by the Church that defined Christendom as an entity, on the margins of which medieval Icelanders saw themselves as existing. There can be no doubt that both the Roman Empire and Christian Church were of enormous importance for defining the identities of those how saw themselves as belonging to this world. And yet it seems to facile to think of this entity as something different than a world-system. How can the expansion of Europe in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries be explained, if not in economic terms? What was different, however, was the relative importance of the culture and economy within this system.

As already noted, in Old Norse geographic treatises, three cities were usually depicted as the centres of Christianity; Rome, Constantinople and Jerusalem. In Constantinople there still resided a Roman emperor and the glory of this capital was to a large degree associated with the presence of this strong secular power. In Old Norse texts, the East Roman emperor is regularly depicted as the head of all Christianity, a person with whom northern monarchs and adventures would benefit enormously from associating (cf. Sverrir Jakobsson 2008, pp. 178–82). In contrast, the Pope in Rome was a person of less splendour but great spiritual honour, and pilgrimages to Rome are frequently depicted in 12th and 13th century sources. Jerusalem held a special position as the hallowed city of Christian ideology, although not a seat of any strong secular or spiritual authority. These sacred cities were at the core of a world-system that was potent enough to draw northern literates, dignitaries ! and people of all kinds on

journeys, both imaginary and physical, to these centres. In these pilgrimages, the relationship between centre and periphery becomes paramount, whether it was primarily economic, political or symbolic.

Spiritual and Material Centres

In the several accounts available about journeys of Icelanders to the centres of Christianity certain themes appear repeatedly. First, the journeys were often a necessary aspect of penitence, such as the trips of the chieftains Sturla Sighvatsson and Gizur Þorvaldsson in the 13th century. But although violent acts often necessitated a trip to the South, such a trip was also considered beneficial to the soul even if it was not intended as a penance for any particular acts. At the end of Arons saga Hjörleifssonar, the fate of the protagonist is debated and a pilgrimage to Jerusalem is used to weigh heavily in his favour:

‘Ok er þat væntanda at sál hans hafi gott heimili fengit, bæði fyrir meðalgöngu vinar síns, ins góða Guðmundar biskups Arasonar, ok einkanliga fyrir mjúkustu várs lausnara miskunn, hvers pílgrímur hann má réttlíga kallast fyrir þat, er hann heimsótti hans helgustu gröf ok marga aðra heilaga staði.’

[And it is to be expected that his soul received a good abode, both through the intercession of his friend bishop Guðmundr Arason the good, and especially through the most sweet mercy of our saviour, whose pilgrim [Aron] can rightly be called, as he visited his holiest tomb and many other holy places.] (Sturlunga saga 1946, 2, p. 278)

Here, a trip to Jerusalem is seen as an important factor in benefit of heavenly salvation, more so than any other pilgrimage. This was an important motivation for any trip to Jerusalem but also more frequent travels to Rome.

Although the spiritual element was of great importance, it was not the only thing to be gained from such trips. The dignity gained by a visit to Rome or Constantinople is often featured in narratives that describe such trips. The chieftain Gizur Hallsson (d. 1206) was ‘betr metinn í Róma en nökkurr íslenzkr maðr fyrr honum af mennt sinni ok framkvæmð’ [more honoured in Rome than Icelander before him on account of his education and countenance] (Sturlunga saga 1946, 1, p. 60). Through this, Gizur seems to have gained in social capital in Iceland, as he was one of the most esteemed chieftains in the country for decades. However, only noblemen could really use such journeys to a full advantage, as is illustrated in the narratives about the visits of Scandinavian monarchs to Constantinople. Their reception at the hands of the Byzantine emperor and the dignity gained by the trip is an important factor in their comparison. This is nowhere captured more succinctly than in the narrative in Orkneyinga saga concerning Earl Rögnvaldr’s trip to the Holy Land and Constantinople. Rögnvaldr is explicitly encouraged to go on the journey in order to increase his honour, ‘muntu þar bezt virðr, sem þú kemr með tignum mōnnum’ [you will be most esteemed, where you associate with dignitaries] (Orkneyinga saga 1965, p. 194). At the journey’s end it is stated that ‘þóttu þeir allir miklu meira háttar menn síðan, er farit hófðu’ [all of those who had gone on the journey were reckoned to men of greater stature afterwards] (Orkneyinga saga 1965, p. 236). Association with foreign lords increased the honour of the lesser monarchs of the North, and none was more important than the emperor at Constantinople.

It is clear that there was a social advantage to be gained from foreign journeys but in many cases the value of the trip also seems to be educational. It is a well-known theme in the Icelandic family sagas, that promising youngsters were thought to gain much by travelling to foreign courts and ‘skapa sik at góðra manna siðum’ [remould themselves to the manners of noble men] (cf. Sverrir Jakobsson 2001, pp. 23–25). This is also a theme in the earliest sagas

of the Icelandic bishops, such as S. Jón Ögmundarson (c. 1052–1121) who went abroad because he ‘girndisk at sjá góðra manna siðu ok nám sitt at auka, sjálfum sér til nytsemi ok mǫrgum öðrum’ [desired to see the manners of noble men and increase his education, for his own benefit and that of many others] (Biskupa sögur 2003, p. 184). The trip of S. Jón and a similar one made by S. Þorlákr seem to more strictly educational than those made by Icelandic farmer’s sons, and yet there is an inherent similarity in them. Being around noble men and adapting their manners was regarded as an education in itself.

The honour and good manners appropriated by associating with foreign dignitaries were important acquisitions in themselves, but there was also an advantage in returning with some symbols of this glory, such as gifts from a noble lord. For instance, the sword brought back by Sigurðr grikkur (Sigurd the Greek) from Constantinople in the late 12th century became a prize possession fought over by chieftains a couple decades later (Sturlunga saga 1946, 1, p. 261). Ideally, a man who had been in the service of a noble and wealthy lord was able to show some tokens of this service, such as gifts from his venerable master.

Precious gifts from a noble dignitary shared the symbolic value of good manners and a good reputation that were the main benefits of foreign travel. However, they also reflect the fact that the relationship between centre and periphery was not all about symbolism, culture and politics. It was also economical in the sense, that the centres in the South possessed much greater wealth than ever dreamed of by Icelanders bound to their lifestyle of subsistence. It was the sight of that wealth that amazed the Scandinavian noblemen who visited Constantinople, and became the stuff of legends. Even if trinkets gained on travels in the East had no actual value in the Icelandic economy they symbolized the difference between the wealthy centre and the poor periphery; that the one region had much more concentrated wealth and urbanity than the other. It was precisely these trappings of civilization that had the greatest impact on Scandinavians. Consequently, the literature that depicts those journeys offers much space to describe the glory of Constantinople while the depiction of the spiritual exaltedness that the pilgrims experienced at Jerusalem is mainly characterized by its brevity.

Thus, the holy centres of the Mediterranean were no less the material centre of the medieval Icelandic worldview than a spiritual one. There is no denying that the main interest of authors depicting the journeys to the centre is on the strong, secular power at Constantinople rather than the modest holiness at Jerusalem. This is in harmony with how the Icelanders regarded the benefit of foreign travel in general. Its main purpose and benefit was to associate with noble men, adapt their manners and bring back tokens of this association.

The Historical Background

The main argument offered in this paper is firstly that the Icelandic medieval world view was intrinsically allocentric, secondly that Iceland was seen as a peripheral part of a region with its political, cultural and spiritual centre in the Mediterranean, and thirdly that descriptions of the travels of Icelandic and Scandinavian worthies to this centre reflect this dichotomy of periphery and centre.

To counter this, one might argue that the Scandinavians also took pride in their own culture, their ancestors and their achievements. What other purpose would otherwise have been served by the vast literature, mostly composed by Icelanders, that chronicled the achievements of legendary and historical Scandinavian kings of the past? Could they be anything else than the product of a proud and self-centered culture, with a strong identity and sense of self-worth?

To a degree, such observations are valid. And yet we have to consider the framework into which the Icelanders tried to fit the tales of their ancestors. It is a staple of Icelandic genealogies that the lines of important chieftains, beginning at the very least with Jón Loftsson (c.

1124–1197) were traced to monarchs of Troy, mostly through the Norwegian royal house (cf. Úlfar Bragason 2007). This was probably the origin of narratives, found in the Prose Edda, Heimskringla, Hauksbók, Reynistaðabók and many other versions, which trace the origins of Scandinavian royal house to migration from Asia. The migrants who had founded the houses were then equated with the Old Norse gods in an euhemeristic fashion. Although specifics of the story were different from work to work – for instance; the Prose Edda has the gods coming from Asia minor while in Heimskringla they come from Scythia – the main features of the story were inevitably the same, as were its implications, Scandinavian noblemen were seen as the descendants of noble Asian immigrants (Sverrir Jakobsson 2005, pp. 180–84, 207–14).

This might be qualified as another version of the legend of *translatio imperii*, of the passing of secular power from East to West, or in this case the North, which was very much current among European literates in the 12th century. However, there are critical distinctions to be made between such theories and the Old Norse world view in which the royal lines of Scandinavia were seen as migrants from Asia. There was no transfer of power implicit in this narrative. In Icelandic literary circles, there was a reasonable consensus that Asia was still the centre of the world and that the emperor in Constantinople was the ultimate wielder of secular power. This view continued to be predominant in the 13th and 14th centuries when it hardly corresponded to reality any longer. Secondly, the Asian ancestors of Old Norse kings were seen as fugitive from a greater power, although there was no agreement to whether it had been the Roman Empire or the Apostle John who had driven them away from home (Cf. Heimskringla 1 1941, p. 14; Edda Snorra Sturlusonar – Edda Snorronis Sturlæi 1848–1852, 2, p. 636). In any case, these noble and pagan ancestors were seen as less notable than the Roman or Christian masters of the world, even if they were the descendants of the mighty Trojans. The empire never went to the North, but some of its lowly opponents had done so.

Within the narrative framework created by medieval literates in order to fit the ancient mythology into the narrative of Christian and Greco-Roman world history, Old Norse ancient history became a corollary of this greater metanarrative – a parallel history that shadowed the greater events occurring at the world's centre. Thus, Scandinavian history was seen as part of a whole, but it was never the centrepiece of the Christian world history current among Icelandic literates.

Conclusion

The view that a culture normally regards itself as the world's centre does not hold true for Iceland during the Middle Ages. In contrast, Icelandic literates had adopted an allocentric world view that entailed that their own society was a periphery within a larger culture. The main events of sacred and secular world history had occurred in distant places, and in literate discourse the centre of the world is unambiguously located in Asia. Iceland was seen as belonging to a larger unity with all its benefits and constraints, the most important drawback being that Iceland was seen as a peripheral.

If Iceland was a periphery the nature of that peripheral status is open to debate. Was it mostly political, cultural or economic? The most important studies on centres and peripheries concentrate on their economic aspects but that leaves the relationship between centres and peripheries within Medieval Christianity mostly unaccounted for. Even if it did not constitute an economic world-system, there existed a coherence within the Catholic world of the Middle Ages, provided by the Church and the legacy of the Roman Empire. Rome, Jerusalem and Constantinople were the cultural and political centres of this entity.

The distance of Iceland from the political, cultural and economic centres had to be compensated for. A journey to the centres of power could increase the cultural capital of the participants. It is a topos in narratives depicting such journeys that the prestige of those had gone

on them had increased. This was reflected in several ways. For instance, a person who had spent time with foreign dignitaries was supposed to have adapted good manners. He had remoulded himself to the manners of noble men. It was also an advantage to be able to show tokens of the respect one had gained at the hands of foreign dignitaries, and gifts from a noble lord usually served as such tokens.

A closeness to the centre of the world was also implied by the fact that the ancestors of the Scandinavian royal houses are traditionally depicted as immigrants from Asia. The genealogical link granted the families of Scandinavian kings and Icelandic noblemen a share in the symbolic capital that could be gained from association with the centres of the world. Looking back in time, these places had at one time belonged to the noblest Scandinavian families. A journey to these centres was thus in one sense a journey home.

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From Syria to Iceland: The Saga of St. Thomas the apostle (*Tómas saga postula*)

Pórður Ingi Guðjónsson, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, Iceland

This paper concerns the Old Icelandic saga of St. Thomas the Apostle and my recently published edition of the text. Accounts of the life, missionary work, miracles and death of St. Thomas originate in the early Christian period. The *Acta Thomae*, or Acts of St. Thomas the Apostle, were composed early in the third century, most probably in eastern Syria. The Old Icelandic *Tómas saga postula* stems from the ancient *Acta Thomae*, but there is a long route of transmission from the original Greek and Syrian texts. There are two Latin versions: *De miraculis beati Thomae apostoli* and *Passio sancti Thomae apostoli*. *Tómas saga* is a translation of the latter. The Old Icelandic saga is extant in two versions, one of which is incomplete. These versions appear to stem from two independent translations and there is no doubt that both are from the late 12th or early 13th century. The paper discusses the preservation of the saga in Icelandic manuscripts and how the text differs and develops with respect to wording and style. The main manuscripts are *Codex Scardensis* (SÁM 1), AM 652 4to, AM 630 4to and AM 656 I 4to.

The paper also considers how the translation of saints' lives in twelfth-century Iceland influenced the development of the Icelandic language and helped to establish its use in literary works. The paper emphasizes the importance of critical editions of Old Icelandic hagiographic literature. Sagas of the apostles and other saints' lives are a neglected field in Old Norse studies, but it is important to examine early texts of this kind more closely in order to appreciate the development of the Icelandic language and literature in the middle ages. Sagas of the apostles and other saints are clearly important with respect to the history of medieval Icelandic or Norse literature and culture, but they must also be studied in connection with the international literature and culture of medieval Europe.

The Versions of *Böglunga saga*

Þorleifur Hauksson, Reykjavík Academy, Iceland

Böglunga saga is one of the “contemporary sagas” which deal with the Norwegian kings of the thirteenth century. The saga describes the period 1202–1217 in Norwegian history. It is written as a sequel to *Sverris saga*, beginning directly after King Sverrir’s death when his son Hákon is appointed as his successor. After only two years on the throne, Hákon became suddenly ill and died, and civil war broke out again between the Baglar and the Birkibeinar. This war, raging from 1204 up to the settlement at Hvítungseyjar (Kvitsøyane) 1208, is the main subject, what I shall call the ‘core’ of *Böglunga saga*. With the settlement, one of the two versions of the saga, the shorter version, ends, whereas the longer version continues, describing the main episodes of the following years, until the death of King Ingi Bárðarson 1217.

These two versions of *Böglunga saga*, here called S and L, and the relation between them, has been a matter of debate from the time of its first edition in 1813. It has been difficult to resolve mainly because of the poor preservation of L. Only three short fragments of this version have survived in Old Norse. For the rest we have to depend on the Danish translation of Peder Claussøn Friis from about 1600. A comparison between the L-fragments and this translation indicates that it is a reasonably faithful representation of its lost original, “despite certain corrupted details and the translator’s tendency both to abridge and to add a few sentences of his own” (Helle 1958: 112). When trying to establish the original text of the L-version through the lens of this translation, one of course stands on a rather unstable ground.

Just a few words about the manuscripts. There is general agreement about the relation between the S-manuscripts. Two vellum manuscripts are preserved which derive from two independent transcripts of this version, Eirspennill, AM 47 fol. and Skálholtsbók yngri, AM 81a fol. The former is slightly abridged, so that in a forthcoming edition in *Íslenzk fornrit*, Skálholtsbók yngri is used as the main manuscript of the S-version, with amendments from Eirspennill, which then is the main text at the end, where the Skálholtsbók text is incomplete.

Knut Helle discovered one textual detail which, according to his opinion, was a strong indication that L derived from the Skálholtsbók branch of the S-version. Helle Jensen pointed out a flaw in his argumentation, and Hallvard Magerøy showed how this instance can be explained by reconstructing various omissions in all the manuscripts involved (Magerøy 1988: 41–46; Helle 1958: 88–90; Jensen 1979: 67–70). To make a long story short, it seems that S and L derive from two independent transcripts. But that does not solve the dispute about which version is closer to the original.

L not only extends over a longer period than S. Some of its chapters are also more detailed and elaborate than the corresponding chapters in S. In these parts of L, one perceives an apparent interest and sympathy with the Birkibeinar, while the Baglar chieftains, especially Bishop Nikulás Árnason and the later king Erlingr steinveggr, are shown in an unfavorable light.

Knut Helle has compared the versions thoroughly and made a list of details and episodes which are found in one version and not the other (Helle 1958: 49–72). It turns out that the most important items which S has besides L concentrate on the Baglar side and thus seem to spring from the Baglar tradition. On the other hand, most of the ample material which L has, beyond what is in S, is Birkibeinar material.

The narrative in S is relatively impartial and objective, but the events described are most often told from a Baglar point of view. The text is rather short and compact and has very few “scenes” (Clover 1982: 180–182). There are only four chapters which can be defined as such: the story of King Ingi’s narrow escape during the Baglar invasion in Niðaróss 1206; the

events in connection with Philippus Símonarson becoming Baglar king 1207; the attempts by Bishop Nikulás to mediate between the Baglar and the Birkibeinar the same year, both episodes being more detailed and elaborate in L; and finally the concluding story in S, directly following the Hvítungseyjar agreement. This is the episode at Nesjar in Vestfold where a mysterious stranger visits a blacksmith and asks him to shoe his horse, and it turns out that the visitor is the god Óðinn himself who is now leaving Norway for Sweden. There, four days later, a major battle takes place at Leinar in Western Götaland between the two rivals for the Swedish throne. This episode has been disputed. Finnur Jónsson, who considered S to be the original text, thought it to be a later addendum, and Hallvard Magerøy, who considered L to be closest to the original version, thought that the writer of S broke the correct saga-chronology here by taking the episode out of its rightful context and making it an appendix (Finnur Jónsson 1923: 634; Magerøy 1988, 152–154). Knut Helle, on the contrary, saw it as a well-placed symbolic conclusion. Almost throughout, the saga has been describing the turbulent years between 1204 and 1208. Now peace has been established – Óðinn has left the country (Helle 1958, 71–72). This scholarly disagreement shows in a nutshell the different opinions that are held on the relationship between these two versions.

In many cases where S only presents the events in a brief summary, these are described in L as whole scenes or episodes. Let us take a few examples.

In the beginning of S, the appointment of Hákon Sverrisson as King is mentioned in one sentence. Here, we have a whole scene in L; it begins when the Birkibeinar chieftains board their ship in Bergen after King Sverrir's death and describes their arrival in Niðaróss, their reception at the young Prince's quarters and how they tell him the news of his father's death. Finally, the court is summoned to announce Hákon as the new king.

The beginning of the conflict between King Hákon and his stepmother Margrét is also described in one sentence in S: "He sent for his sister Kristín and carried her off against the Queen's will and took her belongings in his care" (Soga om Birkebeinar og Baglar 1988: 7–8). A corresponding scene in L begins with the worries of the Birkibeinar because of the princess' planned departure from the country. Then one of their most prominent men, Pétr steypir, travels to Oslo and manages to abduct the girl while her mother the Queen is taking a bath. She becomes very angry and curses the kidnappers. The scene ends with Pétr giving the princess to her brother and she is received with great honour.

The description of the rise of Erlingr steinveggr who later becomes a Baglar king, is also built up as a scene or episode in L. Compared with S, it includes additional information intended to substantiate the Birkibeinar assumption that Erlingr was an impostor. In L, Erlingr is always called by his nickname *steinveggr* and never called King after he ascends the throne.

The death of both the Birkibeinar kings, Hákon and Guttormr, is described in much greater detail in L than in S. In both cases, the suspect is a Swedish woman, first Queen Margrét, thought to be responsible for the death of Hákon, and then her niece Kristín in connection with the death of Guttormr. Here the dialogue in L is very emotional, which is not common in Icelandic sagas.

The description of Erlingr steinveggr's efforts to prove his royal descent by *járnburðr* and Bishop Nikulás' part in this event is very briefly summarized in S, compared with L. Here we have a long episode, during which the Bishop visits Valdimar, King of Denmark, and asks him to support his nephew Philippus as king in Norway. When Bishop Nikulás later realizes that the Baglar are determined to have Erlingr as king, he changes his tactics and suggests as a compromise that Philippus shall become Earl. Afterwards it is strongly hinted that the Bishop falsifies the outcome of the *járnburðr* in Erlingr's favour. In S there is no indication of the Bishop's interference in that matter.

The last long description which L has besides S in this section is the flashback about King Sverrir's sister Cecilia and her husbands. Her son with Lawman Fólkvíðr of Götaland was

Hákon galinn, whereas Ingi was the son of her later husband, Bárðr Guttormsson. As Knut Helle has pointed out, the reason for the inclusion of this episode has been the need to demonstrate that Ingi was in fact not only of royal descent through his mother but also her legitimate heir, since archbishop Eysteinn declared Cecilia's former marriage as unlawful (Helle 1958, 86).

Directly after this, when Ingi has been appointed king by the Birkibeinar, the two versions follow one another closely for the most part, until the end of S. In this section, we have a detailed account of the skirmishes between the forces of the Baglar and the Birkibeinar during the following years, 1204–1208. This is the 'core' of the saga, closing with the Hvítungseyjar settlement.

In Hvítungseyjar, the Birkibeinar are more numerous than the Baglar, so that they are in a position to determine the outcome. The terms of the settlement are that Ingi shall be king and the Baglar king, Philippus Símonarson, shall be his earl and that he shall have Kristín, King Sverrir's daughter, as his bride. In connection with the settlement in Hvítungseyjar, L again contains a couple of "scenes" which are not found in S. The first is a rendering of the conversation between Kristín and Bishop Nikulás where he persuades her to marry Philippus. This conversation demonstrates the princess' proud stance in not wanting to marry anyone less noble than her deceased father and grandfather, and in addition the slyness and eloquence of the bishop. L goes on to describe in some detail the humiliation Philippus has to endure in order to reach a truce with the Birkibeinar, because they are superior in number:

da sagde K. Ingi, dette er det første Naffn oc Titel at du skalt hede Philippus [...] der met bleff Moden oc Tinget endet, oc Baglerne ginge til skibs igen. Arnbiørn Jonsson gick jefnsidis hos Philippus, oc hand pleiede at lede hannem, Philippus racte hannem sin Haand, men Arnbiørn sagde, men leed dig nu sielf (Soga om Birkebeinar og Baglar 1988: 117).

In both versions, there is an account of Philippus celebrating his wedding to Kristín in Oslo where Queen Margrét, his mother-in-law, attends the festivities. L adds that she dies shortly afterwards, and Philippus gets a little rehabilitation in the eyes of the reader when he skilfully manages to get hold of her inheritance and have it transported from Götaland to Norway. We have come to the close of S, but L continues, accounting for the most important events connected with the chieftains, especially King Ingi Bárðarson, until his death in 1217. Now the events are no longer told in rapid succession as before. Instead, the most important events are recounted, but mostly without any effort to assign them to a point in time. L ends with a necrology of King Ingi. His description is exceptionally vivid and indicates that the author's source was someone who knew the king personally:

Han blundet gerne med det ene øye, naar hand vilde see noget grandgifulig (Soga om Birkebeinar og Baglar 1988: 128).

To summarize: The extra material in L is concentrated in the first chapters, including the death of King Guttormr, and appears again in the section equivalent to the last chapters of S, just before this version ends. In the middle part, i.e. the 'core', the versions correspond closely to each other.

The divergent theories

As mentioned before, scholars have disagreed which of the versions, L or S, is closer to the original. In 1958, Knut Helle examined this problem in detail in his monograph *Omkring Bøglungasögur*. His conclusion was that the saga is a composite of two different traditions, on the one hand a compact Baglar tradition covering the war years 1204–1208 and on the other a

more sporadic Birkibeinar tradition from the period 1202–1217. According to Helle, S is a homogeneous entity, whereas L is a mixture of these two traditions. The most natural explanation, in his opinion, is that the S-version is the original one. Somewhat later it was copied in L and combined with new material from other sources (Helle 1958: 113–114).

Hallvard Magerøy published a fine textual edition of the saga 1988. In his introduction, he discusses the relation between S and L. Contrary to Knut Helle, he comes to the conclusion that L, not S, represents the saga in its original form and that it was a direct continuation of the official saga-writing at the Birkibeinar court which King Sverrir started when he had the saga about himself written. According to Magerøy, the original plan of *Böglunga saga* was to describe the whole reign of the three Birkibeinar kings, Hákon, Guttormr and Ingi. Only afterwards was S written, based on the part of L which describes the first half of this period, between 1202 and 1210. Since S was written at the Baglar court, the scribe omitted some stories concentrating on the Birkibeinar, and also material which might be considered as degrading for the Baglar kings.

Magerøy does not discuss Helle's arguments directly. Instead, he bases his conclusions on some general principles, mainly concerning the genre of thirteenth century contemporary Kings' sagas (Magerøy 1988: 47–53):

1. The author acts as a historian, writing about contemporary events. Therefore, one may assume that the version which is more historically true is as a rule closer to the original.

2. In the kings' sagas events were generally described in the right chronological order. A version containing mistakes in chronology or where events are taken out of their chronological context is likely to be a later transcript.

3. A saga composed by an author is necessarily characterized by an inherent harmony. The author is sure to have a comprehensive view of his material. The same does not apply to a later scribe who is likely to make mistakes, omit parts of the text and then have recourse to some kind of a "reparation" later on, regarding e.g. chronology and the sequence of events.

4. One of the main characteristics of kings' sagas is that they deal with the whole life or the whole reign of the protagonist. Other kings are only mentioned when they are involved in important events in the life of the protagonist. And in connection with the announcement of his death, the king is always portrayed in a summary, a "necrology", as is done in *Sverris saga* and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*. In *Böglunga saga* we find such necrologies only for the Birkibeinar kings and for the Birkibeinn Earl Hákon galinn. This, according to Magerøy, shows that the saga was originally intended as a biography of the Birkibeinar kings. It can be mentioned here that in the S-version there is only one necrology, of King Hákon Sverrisson. It is difficult to draw any conclusion from that, since there doesn't seem to be any textual relation between this and the corresponding obituary in the L-version. The preserved kings' sagas from this period are so few that it is difficult to generalize about them, or about early stages in the writing of sagas to which we only have access in later transcripts.

Even though Magerøy's conclusions about the manuscript relations seem to be convincing, it doesn't follow necessarily that his conclusions about the relations between the two versions are indisputable. Practically all the examples he quotes from the saga can be explained differently, if we presume, as Knut Helle did, that S represents the original version. For example, it doesn't seem likely that the scribe of S would pass so quickly over events connected with Hákon Sverrisson – his coming to power, the abduction of his sister Kristín and his death – if he really had access to the detailed description preserved in L. When reading the text of S, one has the feeling that the writer had limited access to sources about this first period in the saga, rather than that he chose to leave out this information.

As mentioned before, in the part of the saga dealing with the civil war 1204–1208, the versions follow one another quite closely. Until then, S has been rather brief and in summary form. What follows are minute descriptions of attacks and counterattacks between the Baglar

and the Birkibeinar. Instead of scattered episodes with a vague assignment in time, we here have a continuous narrative, sometimes even from one day to another.

Ólafía Einarsdóttir has studied the dating of events in various Icelandic sagas (Ólafía Einarsdóttir 1964: 217–232). Here she has shown how the narrative of *Sverris saga* is told in a distinctly chronological manner, even though only one year is indicated by number, namely 1202, when Sverrir died. The reader keeps track of the course of events through reference to the seasons of each year and to where the kings stayed during the winter, as well as their activities during spring and summer, and besides there is an exact dating of important battles and other incidents.

Böglunga saga is quite different in this respect. The narrative in the middle part is very detailed as I said before, and quite often the course of events is described from one day to another, from Sunday to Monday, etc., but there is no further information about its assignment in time. The only exception is when the events happen to take place during Easter; then we have the words *langifréjádagr*, *annarr dagr páska*. A couple of times there is a mention of particular saints' days, as is so frequent in *Sverris saga*, but this form of dating is always inexact: “um várit fyrir Bótólfsmessu”, “á bak Jónsvöku”. Passages like the one that follows indicate strongly that the original source is some kind of a contemporary annal which has been written down almost day by day while the events took place:

Mánadaginn kom konungrinn til bæjarins. Týsdaginn gekk fólkit ór borginni. Óðinsdaginn var rannsakat í borginni, en þórsdaginn brennd. Frjádaginn at kveldi var til tekit at brjóta borgina ok allan laugardaginn. Þá kom þeim njósn, at Hákon jarl færi austan. Lögðu þeir því sunnudaginn út í Flóruvága (Soga om Birkebeinar og Baglar 1988: 98–99).

One is reminded of the preface of *Sverris saga* where there is a reference to various sources, among them eye-witnesses who themselves had taken part in battles with King Sverrir:

Sum þessi tíðendi váru svá í minni fest at menn rituðu þegar eftir at nýorðin váru, ok hafa þau ekki breytzk síðan (*Sverris saga* 2007: 3).

So it seems plausible that the first draft of *Böglunga saga* was some kind of an annal of the events of the years 1204–8, sometimes a day to day account, necessarily by someone belonging to the Baglar camp. The original of *Böglunga saga* was the first adaptation of this source and the versions preserved must derive from it.

The L-version ends with the death of King Ingi Bárðarson 1217. It is interesting to note that his successor, Hákon Hákonarson, is hardly mentioned. On the other hand, Hákon's rival, Skúli Bárðarson, turns up in six episodes in L. As a child he is moved into the wilderness to escape being caught by the men of Bishop Nikulás, almost as in the story of Hákon's ordeal as a child in *Hákonar saga*; he is the right hand of his brother Ingi who makes him an earl on his death-bed. After he dies, Skúli conducts his funeral ceremony and makes precious offerings for his soul. This indicates that L was finished not later than 1223, when the lawmen decreed that Hákon was the right and lawful heir to Norway according to the Law of Saint Óláfr (Helle 1958, 92).

The part of the saga reaching from 1202 to 1208 must have been written down shortly after the events described. Magerøy argued that L was written in two stages and that the section covering the period 1210–1217 was written later, either by the same author or another, and that this part was possibly written under the auspices of Earl Skúli.

In the beginning of the saga there is, in L only, a flashback concerning Erlingr steinveggr, which is intended to show that the present Erlingr was an impostor. This story begins when Erlingr first enters the scene in 1203. Similar allusions are found in *Hákonar saga*

Hákonarsonar, and the reason there is quite obvious, namely that one of the pretenders for the Norwegian throne was Sigurðr ribbungr, Erlingr's son. He became leader of the insurgent force Ribbungar in the winter 1219–1220. This could be a strong argument for assuming that the whole L-version was written around 1220, as an expanded transcript of S. There is, of course, the possibility that the scribe of S wiped out all these Skúli- and Erlingr-episodes. But the motivation for writing them originally must have come from events around 1220, not 1210. There are many other indirect arguments supporting the theory that L indeed is a secondary version. Behind it, one can perceive a deliberate author who treats his material according to a deliberate perspective, somewhat similar to the author of *Sverris saga*. Such an author would be likely to rewrite some episodes according to different sources and correct chronological errors and other inconsistencies in his original.

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Magic in sagas: the curses of Katla and Glámr

Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen, Dept. of language and literature,
Volda University College, Norway

When curses occur in Icelandic family sagas, they are framed within stories going on in the past, mostly in the decades around the turn of the first millennium. This period is relatively distant to the saga authors, who create their tales from oral and written traditions, and from their own understanding of the past. Thus, curses in saga stories are only indirectly related to the curses that were practised in this period. The major difference between proper magic practice and curses in sagas (or for that matter, in an Eddic poem like *Skírnismál*) is the relationship between curse and context. The magic curse belongs to the “primary speech genres,” if we apply Mikhail M. Bakhtin’s terminology, while curses in sagas are adapted to the more complex texts in which they are integrated: “These primary genres are altered and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones. They lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others” (Bakhtin 1986, 62). In this paper, the term “literary curses” refers to curses that have lost their “immediate relation to actual reality”, curses that are working within scenes and stories that are imagined or dramatized. “Literary” in this context does not imply the meaning “written”. The term is simply used to distinguish curses in magic practice from curses that are framed in stories.

This paper investigates two curses in two Icelandic family sagas, Katla’s curse in *Eyrbyggja saga* and Glámr’s curse in *Grettis saga*. These two curses play important thematic and structural roles in their respective sagas, and can be used to question Theodore M. Andersson’s (2006, 16) claim that the “sorcerer and ghost stories” in sagas “have no particular function”. By focusing on the use of curses in *Eyrbyggja* and *Grettis saga*, we can perhaps see more clearly how curses might function within sagas.

The story about the witch Katla and her son Oddr (chapter 20) belongs to what Vésteinn Ólason (1989, 190) calls the “land-cleansing pattern,” stories about chieftains and powerful men who cleanse the land of sorcerers and witches. In state of sexual jealousy, Katla attacks an innocent man with magic, and then manages to get an innocent woman charged for Katla’s own witchcraft. However, the deception is exposed and both Katla and Oddr are killed. Before Katla is stoned to death by Arnkell goði and his men, she pronounces a curse which later turns out to have fatal consequences:

[E]n þú, Arnkell [...] mátt eigi af þinni móður illt hljóta, er þú átt enga á lífi, en um þat vilda ek at mín ákvæði stæðisk, at þú hlytir því verra af feðr þínum en Oddr hefir af mér hlotit, sem þú hefir meira í hættu en hann; vænti ek ok, at þat sé mælt áðr lýkr, at þú eigir illan fǫður. (*Eyrbyggja saga*, 54)

As for you, Arnkel, since your mother’s dead, she can’t bring you bad luck: but I lay this curse on you, that before this is over you’ll suffer more because of your father than Odd has suffered because of me. The time will come when everyone will see what kind of scoundrel your father is. (*Eyrbyggja saga*, trans., 63)

This curse is integrated in the land-cleansing episode, and explains events that occur later in the saga. Arnkell’s father becomes more and more unpleasant in his old age. He causes trouble to his son as well as to other people in the vicinity. When he finally is dead and buried, his antisocial behaviour continues, as can be read in chapter 34. Katla’s curse does more than it promises, since Arnkell’s father returns as a living dead who murders the living and causes them to be mad with fear. In the end, Arnkell moves the uncorrupted and horrifying corpse of

Þórólfr Bægifótr to what later was known as “Bægifótr’s knoll” (Bægifótshöfði). Arnkell builds a high wall to prevent Þórólfr from returning to the living, and it seems to work until the end of the saga.

In chapter 63, long after Arnkell’s death, Þórólfr has found his way over or through the wall which Arnkell built. Again, he kills both beast and men and obviously scares people out of their wit. The landowner Þóroddr Þorbrandsson goes with his men to Þórólfr’s mound, and they break it open. The corpse is still not decomposed, and it is terrifying, black and big as an ox (*Eyrbyggja saga*, 169–170; trans., 156). It turns out that Þórólfr has grown extremely heavy through the years, so that Þóroddr and his men hardly manage to tilt the body out of the grave using a lever. The corpse is rolled down to the shore and burnt on a pyre. Although it takes a long time for the flames to affect the dead body of Þórólfr, it is finally burnt to ashes. The ashes are thrown on the sea, but the wind blows some of them around on the shore. This enables the evil forces to continue their attacks on society through a remarkable chain of events involving a series of “coincidences.” Þóroddr lets a cow with a broken leg graze in the area where the corpse of Þórólfr was burnt. It needs to be said that she is alone in this area, and no bulls are supposed to be present. The cow happens to lick the stones on which some of the ashes had blown, and this probably explains why the cow is pregnant when she returns to Þóroddr’s farm. She gives birth to two calves, a heifer and a bull calf. The bull calf called Glæsir grows much faster than calves usually do. The old foster-mother of Þóroddr warns him that the calf is an abnormal animal when she hears Glæsir’s bellowing: “Þetta eru trolls læti, en eigi annars kvikendis” (*Eyrbyggja saga*, 171); “That isn’t a natural creature’s voice, it’s a monster’s” (trans., 157). The worries of Þóroddr’s foster-mother are not groundless. The bull ends up killing Þóroddr in a terrible rage, and when that is done, his task is obviously completed. Glæsir runs off only to drown in a quagmire. Thus the horrible consequences of Katla’s curse come to an end.¹

The story of Katla’s curse forms a narrative thread in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Although the story is linked to more human conflicts, it also forms a more or less independent structure which is not dealing with the more common saga conflicts between persons, families, and clans.² In this case, the conflict is between evil sorceres and supernatural forces which threaten to disrupt the stability of human society, and the human forces which attempt to defend society against disorder and disintegration. This conflict is comparable to the one present in mythological narratives like *Snorra Edda* and *Völuspá*. Although there is an element of feud in the story of the struggle between gods and giants (Lindow 1997), the parties in the conflict are comparable to those present in the story of Katla’s curse: the conflict is between forces threatening the social order of gods and men on one side, and protectors of the same order on the other side. There are also other correspondences (Thorvaldsen 2001), one of them being the extreme persistence associated with the forces of chaos. The similarities suggest that the story can be considered a “prolonged echo” of older ways of structuring the struggle between chaos and order, perversity and normality. I do not claim that the story about Katla’s curse and its consequences is pagan or very old, rather it seems that some older, underlying views on supernatural, dark forces and magic abilities are reapplied and redefined in saga fiction like other themes and structures (Clunies Ross 1998). The curse pronounced by Katla introduces a structure within *Eyrbyggja saga* that gains meaning from the more general conflict between good and evil, order and disorder. Supernatural forces and fateful devilish magic form the background to understand the chain of events which Katla’s curse introduces.

¹ For a more thorough and detailed presentation of this story, see Thorvaldsen (2001). Vésteinn Ólason (2003, 162–166) also treats this story in detail, with special focus on the motif of the “living dead”.

² Vésteinn Ólason (1989, 190) notes that sorcerers and witches within the “land-cleansing pattern” are most often unrelated to the families involved in the saga stories.

The second curse which I want to draw your attention to, is the curse of Glámr in *Grettis saga*. It is probable that the story involving this curse is directly inspired by the story about Katla's curse in *Eyrbyggja saga*. As Guðni Jónsson shows in the introduction to the Íslenzk fornrit-edition (*Grettis saga*, XXVIII–XXIX), the similarities involve a number of correspondences in subject matter and even in phrasing. The author of *Grettis saga* has probably used matter from *Eyrbyggja*, Guðni Jónsson argues, and the nature and extent of the similarities support the idea of literary borrowing.³ It is, however, important to note that the author of *Grettis saga* has been very creative in the use of material from *Eyrbyggja*. He lets himself be inspired by the structural abilities of the curse, and he reuses many details from *Eyrbyggja*, but the story about Glámr's curse is a completely different one, not at least since it is framed within the peculiar story about the abnormal strength and tragic misfortune of Grettir the strong.

The hero Grettir is presented as an obstinate person with a somewhat immoderate self-esteem, already in his childhood (see chapter 14). However, when he comes of age, and has the opportunity to prove himself, he turns out to be remarkably strong and powerful. First, he kills a man in a quarrel over a bag of lunch (chapter 16). Thus he gets outlawed, travels to Norway, where he kills berserks, bears and men, and finally is outlawed even there for killing affiliates of the king. He goes back to Iceland, and now the most important thematic aspect is revealed (chapter 28). Grettir has gained fame for his achievements in Norway, and he is generally considered to be without equals at his own age. The fame goes to his head, and he starts thinking that there is nothing he cannot manage: “Þá gerðisk ofsi Grettis svá mikill, at honum þótti sér ekki ófært” (*Grettis saga*, 95); “At this stage, Grettir had grown so overbearing that he felt nothing was beyond him” (trans., 66). His overconfidence and aggressive behaviour are shown in the episodes which follow. For example, he attacks Auðun without any other reason than a youth quarrel, and he attempts to attack a company of men which he originally intended to join. Grettir needs to confirm his unsurpassable strength, and that leads him into a fight with a living dead.

In chapter 32, the saga turns to Þórhallr, who is afflicted with a troll which haunts his farm. Thus, he has trouble finding men who are willing to risk their lives herding his livestock. He manages, however, to employ a certain Glámr, who is Swedish, and has an unchristian personality. He avoids going to church, collects the sheep by magic and is quite explicit in his opposition towards the Christian faith. He demands food when he – according to Christian customs – is supposed to abstain from eating. When the house wife is reluctant to serve him, he says: “þótti mér þá betri siðr, er menn váru heiðnir kallaðir, ok vil ek hafa mat minn, en engar refjur” (*Grettis saga*, 111); “I preferred the way people were when they were called heathens. I want my food and don't try any tricks” (trans., 77). Apart from Glámr's heathen sympathies, he does his job well and shows no fear of the troll. One night he encounters it, fights with it and manages to give it fatal injuries, but he is himself killed in the struggle. Although the troll is gone, the problems of haunting are not eliminated. Glámr reappears as a malevolent living dead who threatens to leave the whole valley of Vatnsdalr uninhabited, due to the damage and fear he causes (chapter 33).

When Grettir hears of this, he goes to Þórhallr's farm to encounter Glámr. The descriptions of Grettir's fight with Glámr appear in chapter 35, and remind – perhaps coincidentally – of the presentation of Beowulf's encounter with Grendel.⁴ To make a rather long and detailed story short, Grettir manages to overpower Glámr with bodily strength. The ghost tries to drag

³ The paraphrases offered in this paper cannot illustrate the extent of these similarities. See Guðni Jónsson's introduction to *Grettis saga* (pp. XXVIII–XXIX).

⁴ Magnús Fjalldal (1998, 24–27, 41–44, 120–125) argues that the similarities are not due to any kind of literary borrowing.

Grettir out of the house in which Grettir has barricaded himself, but Grettir suddenly uses all his force to push in the same direction as Glámr pulls. Glámr does not expect this and falls on his back with Grettir over him. But the clouds drift away from the moon, and when Grettir sees the eyes of Glámr staring at him he is for a while left powerless with fear and exhaustion. This enables Glámr to pronounce a curse which seals Grettir's unfortunate fate:

Mikit kapp hefir þú á lagit, Grettir, [...] at finna mik, en þat mun eigi undarligt þykkja, þó at þú hljótir ekki mikit happ af mér. En þat má ek segja þér, at þú hefir nú fengit helming afls þess ok þroska, er þér var ætlaðr, ef þú hefðir mik ekki fundit; nú fæ ek þat afl eigi af þér tekit, er þú hefir áðr hreppt, en því má ek ráða, at þú verðr aldri sterkari en nú ertu, ok ertu þó nógu sterkr, ok at því mun mörögum verða. Þú hefir frægr orðit hér til af verkum þínum, en heðan af munu falla til þín sekðir ok vígaferli, en flest öll verk þín snúask þér til ógæfu ok hamingjuleysis. Þú munt verða útlægr gorr ok hljóta jafnan úti at búa einn samt. Þá legg ek þat á við þik, at þessi augu sé þér jafnan fyrir sjónum, sem ek ber eptir, ok mun þér þá erfitt þykkja einum at vera, ok þat mun þér til dauða draga. (*Grettis saga*, 121)

You have gone to great lengths to confront me, Grettir, [...] and it won't seem surprising if you do not earn much good fortune from me. I can tell you that you have attained half the strength and manhood allotted to you had you not encountered me. I cannot take away from you the strength you have already achieved, but I can ordain that you will never become any stronger than you are now, strong enough as you may be, as many people will find out to their cost. You have become renowned until now for your deeds, but henceforth outlawry and killings will fall to your lot and most of your deeds will bring you misfortune and improvidence. You will be made an outlaw and be forced to live alone and outdoors. And this curse I lay on you: my eyes will always be before your sight and this will make you find it difficult to be alone. And this will lead to your death. (*Grettis saga*, trans., 85)

After the curse is pronounced, Grettir manages to collect himself, and he kills Glámr. Thus Grettir succeeds in his land-cleansing. But like Katla's curse in *Eyrbyggja saga*, the curse of Glámr affects later events in the saga story. In fact, it determines Grettis lifespan, and forms the background for all the stories about Grettir that follow it.

Before we turn to a selection of episodes in which the curse is “visible,” it is fruitful to return to the question of thematic functions. I mentioned earlier that Grettir is presented as an *ofsamaðr*, an overtly aggressive man with a self-confidence which is out of proportions. The encounter with Glámr is Grettir's fatal mistake and it is directly caused by his overbearing nature. Glámr's curse is what shapes the tragic consequences of his *ofsi*. This development is closely related to the concept of fate which is present, at times explicitly, in *Grettis saga*. In his book on saga composition, Albert Ulrik Bååth (1885) puts much weight on the role of fate, especially in the structure of *Vatnsdæla saga*. Among other things, he points to the use of Old Norse terms denoting good and bad luck, terms of which there are many in *Vatnsdæla*.⁵ In a footnote, Bååth (1885, 22–23) mentions the subject of fate in *Grettis saga*. As Bååth rightly points out, Grettir is explicitly called a man of bad luck in the saga,⁶ and his misfortune is certainly shaping the course of events. It is important to note, however, that the curse transforms the theme of Grettir's misfortune into a tragic narrative structure.

⁵ Tommy Danielsson (1986, 60) doubts that fate can be considered a structural principle in *Vatnsdæla*, but he considers fate to be a subject in the saga.

⁶ In chapter 31, Þórarinn inn spaki says this about Grettir: “[M]ikill ofsi er honum í skapi, ok grundar mik um, hversu heilladrjúgr hann verðr” (*Grettis saga*, 104–105); “[H]e is a man of unbridled temper and I doubt how much good fortune he will enjoy” (trans., 73). Another example is Óláfr Haraldsson in chapter 39, who speaks to Grettir: “Mikill ógæfumaðr ertu, Grettir, [...] ok mun eigi hægt at gera við ógæfu þinni” (*Grettis saga*, 133–134); “You are an ill-fated man, Grettir [...] Nothing can be done about your ill-fortune” (trans., 93–94).

Although Grettir is associated with bad luck even before Glámr pronounces his curse, his fate is more clearly a subject after the curse is pronounced. In the story about his second travel to Norway, it becomes clear that Grettir's life is manipulated not only by bad luck as an abstract phenomenon, but by supernatural and devilish forces "directing" the chain of events in which he is involved. After his arrival in Norway, in chapter 38, he travels northward along the coast together with some merchants. However, due to a number of unhappy coincidences, he is unjustly blamed for committing arson somewhere south of Staðr, in a fire incident which lead to the death of Þórir Skeggjason's sons. The saga emphasizes that Grettir is not to blame for the fire – it is his misfortune which causes the incident to be perceived as arson. When Grettir meets king Óláfr in Þrándheimr (chapter 39), the king has already heard the rumours about the fire. However, he believes Grettir's version of the story, and gives him the opportunity to prove his innocence by carrying hot iron. On the day of the ordeal, a young boy runs up to him in church, compares him to thieves and evil-doers, and calls him by rude names. Grettir loses his temper and knocks the boy on the ear. Some claim that the boy died on the spot. However, nobody knew the boy, and "þat ætla menn helzt, at þat hafi verit óhreinn andi, sendr til óheilla Gretti" (*Grettis saga*, 133); "the most common explanation is that he was an evil spirit sent to bring Grettir bad luck" (trans., 93). From being invisibly present in a chain of "coincidences", the evil forces manifest when Grettir attempts to rid himself of the arson charges. Thus the ordeal fails, and Glámr's curse is certainly echoing in these events: "munu falla til þín sekðir ok vígaferli, en flest qll verk þín snúask þér til ógæfu ok hamingjuleysis"; "outlawry and killings will fall to your lot and most of your deeds will bring you misfortune and improvidence". In the dialogue between Grettir and king Óláfr which succeeds the demon-episode, the king speaks of Grettir's ill fate, and refers to the curse: "ef nokkurum manni hefir verit fyrirmælt, þá mun þér hótí helzt" (*Grettis saga*, 134); "If any man have ever been accursed, it must surely be you" (trans., 94). After a while, Grettir sails back to Iceland, only to realize that Þórir Skeggjason has managed to get him outlawed for the burning incident that took place in Norway.

Many stories about Grettir follow, and they mostly focus on the remarkable strength that Grettir possesses, but the stories move slowly in the direction which Glámr predicted in his curse. When it is close to reaching its end, the curse again manifests. Grettir has escaped to Drangey. A certain Þorbjörn Qngull has made a deal with the owners of Drangey to buy a large part of the island cheaply if he drives Grettir away (*Grettis saga*, 236; trans., 167). Because of Drangey's steep sides, it is impossible to get onto the island when it is defended. In chapter 78, Þorbjörn turns to his foster-mother, Þuríðr, for advice, and the saga informs us that she was quite familiar with pagan sorcery, which she had practised before the land was Christianised. Hence, she is an excellent medium for the devilish force of Glámr's curse. Þuríðr curses a log that sails against the wind to Drangey. Grettir attempts to chop it up for firewood, but the axe slides and hits him. The magic spells of Þuríðr thus infect him, and he soon realizes that he is about to die. When he is weak with illness, the old witch sends Þorbjörn Qngull and his men off to Drangey. Due to the unreliable Glaumr, who stays with Grettir and his brother Illugi, a ladder which goes down to the shore is neither dragged up nor watched. Thus, Þorbjörn and his men easily get onto the island, and manage to kill both Grettir and Illugi. Qngull expects to get the reward that was promised by Þórir Skeggjason. But the rumour about Þuríðr's dark magic has spread, and Þórir refuses to pay the reward since the murder was committed with magic methods, and since Grettir was weak from illness when they killed him. In the summer, Þorbjörn claims the reward on the Alþingi, but is instead outlawed for magic and for killing a man who was mortally ill (chapter 84). He escapes to Istanbul, but Grettir's brother, Þorsteinn drómundr, later tracks him down and kills him (chapter 86).

In *Grettis saga*, the curse of Glámr is the turning point of the whole story. It frames and explains Grettir's lifespan from the moment it is pronounced until Grettir is killed on Drangey. The curse does its magic through unreasonable "coincidences" and the direct involvement of a demon and an old witch. Grettir has, however, himself to blame, for although he is extraordinarily strong and resourceful, he is also extraordinarily aggressive and overbearing. By challenging Glámr, he makes a mistake which is caused by a fault in his own character. Thus the curse both serves as a turning point in the narrative, and as a way of transforming the theme of Grettir's tragic fate into a meaningful narrative structure. The stories which follow the curse deal with a variety of conflicts which are subordinated to the curse-structure. The major structure in *Grettis saga* is not primarily based on feud and conflicts between men, it is about Grettir's struggle with his own tragic fate, and with the devilish forces that make it unfold.

Literary curses might somehow originate in proper curses,⁷ and they certainly bring forth associations to performed magic. However, the phrasing in the curses of Katla and Glámr is perhaps not of oral origin, like Vésteinn Ólason (1989, 203) points out in the case of Katla's curse. At least, both curses give a completely different impression from literary curses cast in traditional poetic forms, for example the one present in *Skírnismál*, or the dróttkvætt-curse in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*.⁸ As we have seen, the curses in *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Grettis saga* are both used as structural devices which establish some sort of "causality" behind different chains of remarkable events. They are apparently used as more or less important structural devices. However, studies of structure in Icelandic family sagas have mainly focused on structures defined by conflicts between men (a brief research overview is given in Lönnroth 2007), and the role of Katla's and Glámr's curses is somewhat underplayed for example in Andersson's analysis of these sagas (1967). Katla's curse introduces a chain of events which, so to speak, stands beside the conflicts between men. Glámr's curse is perhaps the most important event in *Grettis saga*, when it comes to structure, since the other conflicts in the saga are subordinated to the structure established by the curse. Also in other sagas, curses and magic play important roles, like in *Egils saga* where magic is performed both by Egill and by queen Gunnhildr, and is an integrated part of the ongoing conflict between Egill and the Norwegian king and queen. Another example, from the fantastic world of legendary sagas, is the curse/prophesy present in the beginning of *Qrvar-Odds saga*, which defines details concerning Qrvar-Odds death (see Swenson 1991, 88–90).

The image of the past in Icelandic family sagas is probably the result of both "prolonged echoes" (Clunies Ross 1994, 1998) from the past itself and a creative process of explaining the past. The stories about Katla's and Glámr's curses are rather unambiguous in their negative attitude towards the curses, its performers and the supernatural forces involved in the "curse-structures." It needs to be said that this attitude towards magic is not generally apparent in the sagas. In *Egils saga*, it is difficult to perceive magic as something devilish and despicable when it is performed by Egill, while magic certainly is considered this way in *Eyrbyggja* and *Grettis saga*. An interesting aspect of the curses of Katla and Glámr is the thematic functions they gain within the sagas. As we have seen, they establish conflicts which are above the level of men and families. In *Eyrbyggja*, Katla's curse and its consequences deal with a general opposition between the society of men on one hand, and the supernatural forces threatening the society on the other. Also in *Grettis saga*, the supernatural forces play the role as threats against society, like the troll and the living dead Glámr. The curse and the supernatural forces involved in its fulfilment are, however, crucial to the theme of Grettir's tragic

⁷ Stephen Mitchell (2003) discusses the source value of sagas in the study of magic, especially when it comes to conceptions on how magic arts were acquired.

⁸ In a forthcoming article, I present some literary curses in metre and investigate their generic relations.

and personal misfortune. Thus the saga authors and their traditions obviously use curses to serve thematic as well as structural functions, and in *Eyrbyggja* and *Grettis saga*, the thematic functions are defined by more or less anachronistic conceptions of the past. The transmission of curses from proper magic practice into literary contexts obviously makes it difficult to use literary curses as sources to magic practice. This is at least the case in the examples given here, since the structural and thematic functions reveal a high degree of adaptation to literary purposes and to the ideological contexts of the saga authors. Curses and other kinds of magic genres in saga literature are, however, interesting as sources to the perceptions of the past at the time of saga writing, and to the creative use and reshaping of genres originating in oral practices and tradition.

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Earl Hákon of Orkney's Journey to Sweden

Maria-Claudia Tomany, Scandinavian Studies Program, Minnesota State University, Mankato, USA

The Norse sagas are firmly set in the western Nordic areas: Their protagonists hail from Norway, Iceland, or the Atlantic dominions; this is where their families come from and where they have their *udal*. From this center, they make excursions into the world.

Each of the four principle directions sets the stage for a different experience: going west, to the Scottish Isles, Ireland, Iceland, the Faroes, or Greenland, opens up opportunities – to trade, to settle, to plunder – in an area that is only loosely controlled by weak central powers while there is an existing network of Norse people and settlements. Going south will take the sagas' protagonists to England or Denmark and to the countries on the continent, to Rome and all the way to the Holy Land. Expeditions north will bring the saga heroes into contact with the uncivilized, pagan peoples of the North, the Skraelings in Greenland and the Lapps in Northern Norway. Encounters with these peoples are unpredictable: a successful exchange of goods is as likely to ensue as violence, and the magic powers ascribed to these tribes make them dangerous enemies.

A journey to the East, however, is different. When the saga protagonists come to Sweden, they might meet friends and relatives, or foes, they might come as tax collectors or diplomats or warriors, travel through beautiful cities or vast wilderness, and they might encounter Christian rulers, churchmen, missionaries, crusaders, or they might meet Heathens.

The ambiguous nature of Sweden also plays an interesting role in *Orkneyinga saga*. A large part of the *Saga of the Earls of Orkney* is devoted to the *vita*, *gesta*, and *miracula* of Magnús Erlendsson, the earl of Orkney who should soon become St Magnus, the patron saint of Orkney.

Magnus Erlendsson ruled the Orkney earldom together with his cousin, Hákon Pálsson, until his cousin ambushed and killed him at Easter, 1117. Shortly after Magnus' death, the first miracles at his grave were reported and people started venerating him as a saint. He was canonized within two decades of his death, and his cult spread throughout Scandinavia (Jexlev 1988:189). The cathedral that Earl Rognvald had built in Kirkwall in his honor, beginning in the late 1130s, is of impressive dimensions; its magnificence has no equal in the contemporary Scandinavian world (Radford 1988:23). Its size alone attests to the amazing power both religious and political that the figure of St. Magnus wielded.

At first glance, there is nothing unusual about St. Magnus. He was a royal martyr similar to St. Olaf of Norway or St. Erik of Sweden, canonized in the same era, like them the patron saint of his country. Similar saints can be found not only in the Scandinavian but also in the Anglo-Saxon and the Slavic tradition, as Norman Ingham (1973) and Erich Hoffmann (1975) have shown; Haki Antonsson (2007) has documented the similarities in narrative patterns between the legend of St. Magnús and comparable "princely saints"; Carl Phelpstead (2007) has explained the political potency of these "holy Vikings" in the late 13th century.

All these Old Norse royal saints also have in common that between their canonization and their extant hagiography, a profound shift in the definition and ecclesiastic use of sanctity occurred. As Vauchez (1997) described in his monumental study of sainthood, all these martyr saints underwent a collective crisis in the 12th century. Their sanctity had stemmed from one root: a violent death, which alone could give rise to veneration, due to contemporary concepts of guilt and atonement. "Innocent blood", blood that was shed without guilt on the part of the victim, was considered "left-over", excess atonement that could be used by other sinners in need of redemption.

This practice came under attack under popes Alexander III and Gregory VII because of the lack of any ethical component, both in regard to the saints and to the sinners who invoked them. As a consequence, the martyr saints' lives were rewritten in ways which highlighted their exemplary virtues, especially their self-denial in material and sexual matters.

Also in the case of St. Magnús, different versions of his *vita* are preserved that possibly show traces of this shift. One of these accounts is the Latin *Legenda de Sancto Magno* which contains hardly any ethical component – Magnus is described as a *praedo marinus*, a pirate, prior to his martyr death. The other three extant texts are Old Norse prose narratives. The most comprehensive one is the *Magnúss saga lengri*, a legend infused with prayers and religious explanations which boasts thirty pages of example stories illustrating Magnus' virtuous life prior to his martyr death.

The third major text about Magnús is the account preserved in the *Orkneyinga saga*, the saga of the earls of Orkney, which is commonly dated to the early 13th century. This text presents a very similar account of Magnus' life and miracles as the legendary saga, but other people and political considerations also play a role, while the religious comments of the legend are largely missing. The “shorter saga of Magnús”, *Magnúss saga skemmri*, is only an excerpt from *Orkneyinga saga*, and will therefore not be discussed separately in this paper.

An important part of this new paradigm of sanctity is the self-sacrifice of the martyr. The martyr must have been warned of his impending death, and he must have accepted it willingly. This warning comes to Magnús on the eve of this death, as he rows out with his men to the island of Egilsay where the two contenders for power in Orkney, he and his cousin, Hákon Pálsson, are to meet to take oaths on their newly arranged peace agreement:

Er hann var búinn, helt hann til Egilseyjar, ok er þeir røru i logni ok sækyrru, þá reis boði hjá skipi því, er jarl stýrði, ok fell yfir skipit, þar er jarl sat. Menn jarls undruðusk mjök þenna atburð, er boði fell i logni, þar sem engi maðr vissi ván til, at fyrri hefði fallit, ok djúpt var undir. (Guðmundsson 1965:106)

When he was ready, he went off to Egilsay. As they were rowing away upon a calm, smooth sea, a breaker suddenly rose high over the ship he was steering and crashed down upon the spot where he was sitting. His men were astonished to see such a breaker rise up from the calm sea: no one had seen anything like it before, and there was deep water beneath them. (Pálsson, Edwards 1978:91–92)

It is nature itself that gives a sign but the sign is not easily interpreted. The saint alone understands its true meaning:

Þá sagði jarl: “Eigi er þat kynligt, at þér undrizk þetta, en þat er hugsan mín, at þetta sé fyrirboðan lífláts mins; kann vera, at þat komi fram, er fyrir er spát um Hákon jarl.” (Guðmundsson 1965:106)

‘It’s not surprising that you should be worried by this,’ said the Earl, ‘for I think it forbodes of my death. It may be what was prophesied about Earl Hakon will turn out now to be true.’ (Pálsson, Edwards 1978:92)

Magnús' men accept the truth of this explanation but they are reluctant to accept the inevitability of the coming events.

Menn jarls urðu hryggir við þessi orð, er hann sagði svá bráðar vánir síns lífláts, ok báðu hann gæta lífs síns ok fara eigi á trúnað Hákonar jarls. Magnús jarl svarar: “Fara skal nú at sinni, ok verði allt at guðs vilja um vórar ferðir.” (Guðmundsson 1965:106–107)

The Earl's men were disturbed by what he had said, to hear him predict his own imminent death, and they asked him not to place his trust in Earl Hakon but to watch out for his own safety. 'On with the journey,' the Earl replied, 'let it turn out as God wills.' (Pálsson, Edwards 1978:92)

Magnús is given one more chance to escape when the treacherous intent of his cousin becomes apparent as Hákon approaches the island with an army. But Magnús rejects the offers of protection; instead, he chooses to send his men away, sparing them while offering himself up as a sacrifice for lasting peace in Orkney.

Jarl svarar: "Leggja vil ek eigi líf yðvart í hættu fyrir mik, ok ef eigi verðr friðr settr með okkr frændum, þá verði sem guð vill." Mönnum hans þótti sannask þat, er hann hafði sagt. Nú af því at hann vissi fyrir um lífstundir sínar, hvárt er þat var heldr af hugspeki hans eða guðligri vitran, þá vildi hann eigi flýja ok eigi fara langt frá fundi óvina sinna. Hann bazk fyrir rækiliga ok lét syngja sér messu. (Guðmundsson 1965:107–108)

'I don't want to risk your lives in saving mine,' said the earl, 'and if there's not to be peace between me and my kinsmen, then things must go according to God's will.' It seemed to his men that everything was turning out as Magnus had predicted when the breaker crashed on them. Either by divine revelation or plain wisdom he knew the length of his own life-span, but he would not run away from his enemies nor put a distance between himself and them; he only prayed devoutly and had Mass sung for himself. (Pálsson, Edward 1978:93)

The most important difference between *Orkneyinga saga* and the saint's saga, *Magnúss saga lengri*, is that here, Magnús wishes for redemption for his future murderer, Earl Hákon:

"En ef því væri at skipta, þá vil ek miklu heldr þola rangendi en gera oðrum manni; sem guð láti Hákon frænda bætr fá, þó at hann geri mér rangt." (Guðmundsson 1965:363)

'But if I could choose, I would much rather suffer injustice than commit it to someone else; may God let Hákon receive amends even if he does wrong to me.' (Tomany 2008:149)

Clearly, these narrative elements are modeled after the self-sacrifice of Jesus: Like Jesus in Gethsemane, Magnús knows of his coming death, he is betrayed, like Jesus, he asks his men not to fight on his behalf but gives himself up willingly, and he asks for forgiveness for those who kill him.

But there is also a striking difference between this and comparable "princely martyr" narratives, and that is the important role that is given to the saint's adversary and killer, Earl Hákon Pálsson. It is Hákon Pálsson who first receives knowledge of the martyrdom and death of St Magnús, and Earl Magnús only finds out about it through him. It is this prophecy or advance warning to which Magnús refers in the speech to his men after the strange wave has washed over him, here in the extended version of *Magnúss saga lengri*:

"En þat er hugboð mitt, at þessi atburðr sé fyrirboðan míns lífsláts. Kann vera at þat komi hér fram, er fyrir er spát, at son Páls jarls mun inn mesta glæp vinna; má vera, at Hákon búi um svik við oss á þessum fundi." (Guðmundsson 1965: 363)

'It is my premonition that this occurrence foreshadows my impending death. It can be that here the prophecy will come true that said that Earl Páll's son will commit the most heinous crime; it could be that Hákon will betray us at this meeting.' (Tomany 2008:149)

So, Earl Hákon, the later murderer of the saint, received a prophecy about everything that was going to come to pass, and he received it in Sweden. The circumstances are described in chapters 35 and 36 of *Orkneyinga saga*. Hákon's journey to Sweden occurs at a pivotal point in the saga when the goodwill and peace between the two earls' fathers, Erlend and Páll, who ruled Orkney jointly, is slowly eroded as their sons grow up into bitter rivals for power in the earldom. In a bid for peace, Hákon is asked to leave Orkney. It is with everyone's blessing and in the best interest for Orkney that he leaves his home and travels to Sweden.

The reason for his going to Sweden is that he has relatives there: Hákon Ívarsson, the saga explains, is Hákon's maternal grandfather; he "had been exiled by Harald Sigurdarson but granted power in Sweden by King Steinkel, in whose opinion he stood high, as indeed he did with everyone." (Pálsson, Edwards 1978:79).

At this point, the saga inserts a historical explanation about paganism in Sweden:

Þá var í Svíþjóð ung kristni; váru þá margir menn, þeir er fóru með forneskju ok þóttusk af því verða fróðir ok vísir margra hluta, þeira er eigi váru fram komnir. (Guðmundsson 1965:89)

In Sweden, Christianity was in its infancy, so there were still a good many people practising paganism in the belief that by it they would gain wisdom and knowledge of many things yet to happen. (Pálsson, Edwards 1978:79–80).

The excursus continues that King Ingi, a "devout Christian" who "abhorred" every heathen (*vel kristinn maðr, ok váru honum leiðir allir forneskjumenn*), attempted to end pagan practices but was forced out of power, and Svein the Sacrificer was installed in his stead. In the end, Ingi returned, burnt Svein in his own house, and "put an end to many of the barbaric practices" (*eyddi hann þá ósiðum mǫrgum*). Hákon Pálsson is staying at the court of this King Ingi, the glorious defender of Christian faith in Sweden and the son of Steinkel who had already given Hákon's grandfather a good position at the Swedish court. The circumstances of Hákon's visit to Sweden, like the reasons for his journey themselves, are thus couched in the most positive description.

But pagan practices, *ósiðir*, lurk as soon as Hákon leaves the court. Gaining insight into the future is portrayed most negatively, as one of the chief practices of heathenism, in fact it is its only pagan practice that the saga describes. Word comes to Hákon about a soothsayer, "a certain wise man who could see into the future" (*maðr er fǫr með vísendi ok spádóm*) and who told the farmers about weather and harvests.

In the context of the saga, there is no doubt that these prophecies are correct and that the soothsayer can really foretell the future as it will unfold. He is privy to such foresights, even though it is unclear how, "whether he could use sorcery or other means" (*hvárt er hann hafði till þess fjölkynngi eða aðra hluti*) (Guðmundsson 1965:90; Pálsson, Edwards 1978:80).

Hákon decides to go to this man and find out about his own fate. When he tells the soothsayer his name and lineage, the man immediately knows all about him. But interestingly, the wise man asks why Hákon would not use Christian means to find answers, and why he would instead consult with him, the heathen soothsayer:

Ok má þer þorð vinna, at þú leitir eptir at vita forlög þín af Óláfi inum digra, frænda þínum, er þér hafid allan trúnað á. En grunr myndi mér á vera, at hann myndi eigi lítillæti til hafa at segja þér þat, er þik forvitnar, eða vera eigi svá máttugr ella sem þér kallið hann. (Guðmundsson 1965:90–91)

'In fact it might be as well for you to learn your destiny from your kinsman Olaf the Stout, since you all have such confidence in him, though it's my opinion that he will never condescend to

tell you what you want to know, nor do I think he's the man of might you make him out to be.' (Pálsson, Edwards 1978: 80–81.)

What Hákon wishes to know is “if he would ever come to power and what kind of fortune he could expect.” But the soothsayer’s answer is confusing. He names St. Olaf as a possible source of insight about the future but he taunts Hákon that either the saint will “never condescend to tell” what Hákon wants to know, or the saint is not powerful enough to know these things. Hákon answers:

“Ekki vil ek honum ámæla; ætla ek þat meirr, at ek mun eigi verðleika til hafa at taka af honum vísendi en hitt, at eigi myni hann vera svá völdugr, at ek mætta taka fyrir þat af honum vísendi. En því hefi ek á þinn fund farit, at mér hefir þat í hug komit, at hér mun hvárrgi þurfa at qfunda annan fyrir mannkosta sakar eða trúabragða.” (Guðmundsson 1965:91)

‘I’m not speaking ill of him. But I don’t think I deserve to get knowledge out of him – not that he hasn’t the power to give it to me. The reason I have come to you is this: I don’t think neither of us need to feel envious of the other on the ground of any particular talents or beliefs we might have.’ (Pálsson, Edwards 1978:81)

Like the soothsayer, Hákon allows for the possibility that St. Olaf could give him foresight but he says that he does not deserve it. He also refers to reasons to “feel envious” of one another which might have to do with his rival cousin Magnús Erlendsson’s family connection to St. Olaf – Magnús’ maternal grandmother, Ingibjörg Finnsdóttir, was the daughter of Finnur Árnason, retainer and advisor of St. Óláfr.

But, continues the soothsayer, it is not as though Christian people would not covet insight into the future; he goes on to describe many Christian practices as impotent means to gain knowledge about future events – a misunderstanding of Christian asceticism that some scholars have considered to be meant as a joke (Foote 1988:199).

Sá maðr svarar: “Vel líkar mér þat, at ek finn þat á, at þú þykkisk þar eiga allt traust, er ek em, ok framarr en trúa sú, er þér hafið með farit ok aðrir frændr þínir. Er ok svá, at þeim, er á slíkt stunda, er undarliga farit, fara með fóstur ok vökur ok ætla, at þar af myni þeim veitask þeir hlutir, er þeim er forkunni á at vita. En þó at þeir stundi á slíkt, þá verða þeir því síðr vísir þess, er þá forvitnar, sem þá skipti meira. En vér leggjum oss í engar meingörðir, ok verðum vér þó jafnan vísir þeira hluta, er vinum várum þykkir máli skipta, at þeir gangi ódulðir. Nú mun svá fara með okkr, at þú munt þess njóta frá mér, er ek skil þat, at þú þykkisk heldr mega taka sannynði af mér enn kennimönnum Inga konungs, þeim er hann þykkisk allt traust undir eiga.” (Guðmundsson 1965:91)

‘I’m glad you feel you can place so much trust in me’, said the man, ‘more than you and your kin give to your professed faith. It’s very odd how these believers behave, fasting and keeping vigil in the hope of being told whatever it is they’re so keen to know; yet for all their efforts, the more there is at stake, the less they find out. Now people such as myself, who don’t load ourselves with penances, can quite easily discover all the important things our friends want to know, so that they’re not kept in the dark. And that’s the way it will be between us two, as I’m obliged to you for showing that you’d rather learn the truth from me than from the priests King Ingi puts all this trust in.’ (Pálsson, Edwards 1978: 81)

The more ardently people follow Christian practices of fasting, penance, and self-denial, the less they will know about the future – with this statement, the soothsayer, as a heathen, either completely misunderstands or deliberately distorts their meaning. Either way, Hákon’s act of asking the heathen wise man in order to find out the future can be understood as a forsaking

of his Christian faith; a deliberate disseverment and a conscious act of rebellion, and the soothsayer rewards him for this by disclosing what will be.

Hákon returns after a set period of time, and the soothsayer foretells his future.

Er þat mitt hugboð, at þú verðir einvaldshöfðingi yfir Orkneyjum at lykðum, en kann vera, at þér þykki langt at bíða; hygg ek ok þat, at þar myni þitt afkvæmi ríkja. En af vestrfor þinni, þeiri er þú fer næst til Orkneyja, munu mikil stórtíðendi af gerask, þá er þeir hlutir verða fram gengnir er þar af mun leiða. Þú munt ok á þínum dögum láta gera glæp þann, er þú munt annattveggja fá bætt traudla eða eigi við þann guð er þú trúir á, en spor þín liggja lengra út í heim en ek fæ sét, en þó hygg ek, at þú mynir hér bera beinin í Norðrhálfunni. (Guðmundsson 1965:92)

My feeling is that you'll end up as the sole ruler of Orkney, though you'll most likely think you've waited long enough for it. I think your offspring will rule there as well, and as for the journey you're about to make west to Orkney, momentous events will result from it, matters of great consequence. During your life you'll be the cause of a crime for which you'll barely be able to atone – perhaps never – to that god you believe in. The trail of your life stretches deeper into the world than I'm able to see, but I think your bones will be laid to rest somewhere here in the North. (Pálsson, Edwards 1978: 81)

Clearly, the “crime for which you'll barely be able to atone” is the “heinous crime” Earl Magnús mentions on the eve of his death, the killing of the martyr. Word of this prophecy must have come to Magnús even though the saga does not describe their exact transmission; however, there is no doubt, not even in the mind of St. Magnús, that the prophecy is right, that events will indeed come to pass as the soothsayer said. God's plans had been revealed through the act of the heathen Swedish wise man.

This means that also the role of Earl Hákon, the murderer of the saint, was preordained; he, too, knew what was going to come to pass and he, too, accepted his role in the events. As *Magnúss saga lengri* notes, Hákon was “at this time completely removed from all love or fear of God” (Tomany 2008:150), but the expression “at this time” denotes a temporary absence.

In the climax of the saint's saga, Hákon and Magnús negotiate how to solve the situation that has developed through Magnús' capture. Magnús offers a series of alternatives to his own death, including this last one:

Nú er einn sá [kostr] eptir, er ek vil þér bjóða, ok guð veit, at meirr sé ek fyrir þinni sáluhjálpi hér um en mínu líkamans lífi, því at þér sómir þó síðr at týna mínu lífi: Láttu mik aflima, sem þér líkar, eðr augum ræna, ok set mik svá í myrkvastofu þá, er ek kemst aldri ór. (Guðmundsson 1965:367)

‘Now there is only one option left that I want to offer you, and God knows that I am suggesting this not so much for the life of my body as for the salvation of your soul, because it is not decent for you to kill me. Have me mutilated as you please, or rob me of my eyes, and then throw me into a dungeon out of which I will never escape.’ (Tomany 2008: 151)

Magnús' words seem to express an awareness of the terrible role that is preordained to Hákon; while they both act to fulfill the divine prophecy, one is rewarded with sainthood and life in paradise while the other faces eternal damnation, and Magnús is worried about the salvation of Hákon's soul.

Hákon agrees to this last suggestion but it is the men of Orkney who force him to go through with the deed and kill Magnús. They threaten to kill both men if one does not kill the other, as they are tired of the warfare and strife that comes with competing rulers (*O.s.*, ch. 49). In other words, Hákon was prepared to let Magnús go, similar to Pontius Pilate who of-

ferred to let Jesus go free after he had been tortured and abused. Just like in Pilate's case, the masses, here the farmers, want an innocent man killed. Just like Pilate, Hákon becomes afraid and gives in to the crowd, but it is their decision, not his. Hákon as Pilate is thus not only morally freed from killing Magnus: if Hákon is like Pilate, and Magnús like Jesus, then they are no longer contenders: St. Magnus is the heavenly, the spiritual leader of the Orkneys, like Jesus who became *Rex Judorum*. Hákon is the profane governor of the Orkneys, just like Pilate is the governor of Judea. Hákon's innocence is further highlighted when Magnús' mother accepts him after the murder instead of her own son (ch. 52), thus also accepting him as the new leader of the half of the earldom had her husband and her son had previously ruled.

And even though the Swedish soothsayer could hardly imagine that Hákon would be able to atone and God would be able to forgive, this is exactly the outcome that both *Orkneyinga saga* (ch. 52) and *Magnúss saga lengri* seem to imply:

En nokkurum vetrum síðarr byrjaði Hákon ferð sína ór landi ok fór suðr til Róms. Í þeiri ferð fór hann út til Jórsala, sótti þangat helga dóma ok laugaðisk í ánni Jórðán, svá sem siðr er til pálmara. Eptir þat vendi hann aptr til óðalla sinna ok tók undir sik ríki í Orkneyjum. Hann gerðisk þá stjórnSAMUR ok friðaði vel ríki sitt. Setti hann þá í Orkneyjum ný lög, þau er bóndum hugnuðu miklu betr en þau, er áðr váru. Tóku við slíkt at vaxa vinsældir hans; kom þá svá, at Orkneyingar stunduðu á ekki annat en hafa Hákon at höfðingja ok hans afspringi. (Guðmundsson 1965:113)

Some years later, Hakon set out on a long journey overseas and traveled south to Rome. His pilgrimage took him beyond to Jerusalem, where he visited the holy places and bathed in the River Jordan as is the custom of palmers. After that he returned to his realm and ruled over all Orkney. He grew to be a good ruler and brought firm peace to the land, making new laws for Orkney which the farmers found they liked much better than the ones they'd had before. That was how his popularity began to grow and, in time, the people of Orkney would have no one but Hakon and his offspring to rule over them. (Pálsson, Edwards 1978: 97)

Hákon gives up his throne in Orkney to make the arduous journey to the Holy Land – the part of his life that the soothsayer could not see (Foote 1988, 198) –, and God rewards him visibly, granting unto him a safe return home to his earldom, and his highseat, and blessing him through years of power in peace.

There is a possible political background to this story: for the two decades immediately following Magnus' death, Hákon and his sons were in power. Bishop William of Orkney attempted to canonize Magnús which, as *Orkneyinga saga* (ch. 52) mentions, Hákon attempted to prevent. Then, for the following four decades, Magnús' descendants ruled over Orkney, commissioning monuments both in paper and in stone for their murdered uncle and using his popularity for their own purposes. After that, Hákon's grandson, Haraldr Maddaðarson, held the power from 1158 to 1206, and Harald's sons John I. and David took over after him. To commission a new history of the earldom seemed to have offered an excellent opportunity to rectify the records.

Hákon's trip to pagan Sweden is in this context of the highest importance. It bears remembering that *Orkneyinga saga* is preserved in large parts in *Flateyjarbók*, a compilation of Old Norse narratives and texts about St. Olaf, the missionary king of Norway. The Norwegian Kings' sagas in general make much of the heathenism of Sweden at a time when Sweden should have been a Christian country for quite some time already. As Lönnroth (1996) remarked, much of this will be unhistorical. But the story of the heathen soothsayer is reminiscent of other encounters with sorcerers in the sagas; Mundal argued that Norse and Sámi heathenism is conflated in Norse historiography, and that these sorcerers' powers are beyond doubt to the medieval writers (Mundal 1996:113).

The important detail is that in the saga, Hákon defied Christian laws and abrogated the power of the saints in order to receive news of his fate from a heathen soothsayer. But God's true plan was revealed through the pagan medium. Hákon accepted his role in the plan and killed the saint. Even though Earl Hákon rejected St. Olaf and turned to a heathen for advice instead, he only ended up creating another saint – Magnús. Later, he was able to reconcile himself with God, and he became a just ruler.

One can look at these narratives of heathen people as belonging to two types that are complementary, and indeed, both of them appear together also in the story of Earl Hákon in Sweden:

One thread of the story is the missionary kings' fight to spread the true faith – and they are usually victorious. But the other thread is the comforting, theodicean idea that God is present and works also through the wrongful acts of those who have not yet found Him or who know of Him and openly defy Him. The greatest closeness to God's will and its clearest revelation can occur in the greatest distance from Him. Thus, the paganism and late Christianization of Sweden appear to be an integral and meaningful element of God's order of the world. As Hákon plays a central role for the sanctification of Magnús, Sweden's history of paganism presents an important part of the salvific history of the North.

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“Ærið gott gömlum og feigum.”

Seeking death in *Njáls saga*.

Torfi H. Tulinius, Faculty of Humanities, University of Iceland

In the last lines of *Njáls saga*, near the end of the 159th and ultimate chapter of this longest of the sagas about early Icelanders, we are told the following about Flosi, a noble man whose misfortune it was to commit a terrible crime:

Það segja menn að þau yrðu ævilok Flosa að hann færi utan þá er hann var orðinn gamall að sækja sér skálavið og var hann í Noregi þann vetur. En um sumarið varð hann síðbúinn. Menn ræddu um að vant væri skip hans. Flosi sagði vera ærið gott gömlum og feigum og sté á skip og lét í haf og hefir til þess skips aldrei spurst síðan.

People say that the end of Flosi's life came when he had grown old and went abroad to find wood for building a house and spent the winter in Norway. The next summer he was late in his preparations. Men talked about the bad condition of his ship. Flosi said that it was good enough for an old man doomed to die, and he boarded the ship and put out to sea, and nothing was ever heard of the ship again. (p. 310)

At this point Flosi has compensated for the burning of Njáll and his family: “He had then fulfilled all his part in the settlement, both the exile and the payments.” (p. 309) So says the saga. However the settlement is not only with humans, but also with God since Flosi had received absolution for his sins from the Pope himself. It is therefore noteworthy that the saga emphasizes that he pays no heed to warnings against putting out to sea on a damaged ship to go to Iceland. He never gets back home. Instead he drowns, or as Freud says, he “return[s] to the quiescence of the inorganic world” (Freud 1955:62).¹

Flosi is only one of very many characters in *Njáls saga* who seem quite willing to die. Others are for example Þjóstólfr, who after killing Glúmr does as Hallgerðr says, i.e. goes to her uncle Hrótr who kills him, even though he seems to know that this is what is going to happen to him, and Gunnar himself, who sings joyfully in his burial-mound after his death and who stayed in Iceland, even though he knew it would bring about his demise. This is also true of many of the slaves and workmen who are manipulated by Hallgerðr and Bergþóra in their feud: they also know that they will die and seem to accept it, as do Njáll and so many members of his family, when their farm is attacked by Flosi and his men. This is especially true of Njáll himself, his wife Bergþóra and their grandson Þórðr Kárason. I believe that a willingness to die is an important structural and semantic feature of *Njal's Saga* and that a psychoanalytic approach informed by Freud's theory of the death-wish may enrich our understanding of the structure and meaning of this remarkable saga.

Psychoanalysis and the sagas

The tragic nature of *Njal's Saga* as well as the sexual themes it contains offers itself to a psychoanalytic approach, and I am not the first to attempt one. Carolyn Anderson (2002) has written a brilliant article about *Njála* in which she studies the construction of gender in the saga in light of the theories of Jacques Lacan. I have myself worked on *Egils saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga* from a psychoanalytic perspective. This way of approaching the sagas is fraught

¹ Scholars have commented diversely on this ending over the years. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1943: 169) talks about Flosi's strength of character. He is ready to take whatever life brings him. Richard F. Allen (1971: 178) sees in it a parallel with the last voyage of the Danish king Scyld Scefing.

with difficulties. Their authors are anonymous and we are not sure whether it is indeed correct to assume individual authorship of these works. Their texts vary from one manuscript to another and the issue of to what extent and in what way they are based on oral tradition is still being discussed (Gísli Sigurðsson 2002). Moreover, it is not always obvious that the concepts of psychoanalysis can be of use in pursuing the aims of most literary historians, i.e. understanding the way the texts are structured, how they generate meaning and how they relate to the social and historical reality in which the sagas originate.

In a recent book on *Egils saga*, I try to show that the twofold structure of the saga can be explained by the way the simple conflict between hero and king in the first part is complicated by more or less hidden ones with the father and with God in the second and longer one. This structure allows for a complex play of condensation and displacement, which are in Freud's thought the way dreams both express and dissimulate from the reader what is going on in his unconscious mind. In the same way *Egils saga* is both showing and hiding that it deals with basic oedipal conflicts and projects them on religious and political concerns. This approach explains many aspects of the saga, not the least the motivations of its main character, Egill Skalla-Grímsson. The psychoanalytic approach has explanatory value whether or not we choose to believe that Snorri Sturluson authored the work, though it also brings an interesting perspective to that theory (Torfi H. Tulinius 2004).

In a series of articles on *Eyrbyggja saga*, I have also endeavoured to solve the problem of that saga's atypical structure in a similar way. In this saga the father figures are several and systematically opposed. By combining the use of the narrative semiotics of A.J. Greimas with psychoanalysis it is possible to show how this dispersion of the theme of the father relates on the one hand to the meandering construction of the saga and on the other to an identity problem of the chieftain class in mid-thirteenth century Iceland. How can they become what their fathers were, i.e. chieftains, when so many equally well born and capable men are fighting for these positions (Torfi H. Tulinius 2009)?

In both sagas, I try to show that the saga authors are communicating with their audiences subconsciously about issues that are important in their times. Indeed, I believe it is of the utmost importance when attempting to use psychoanalysis on texts such as the sagas to combine a careful analysis of the narrative with knowledge which is as thorough as possible of the society and culture which it expresses.

Eros and Thanatos

The death drive appears rather late in Freud's work, his first major text about it being *Beyond the pleasure principle*, first published in German in 1920 (Freud 1955). It is one of Freud's more difficult and speculative texts. In it he postulates that the goal of all life is to seek death (the "quiescence of the inorganic world") and that furthering this goal is a particular unconscious drive towards death which is constantly interacting with the other main drive in our psyche which is the life instinct and is equally unconscious. This led to a major reworking of Freud's conceptions of the psychic apparatus, with the development of the threefold scheme of the Id, the Ego and the Superego (Freud 1953).

This development took some time and is expressed gradually in a series of Freud's works, where he speaks of these drives in the plural as two groups of drives, one aiming for death and the other for life (Freud 1953:39–47). On the one hand the death drives are those of all living organisms who at some point seek to end their existence. These drives are exteriorised in the form of aggressiveness and internalised in the form of masochism. On the other, the life drives' role is to bind the destructive forces of the death drives. He calls the former group of drives Thanatos and the latter Eros. This model is not only dualistic but also dialectic: there is a constant struggle between two sets of drives, Eros trying to keep Thanatos in check. The

result is that the two categories of drives are intricately interwoven or blended, for example in sexuality, which calls for a certain dosage of each drive to be effective. Eros is the more apparent of the two drives while Thanatos is silently working behind the scenes, except at moments of crisis when passions are unleashed. Then it appears, usually in the guise of aggressiveness, but sometimes as a willingness to die. This unbinding of the passions is associated with what Freud calls *Triebentmischung* or defusion of drives, i.e. a state which occurs when the binding of the death drive by Eros is deficient.

Freud believes that of the two sets of drives Thanatos is both the stronger and the more fundamental to the living being. The role of Eros is merely to delay as long as possible the inevitable end. As Freud says, every living thing wants to die, but wants to do so on its own terms (Freud 1955:39; Brooks 1984:107).

The American literary critic Peter Brooks wrote a remarkable study in which he showed how Freud's theory of the death wish brings new insights into the workings of narrative. Expanding on the idea that every narrative is shaped in accordance with the way it ends and basing his approach on a close reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he proposes to read narrative as intimately related to the death drive, reproducing the dialectic between Eros and Thanatos in its very form (Brooks 1984:112).

Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of any story without an ending and one can also say that each narrative is shaped by the way it ends, since the events narrated are chosen and ordered to lead to the ending which the author has in mind. But Brooks sees also other characteristics on the death drive in literature, for example the way it typically works with repetition, for example rhyme and alliteration in verse and epic triads in narrative. Repetition is one of the ways in which the death drive manifests itself.

Freud's discovery of this drive is related to his treatment of patients who suffered from shell-shock after the First World War. The way they would relive in their dreams the traumatic situations they had been exposed to did not conform to Freud's theory of the pleasure principle and that is why he sought to replace it. In his new way of thinking, repetition was a way of achieving the illusion of mastery over the trauma. He gave an example of this in the story of his little grandson who was extremely distressed whenever his mother left him, but seemed to deal with it symbolically by playing over and over again the strange game of throwing a toy under a bed and saying "fort" (away) and then retrieving it and saying "da" (here). By doing this, Freud believed, the toddler was paradoxically reliving the anxiety of separation from his mother but also gaining control over it by symbolically making the mother come back (Freud 1955:14–17).

This could be seen as a manifestation of the pleasure principle (relieving the anxiety), but however, the urge to repeat is deeper. It allows the binding of energy which protects the psyche from the too strong stimulus (the trauma). It is therefore a sort of defence mechanism and one could postulate that the more often you find traces of this compulsion to repeat in a literary text, the greater the trauma it is dealing with. Brooks sees in Freud's theory of the death drive a sort of "master-plot" for all narrative. I would argue however, that in some stories it is more apparent, and that *Njál's Saga* is a particularly good example of this.

“Koma mun til mín feigðin...”

It is a distinctive feature of the saga how many of its characters accept their death. This is true of the main protagonists: Gunnar decides to return to Hlíðarendi, despite Kolskeggr's and Njál's previous warnings that it will bring about his death. (*Brennu-Njáls saga*: 181–183). Njáll, Bergþóra and Skarpheðinn all show in some way that they are willing to die (326–330), as does Flosi, as has already been noted. This is also true of many minor characters, such as Þjóstólfr. He obeys Hallgerðr when she tells him to go find Hrútr after he has killed her hus-

band Glúmr, even though he suspects why she sends him there (50). The same could be said of Kolr, Atli, Þórðr leysingjason and other characters involved in the series of vicarious murders committed by Hallgerðr and Bergþóra in their feud (93; 99; 107). They all know what their involvement in the killings will bring upon them but they nevertheless submit to the will of the women. This does not mean that they do not defend themselves when it comes to the actual fighting, but it was within their power to avoid being in this situation. This is also true of the Norwegian Þórir, who doesn't want to fight Gunnar but, when prodded by his Icelandic hostess, goes even though he knows it will be his death (155). Gunnar's brother Hjörtr also chooses to fight though his death has been foretold in his brother's dream (156). Not to be forgotten on this list is the young Þórðr Kárason, who prefers dying with his grand-parents to surviving them (330).

This aspect of the saga is closely related to the stylistic feature of foreshadowing, which is one of its salient characteristics (Zimmermann 1984). The foreknowledge of one's death, as it has been predicted by somebody like Njáll, who has the gift of prophecy, means that in some way one accepts it. This is particularly clear for Gunnar as has been remarked by Theodore M. Andersson (2006:195) in a recent reading of the saga: "It therefore seems difficult to believe that Gunnar is not a partner, voluntary or involuntary, in his own undoing." It is quite striking in this context that Gunnar is never portrayed as particularly gay or joyful except when he is seen revelling in his grave mound after his death. Indeed, there he is "kátligr ok með gleðimóti miklu" (193).

Joining the idea of foreshadowing and death are the noun "feigð" and the adjective "feigr". A study of the complete corpus of the Íslendingasögur reveals that in all of them except *Njál's Saga* it only occurs at the most three times and in many not at all. In *Njála* both noun and adjective happen for a total of ten times. Of course, *Njála* is the longest of the Íslendingasögur. Nonetheless, this exceptional density of occurrences suggests that the author took a particular interest in the idea that the living were destined to die.

Gunnar himself uses the noun in quite a remarkable way in chapter 68 (168). His brother is warning of a possible danger and he replies: "Koma mun til mín feigðin, segir Gunnar, hvar sem ek em staddr, ef mér verðr þess auðið." or "Death will come to me, says Gunnar, wherever I am, if such is my fortune." What is unusual here is the choice of the expression "að vera einhvers auðið". It is a positive word, suggesting good fortune, but here Gunnar uses it with the word "feigð". This is the only occurrence of this word with this expression and it increases the impression that Gunnar's attitude to death is quite positive.

One wonders why and here only an attempt at an answer can be made. Gunnar is a complex character. He is an outstanding warrior but he also is a peaceful man who does his best to avoid conflicts, though he will defend his honour when it is questioned, for example in the case of Otkell's and Skammkell's slandering of him (136). He usually shows forbearance but he also can be carried away by his own ability to fight. Though he kills many men, he doesn't like it: "Hvat ek veit, segir Gunnarr, hvárt ek mun því óvaskari maðr en aðrir menn sem mér þykkir meira fyrir en öðrum mönnum at vega menn." (139). "Do I know, says Gunnar, whether I am less of a man than others, because it affects me more than others to kill people."

Despite his self-control, Gunnar is a man of strong emotions. He is often shown to be angry but he is also a true friend to Njáll as well as a loving brother to Kolskeggr and Hjörtr. Finally, he is open to feelings of lust as can be seen in his brash and ill-fated decision to marry Hallgerðr. Hrútr calls it a "girndarráð" (87: "decision based on lust") and this seems to be the opinion of the author of the saga. Here we come to the famous scene, later in the saga, when Gunnar changes his mind about leaving Iceland for the three year exile which was one of the terms of the settlement he agreed upon after the killing of Þorgeir Otkelsson. Gunnar's horse has stumbled on its way from Fljótshlíð to the ship that will take him abroad and Gunnar has

dismounted. He turns back and sees his home and the surrounding countryside and says that it has never seemed more beautiful to him (182).

This scene has been interpreted in different ways over the years. Quite a few think that Gunnar is actually referring to Hallgerðr, who stayed behind at Hlíðarendi, and that the meadows and fields stand for her hair and other sexually charged attributes (Helga Kress 2008:40). Several years ago, the late Hermann Pálsson brought to my attention the fact that what Gunnar is watching is not only his farm but also the place where his grave-mound will stand, since it is believed to have been on the flatland between Hlíðarendi and the sea (192n). He also mentioned that the only other staging of a character contemplating the beauty of landscape in the saga literature which is in *Landnámabók* is associated with death. Hallsteinn Þengilsson comes home, learns of his father's death and interprets his mixed feelings with a verse which tells how the mountain which gives its name to the paternal farm is bowed with grief but that the slopes of his home welcome him with laughter (272).

Perhaps that mixed feelings is the correct way to describe Gunnar's emotions at this moment. Indeed, there is no reason to reject any of the interpretations of what is going through his mind. He could be feeling love for his home, and also want to stay with Hallgerðr, the object of his lust. He is also deliberately going against the advice of his two most trusted friends, Njáll and Kolskeggr, who both have said that he would certainly die if he doesn't honour his promise to leave the country for three years. Gunnar is a man of strong and conflicting passions, but he doesn't like them and is never happier than when he has been freed from them and sings alone but happy in his grave-mound.

It is worthy of note that the saga establishes several times a relation between lust and a willingness to die. Both Þórir and Þorgrímr, the Norwegians who are killed by Gunnar, know that they will die but accept to fight with him because of their desire for Egill's daughter Guðrún. She is the most beautiful ("kurteisust") of women and significantly called "náttól" (night sun) (147; 155; 160). Þorgrímr is also the first person Gunnar kills during his last fight (187). This is in accordance with Freud's theory of the close links between exacerbated sexual passions and the death drive. Eros is serving Thanatos.

"Genginn út úr sjávarhömrum"

Nowhere the ineluctability of programmed death in the saga is more striking than in the famous Járngrímr episode, when Flosi dreams that an impressive figure steps out of the no less imposing mountain Lómagnúpr to the west of his home and calls Flosi's men to him (346–348). The men are called in the order of their death, and also in clusters which shows that their deaths will occur at different moments in the future (Lönnroth 1976:32).² From the perspective of Freud's theory of the death drive, this is a particularly interesting scene for at least two reasons. The first is that it comes to Flosi in a bad dream, not one which fulfils his wishes as in Freud's earlier theory where the pleasure principle prevails. In it he is living the trauma to come, when so many of his followers will be killed, most of them by Kári. The second reason is that here the idea of death to come is not presented as an expression of somebody's insight or foreknowledge but as something which is inherently uncanny, a mysterious man with a no less mysterious and intimidating name coming out of a mountain.

It is no coincidence that Freud was working on his famous essay *The Uncanny* at the same time he wrote *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Royle 2003; Brooks 1984). As Freud said himself, the death drive is in itself uncanny (Freud 1955:21). The idea of a force within us that is working towards our disappearance is not only counterintuitive but deeply unsettling. It is however also a fact of life, in the sense that we all grow old and die. But Freud's theory is not

² There is quite an extensive literature on Flosi's dream. It is enough in this context to quote Einar Ólafur Sveinsson on its likely origin in an account in Gregory's *Dialogues* (Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1943, 10–11; 171).

a mere statement of this all too well known reality. What troubles us in it is – as in his theory of the unconscious in a more general way – is that there is a force within us that we do not control and that we do not like. Not only are we not masters in our own house – as in Freud’s famous formulation (Freud 1917:143) – but there is an enemy within.

The figure of Skarphéðinn has long fascinated readers of *Njál’s Saga* as he obviously fascinated its author. He is indeed an unusual character and in many ways unique in the saga literature. In the first part of the saga, he stays in the background, obeying his father and supporting his friends. When he takes a leading role it is almost without exception to commit violent deeds, like killing Þráinn and later his son (231; 280), but also to destroy his own and his family’s chances of garnering support for their cause after the slaying of Höskuldr Þráinsson and finally to ruin the settlement that at last had been reached after much effort by many good people. As Síðu-Hallr says at this occasion, Flosi and he are obviously “ógæfumenn”, men of misfortune (314). He also takes a lead when he decides to obey his father on the night of the burning and retreat into the farmhouse, though he knows it means their death (326).

This would be sufficient to connect Skarphéðinn to the death drive in what could be called the psychodynamics of the saga, or in other words the way it speaks to the unconscious. But there are other aspects of the character that add to this impression. He is in many ways an uncanny figure. He is very often described as pale and betrays strong emotions that he nevertheless does his best to repress (114). One of his defining characteristics is his mysterious grin (“glott”) which he displays at numerous times in the saga (96; 98; 114; 299; 304; 327). There is something strange about this grin (Ai 1996), as if he is taking pleasure in negative things, but also being provocative.

This is particularly true in his behaviour at the Alþingi when he and his brothers are seeking support from major chieftains in the lawsuit which follows Höskuldr’s slaying. This episode is of special interest in relationship to the death drive. It is a series of five scenes which are all structured in the same way and all repeat with variations the identification of Skarphéðinn (297–306). As we have seen, repetition is closely related to the death drive, and though there are significant differences between each of the five scenes, it is the repetition that makes them remarkable as well as the fearsome and uncanny behaviour of Skarphéðinn. This eeriness is suggested to the reader in several ways, among others in the way the four successive chieftains describe him. Of particular note is that Skapti Þóróddsson calls him “tröllsligr” (“like a troll”) and Hafr inn auðgi says he is “svá illiligr sem genginn sé út ór sjávarhömrum” (“so dreadful that it is as if he had walked out of a sea-cliff”). During this episode, there is something out of the ordinary to Skarphéðinn that awakens a sense of unease in those who meet him, as if death itself were among them. Hafr’s comparison is particularly interesting because of the parallel between him and Járngrímr, who as we have seen announces the death of those whose name he calls. This is confirmed by the way people react to his body after his death. He had declaimed a skaldic strophe from within the ruins of the burned-down farm, suggesting to Grani Gunnarsson that he might already have been transformed into a revenant (336–7). Therefore, everyone is pleasantly surprised that his dead body does not provoke fear (344).

“Veg þú aldrei meir í inn sama knérunn”: Repetition and the death-drive

As in so many narratives, repetition is one of the ways in which *Njála’s* story is woven. It is particularly present in passages like Bergþóra’s and Hallgerðr’s vicarious killings of each other’s men, in the story of Gunnar’s deceit of Hrótr early in the saga, as well as in the lengthy episodes of legal wrangling later on in the saga. It is of interest to note that the saga warns against repetition, as if the author sensed the links between repetition and the death

drive. This is true of Gunnar who repeats the slaying of Otkell when he kills his son Þorgeir, despite Njáll's warning against killing again "í inn sama knérunn" (139), i.e. in the same lineage. Tragic circumstances make this inevitable for Gunnar. The same can not be said for Skarphéðinn and his brothers who allow themselves to be tricked by Mörðr, a person they should have distrusted, into killing Höskuldr, son of Þráinn whom they had killed several years earlier. As in Freud's theory, repetition is the way in which the elusive death drive makes itself known. In the case of the slaying of Höskuldr Þráinsson, the saga obviously perceives it as causing the death of Njáll and all his sons (281). It is as if some hidden force has taken over, both human and escaping the control of humans. The only way to stop it is to break the chain of revenge and counter-revenge as Gunnar does after the killing of his cousin Sigmundur, but also Síðu-Hallr by renouncing compensation for his son's death. However, the death-drive is unstoppable and its destructive forces always prevail at the end.

There is a psychodynamic way of reading *Brennu-Njáls saga*, as has been shown in the already mentioned article by Carolyn Anderson (2002:435). The present paper suggests that bringing the Freudian concept of the death-drive into the analysis of the saga can add new insights into this most remarkable and most studied of the Íslendingasögur. It is a saga deeply engaged in the struggle between the destructive impulses of the death drives and the efforts of the life instincts to keep Thanatos at bay. This engagement can be seen in the author's obvious preoccupation with chosen death, in the repetitive structure he gave to the story but also in the way he takes the reader through his vast narrative, inviting them to experience the dangers of passions, witness the efforts of good men to curb them, and in the end return to the inorganic state in Flosi's peaceful death at sea. His life has run its course and he has ended it on his own terms. So has the saga.

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‘I have been laughed at a good deal about my heathenism’:
W.S. Calverley and the early interpretation of the Gosforth
Cross

Matthew Townend, University of York, England

The Gosforth Cross in Cumbria is one of the iconic monuments of the Viking Age, an elegant tenth-century sculpture that combines a crucifixion scene, and Christian symbolism, with an array of figures and episodes from Norse mythology. It is both an enduring work of art, and a vital document for the meeting of paganism and Christianity in Viking Age England. In Viking scholarship it has, consequently, been much discussed, debated, and reproduced, especially in studies of conversion and syncretism.

But although medieval stone sculpture has been studied by antiquarians since the early modern period, the proper understanding of the Gosforth Cross dates only from the late nineteenth century – or, to be precise, from 1881. In that year the Rev. William Slater Calverley (1847–98), vicar of nearby Dearham and a student of local sculpture, first identified the non-Christian scenes on the cross, and argued not only that stone crosses might depict persons and scenes from pagan mythology, but also that pagan and Christian motifs might co-exist on the same monument. To make these claims Calverley turned, in interdisciplinary fashion, to the analogous evidence of Norse mythological poetry. Calverley’s ideas and approach are now core elements in the study of Viking Age England, and Viking Age sculpture; but he met with resistance and disbelief when he first presented them.

This paper will examine the early interpretation of the Gosforth Cross, and demonstrate how some of the established beliefs of modern scholarship can be traced back to Calverley’s ground-breaking work. Calverley was aided and fortified by an epistolary friendship with George Stephens, Professor of English at the University of Copenhagen and a giant of nineteenth-century philology. At the heart of the paper will be the unpublished correspondence between these two men, a correspondence that has never previously been reconstructed (Calverley’s letters to Stephens are in the National Library of Sweden; transcripts of Stephens’ letters to Calverley are preserved among the papers of W.G. Collingwood in the Sackler Library, Oxford, and their existence has never been known before). These voluminous letters cast a great deal of light on the two men’s pioneering steps towards the elucidation of the cross’ meaning.

The early interpretation of the Gosforth Cross also forms part of a bigger story, that of the discovery of Cumbria’s Viking past, and of the role of that past in articulating regional identity in the nineteenth century; and it is within this wider context that this paper will position its particular concerns.

Why did Kjartans' men disapprove of his cloak? Identifying political symbols and rituals in the archaeological record and the Sagas of the Icelanders

Zanette Tsigaridas Glørstad, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo

In the period from around 850–950, a large number of so-called penannular brooches are found in upper class male burials in Norway. Based on an analysis of the brooches, their burial context and contemporary depictions, I will argue that they were used as cloak-clasps and that both the brooches and cloaks had a greater significance than previously presumed. The archaeological record strongly indicates that they were used by a group of men of high social and political rank in the period, and that both brooches and cloaks were powerful social and political symbols. This archaeological material thus opens up for better insight into the materialization of political culture, with the potential to broaden and complement our knowledge of political rituals and structures in the period. The first part of the paper will discuss these archaeological sources, and assess their context and interpretation.

In the second part of the paper, I will argue that the political symbolism and rituals associated with the penannular brooches and cloaks to a large extent also can be traced in the Sagas of the Icelanders. Cloaks in the sagas are normally described as gifts, with specific accounts for the rituals and events surrounding the gift-giving. These situations illustrate the often complex and hierarchical relationship between the men involved. The cloaks are also assigned with personal names, reflecting the order of gift-giver and -receiver. I will draw especially on situations found in the *Laxdæla saga*, *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Brennu-Njáls saga* that well describes the interplay between the cloaks as political symbols, their ritualization, and their role on the political and social scene. Finally, I will argue that the recurrent description and appearance of the cloak in the Sagas of the Icelanders reflect and confirm what can be deduced from the archaeological and iconographic sources, but also provides an additional and complementary perspective on the political and social significance of the brooches found in male elite burials.

Sturla the trickster

Úlfar Bragason, Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, Iceland

In his *Epic and Romance*, W.P. Ker emphasised context in *Sturlu saga*. He writes:

Sturlu saga, the story of the founder of the great Sturlung house [...] is longer and more important than the story of Thorgils and Hafliði. The plot is a simple one: the rivalry between Sturla and Einar, son of Thorgils. The contest is more deadly and more complicated than that of Thorgils himself against Hafliði; that was mainly a case of the point of honour, and the opponents were both of them honourable men, while in this contest Sturla is politic and unscrupulous, and his adversary “a ruffian by habit and repute” [1908, 1957:253].

While many scholars have been in agreement with Ker’s views on the rival characters of *Sturlu saga*, none have accepted his opinion on “the unity of its plot,” with the exception of Viðar Hreinsson. Björn M. Ólsen felt there was a strange ambiguity in the saga’s judgement of Sturla [1902:218], and W. H. Vogt maintained that the saga was a composite of three narratives: Sturla’s quarrels with Einarr Þorgilsson and with Þorleifr *beiskaldi*, and the Deildartunga dispute, in which Sturla clashed with Páll Sölvason and Jón Loftsson. Vogt also stated that “eine innerliche verarbeitung der recht verschiedenartigen stoffe hat nicht stattgefunden; im allgemeinen ist aber eine zeitliche anordnung angestrebt [1913:389].” Jón Jóhannesson went even further in his criticism of the saga:

Sturlu saga fjallar um deilur Hvamm-Sturlu við nágrannahöfðingja á árunum 1148–1183. Er honum heldur illa borin sagan og þó ritað um hann af miklum kunnugleik. Sagan er hinn mesti óskapnaður. Þar ægir saman frásögnum af stóratburðum og hverdagslegum smáþrætum. Söguþráðurinn er slitróttur og tímatal víða óljóst. En höfundur hefur verið nákunnugur mönnum, stöðum og atburðum sögunnar. Um það ber smásmyglin vitni, og er sagan því einhver bezta heimild, sem til er, um líf manna hér á landi á 12. öld [1946:xxvi].

In Jóhannesson’s opinion the “[k]unnugleikinn, smásmyglin og vanþroskinn á sviði efnis-meðferðar [1946:xxvii]” indicated an early date for the saga, or the first quarter of the 13th century. Scholars are generally in agreement with this conclusion (see Andersson 2006:87).

Others have sought to clarify the “faults” of the saga. Peter Foote explained the ambivalence in the portrayal of Sturla of Hvammr as being due to a change of viewpoint at the start of the Deildartunga dispute – the saga is no longer “told from the point of view of those living in Hvammr [...] in the same unqualified way [1950–51, 1984:21].” Stephen Norman Tranter discerns a “theme of distrust” running through the whole saga, which is otherwise “episodic in nature, digressing at times to relate apparent trivia, and held together by the central figure of Sturla Þórðarson rather than by underlying unity of action [1987:89].” Viðar Hreinsson, on the other hand, maintained that the saga had its own internal logic, based on social stability and consistency (1994:809). Most recently, Theodore M. Andersson has written about the saga. He quotes the narrator’s words at the end of chapter five: “Þessi váru af Sturlu upphöf fyrst, er hann átti málum at skipta við menn [68].”¹ Andersson observes:

This is an important comment because it can be read to say a good deal about the nature of the story that is being told. It suggests a biographical focus on Sturla, and it suggests that an important aspect of a man’s biography consists of his legal dealings or, more broadly perhaps, his contentious dealings of any kind with other people. Finally, it suggests that these dealings were

¹ All quotations from the saga are from the edition of Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason, and Kristján Eldjárn, *Sturlunga saga*, 2 vols. Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946. Vol. 1.

remembered and therefore perhaps told serially. The dealings did not necessarily focus on two particular individuals in conflict but could instead involve the protagonist and a series of opponents [2002:391].

Andersson has, then, discovered a “unity” of a kind in *Sturlu saga*, although he is as critical of “its literary merits” as most other scholars who have expressed an opinion. Andersson says: “Aside from this chapter [21, i.e. about the killings on the heath], it is not until the last six chapters that the narrative acquires saga dimensions and saga rhythm. [...] The author appears to have exchanged the role of chronicler for a new role as dramatist. [2002:395].” And Andersson takes the saga as an example of a preclassical saga, based upon oral accounts of recent events. He is thus not far from sharing Finnur Jónsson’s view of the technique of the saga: “Det er den historiske virkelighed, der taler ud af alt dette, og ikke nogen særlige forfatterinteresser [1923:551].” In his book *The Structure of the Novel*, Scottish poet and critic Edwin Muir criticises scholars for their ideas on how novels reflect real life, commenting: “what they forget is the novel [1929:10].” *Mutatis mutandis*, the same may be said of scholars’ views on the contemporary sagas – they forget the contemporary *saga*. The saga makes a statement, and life does not. Thus we must seek to understand the motivation of the saga writer, to discover his intentions in recounting the saga.

Sturlu saga is extant only as part of the *Sturlunga* compilation (from about 1300). We do not know how much the compiler may have revised it, but scholars have assumed that he included it largely unchanged in his compilation. A list of sagas on the last page of a vellum manuscript of *Ólafs saga helga* (Stockh. perg. 4to, no. 2) includes *Sturlu saga*. But the *Sturlunga* compiler calls the saga *Heiðarvígs saga* (I, 131), a title derived from the climactic event in Sturla’s dispute with Einar Þorgilsson, the battle on Sælingsdalsheiðr in 1171. Hence the compiler may be said to emphasise the saga conflict plot in inserting the saga into his compilation, while whoever used the title *Sturlu saga* focussed on the description of the leading character and saga composition as biography.

Edwin Muir suggests in his book, mentioned earlier, a classification of novels into categories, according to the author’s method of presentation. The first category is what he calls the “novels of action and character”. His description of such novels, where the plot is designed to introduce us to society itself, can be applied to *Sturlu saga*:

All the plot that remains is the series of incidents which widen and diversify the picture, and set the characters in different relations. These incidents may be quite trivial [...]. What we ask from them is that they should arise as naturally as possible, that the plot should not appear to be a plot [[1929]:39–40].

In other words it is the author – not the circumstances, not the other characters of the saga – “der tvinger Sturla til mere at vise sig fra sine mindre gode sider og røbe sin egenkærlighed, stridbarhed og sit had til modstandere [1923:551]”, in flat contradiction to Finnur Jónsson’s view. In the saga “accounts of momentous events are jumbled together with commonplace quarrels,” because the intention of the writer is to describe not only individuals but also the society in which they live.

It is a characteristic feature of Icelandic sagas, not excepting the contemporary sagas, to recount the achievements of the characters and show how they interact; to bring together the conflicting desires of the characters; but not to attempt direct general reasoning or philosophising (see Ker 1908, 1957:251–52; Cook 1973:91; Gurevich 1992:112–13). In the sagas, as we know, the characters may be described on their first appearance in the saga, but otherwise they illuminate their own character through word and deed; or other characters throw light on

them through their conduct towards them. Finally, a mouthpiece of the narrator, or public opinion, may enunciate a judgement of the character (see Lönnroth 1976:82–101).

All these methods of characterisation are applied in *Sturlu saga*. Yet, of the countless characters introduced by name, only a few are directly described. But by virtue of being named in the saga, the character has naturally gained a place in the narrative (see Sternberg 1987: 330). Of the four conflicting characters in the principal dispute in the saga, only Einarr Þorgilsson is explicitly described.

Einarr tók þá fé sitt ok goðorð, ok gerðist hann höfðingi, því at margar stoðar runnu undir hann, frændr og mágar ok vinir, er Þorgils, faðir hans, hafði fengit sér. Hann skorti ok eigi kapp né áræði. Engi var hann lagamaðr ok blestr í máli [68].

This kind of “proleptic portrait,” where the narrator expounds the physical and psychological characterisation and social position of the person involved, is an indication of what is to come, although the conduct of the character in the saga is not necessarily entirely consistent with the introductory presentation (see Sternberg 1987:325–28).

The saga begins with a reference to Einarr’s father, chieftain Þorgils Oddason of Staðarhóll, and his family. We are informed that Oddi, Einarr’s elder brother, who was intended to succeed to his father’s position, was fostered by Sæmundr Sigfússon at Oddi “ok varð hann fróður (63).” Einarr, on the other hand, was fostered in a humbler home, and he is said to have known little of the law. In addition, he is described as speaking with a lisp, which was not appropriate for a chieftain (cf. Bragg 1994:28–32). Thus we know that he lacked two attributes which are specifically emphasised in the saga’s portrayal of Sturla: legal expertise and eloquence. He had, on the other hand, various advantages that Sturla lacked: wealth, as well as many other pillars to support his power: relatives by blood and marriage, and friends supplied by his father. Neither Sturla nor Einarr displays any lack of ambition or daring, although we are informed that Sturla suffered from depression.

Listeners/readers of the saga may not have read any important meaning into the name Einarr (i.e. great champion). But it is clear from the discussion of the name of Snorri *goði* (i.e. Snerrir, sharp-witted) in *Eyrbyggja saga* that people did in fact think about the meaning of names (*Eyrbyggja saga* 1935:20). Þorleifr (i.e. Þórr’s heir) has the soubriquet *beiskaldi* (acerbic, griping, nagging) which cannot have been good for his reputation. Páll Sölvason the priest and Jón Loftsson of Oddi probably benefited from having Biblical names (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1936). And the character of Páll’s wife Þorbjörg may have been seen as consistent with her name, which means ‘Þór’s deliverance/aid.’ The question is, was any special interpretation placed upon the name Sturla? The name derives from the verb *sturla*, ‘to disturb, derange, madden,’ and is akin to the personal name *Stýrr*, ‘warrior’ (Guðrún Kvaran and Sigurður Jónsson 1991:514–15). An interpretation of the name is dreamed by Guðný Böðvarsdóttir, Sturla’s second wife, before the birth of Sturla Sighvatsson in *Íslendinga saga*, where the meaning is said to be ‘valiant in battle’ (I, 236–37). The name could thus reinforce the other descriptions of Sturla of Hvammr in his saga.

There has been limited discussion of methods of characterisation in the sagas in recent years, since this subject was addressed by Lars Lönnroth in the 1960s and 1970s (see ref. Lönnroth 1976; see also Vésteinn Ólason 1998:109–36). Scholars have focussed more on roles in saga feuds and stock characters, in accord with structuralist analysis of the sagas (see Lönnroth 1976:61–68; further Jochens 1996:87–195). As *Sturlu saga* recounts disputes and conflicts, Sturla’s enemies and their supporters may be deemed to take on the roles of villains and the villain’s helpers, except Páll the priest. And indeed Sturla implies that it is in fact Páll’s wife Þorbjörg who is his opponent in that dispute, and she is presented in the light of a *prima donna*. Jón Loftsson is the wise counsellor to Páll the priest, and indeed to the whole

community. But it is hard to see Sturla as a hero of any kind: he is far more of an antihero, and indeed is presented in an ambiguous manner, as Ólsen pointed out (cf. Tranter 1987:113). *Sturlu saga* is a story of conflict, with no hero as such.

W. P. Ker likened Sturla to his forefather Snorri *goði* (Ker 1908, 1957:253). In chapter two of *Sturlu saga* this relationship is mentioned, and the saga explains how the chieftainship of the Snorrungar came to be held by Þórðr, Sturla's father, before passing to Sturla. Helgi Þorláksson maintains that the following is known from sources on Snorri *goði*: 1) He is regarded as being fairly powerful; 2) he connected himself with influential men; 3) he is said to be a man of good counsel, and wise; 4) he fathered many children by a number of women; 5) he is said to be a fine warrior (1992:297–98; see also Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1935:xli–xlii). This is undeniably reminiscent of the description of Sturla in his saga. As in the case of the portrayal of Snorri, Sturla of Hvammr has difficulty engaging the empathy of those he interacts with in the saga, and of the listener/reader, even though most of those with whom he finds himself at odds are little better than he, except Páll the priest. Jón Loftsson of Oddi, admittedly an ally of Páll, calls him a divine cleric, as does Bishop Þorlák Þórhallsson of Skálholt (112). Bishop Brandr Sæmundarson's judgment of Sturla's personality dominates the saga, as it is given near the end of the story, by his own relative, who had however turned against him in the Deildartunga dispute: “Engi maðr frýr þér vits, en meir ertu grunaðr um gæzku [113].”

The ambiguity in the portrayal of Sturla can be explained by his being of the *trickster type*. And indeed Þorbjörg at Reykholt tries to make him like the one he most wishes to resemble, i.e. Óðinn (109). Dean A. Miller has discussed the principal features of the trickster type; he calls tricksters ‘warriors of Óðinn’ and points to such characters as Skalla-Grímr and his son Egill as examples of the type. He says they “are edgy, prickly, talented individualists with a strong whiff of the supernatural but little sense of social solidarity or group loyalty, except, minimally, to their own family [2000:245].” Miller also links sexual energy to the trickster type. He maintains in addition that “because the type is thoroughly unafraid of reversal and anomaly, odd, unpredictable, and intriguing combinations are very likely to occur [2000:249].” Finally, he attributes to the trickster type “the manipulation of words, not only in ‘ordinary’ speech (as if anything having to do with the trickster could be ordinary!) but in songs, spells, and celebratory poems [2000:250].” It is not least this last attribute of the trickster type that suggests a link with Óðinn, as witness Jón *skáld*'s verse in *Sturlu saga*:

Karl er staddr hjá Sturlu,/ stendr hann fyr réttendum,/ þrumir andskotinn undir/ orðslægr goða bægi [109].

It does not matter if Óðinn was regarded by some as the Devil himself.

The verse is spoken in an argument between Jón *skáld* and Sturla (see Bax and Padmos 1983:154–5, 165–6). A similar *senna* takes place earlier in the saga between Sturla and Þorleifr *beiskaldi* when Sturla accuses Þorleifr of having burned the bishop to death in Hítardalr “en var sjálfr dreginn grátandi ór eldinum”. Þorleifr replies:

Engum munu þau tíðindi verri þykkja en mér. En eigi erum vit enn þaðan komnir, at þat sé víst, at sá hafi betr, er einskis þykkir um þau tíðindi vert. En ekki gerla mantu þat nú, at þú myndir drepinn hjá garði þínum sem melrakki hjá greni, ef ek stæða eigi fyrir. En þess vilnumst ek, at færi gangi höfuðlausir fyrir mik á dómsdegi en fyrir þik, er þú hlær nú at glæpum þínum [96].

Þorleifr, like Jón *skáld*, focuses on the most negative aspect of Sturla's personality, his “little sense of social solidarity.” At the same time, his interest in witty and memorable speech is also illustrated.

While the classification of Sturla of Hvammr as a trickster type goes far to explain the context of his saga, it by no means clarifies the characterisation, as in the narrative he is a rounded character. It has even been maintained that he develops as the saga progresses, which is contrary to the general assumption that characterisation in the sagas is static (Björn M. Ólsen 1902:220; Tranter 1987:113). It makes more sense, however, to view the characterisation as Peter Foote does: “He [Sturla] grows older and the situations are different [1984:23].” At the start of the saga, Sturla is introduced as a young man who is heir to a chieftainship. He is a ladies’ man, like his forefather Snorri, and has many children with Álof, daughter of Þorgeirr Kaggason, who “þótti kvenna friðust ok gerviligust [64]”. Later Sturla’s marriage to Ingibjörg, daughter of Þorgeirr Hallason, is reported, with the statement that Þorgeirr “hafði spurðaga af Sturlu, at hann var mikilmenni ok ættstórr ok líkligr til höfðingja [66].” The Staðarhóll family attend the wedding, as they are related to the bride. But before long they find themselves at loggerheads with Sturla. The saga then recounts Sturla’s various legal disputes, mainly with Einarr Þorgilsson, and later with Þorleifr *beiskaldi*. Sturla generally has fewer men, yet in most cases he gains the upper hand, through his resourcefulness and good sense. For example, the saga tells how Sturla helps Yngvildr Þorgilsdóttir, Einarr’s sister, and his brother-in-law Þorvarðr to conceal the birth of her child, fathered by Þorvarðr, and assists her in fleeing the country. In this legal dispute his cunning clearly emerges when he is ready to swear that he did not advise Þorvarðr to lie about his paternity, but not to admit that he was Þorvarðr’s accomplice. This gave rise to a rumour that he had been complicit. Sturla finally gains the upper hand in the fight with Einarr Þorgilsson on Sælingsdalsheiðr, although according to the saga his men had set off from home in a hurry. But when it came to the point, the boldness and resourcefulness of Sturla and his men paid off. After the battle the saga says: “Ok var þat mál flestra manna, at á þeim fundi skipti um mannvirðing með þeim Sturlu ok Einari [94].” Public opinion has turned in Sturla’s favour. And it is recounted that Jón Loftsson of Oddi and Gizurr Hallsson of Haukadalsr settled their dispute at Alþingi in 1172: “Ok var þeim gerðum svá farit sem líkligast þótti, at helzt myndi sættirnar verða haldnar, en ekki með þvílíkum stafnaburði [arrogance], sem fyrr váru gervar [94].” By this the parties settled their differences.

It is not clear when Sturla’s disputes with Þorleifr *beiskaldi* took place, as the chronology is confusing in this part of the saga. But everything suggests that the events of chapters 23 to 29 are partly contemporary with Sturla’s disputes with Einarr, although they are recounted later (Vogt 1913:385–88; Finnur Jónsson 1923:550). Thus it seems that in chapter 23 the saga goes back in time to the 1160s, so that the events of the following chapters, up to chapter 29, are in fact simultaneous with the events previously recounted; that chapter tells of Páll Þórðarson drowning in Ísafjörðr, an event which took place in 1171. The saga thus applies artificial ordering, parataxis and simultaneity, as Carol J. Clover has pointed out is common in saga literature (1982:109–47; cf. Andersson 2000).

Sturla’s disputes with Þorleifr *beiskaldi* form a comical intermezzo between the principal conflicts in the saga. And their confrontations are generally confined to the verbal. The middle section of the saga, however, is linked to the previous disputes, as Sturla is still at loggerheads with Þorleifr and Einarr of Staðarhóll. This section ends with Jón Loftsson settling the case. The saga says of Jón: “Váru þá sem mestar virðingar Jóns, ok var þangat skotit öllum stórmálum, sem hann var [104].”

The saga had previously reached a climax with the *heiðarvíg*, where Sturla is on the winning side. But after the middle section, at the beginning of chapter 30, new characters enter the saga. New disputes arise, outside the region: Sturla provides support to his father-in-law Böðvarr Þórðarson, but clearly has his own interests in mind. At this point the saga goes back several years to the mid-1160s, to the marriage of Þórir Þorsteinsson the priest and Þórlaug, daughter of the Páll the priest at Reykholt. A dispute arises between the relatives and chief-

tains Böðvarr Þórðarson and Páll the priest due to an inheritance from the couple: Böðvarr takes over their estate at Deildartunga, to which Páll claims to be the true heir. The Deildartunga dispute reaches its climax with a legal case at Alþingi near the end of the saga. Jón Loftsson determines Sturla's place in society as an upstart, but softens the blow by offering to foster Sturla's son, inviting him to his home at Oddi, and giving him fine gifts. The saga thus becomes bipartite in structure, as is often the case with sagas (see Clover 1982:41).

In his interaction with Einarr Þorgilsson, Sturla demonstrates that he is a strong regional leader, who stands by his followers, although he is cunning. But he benefits from the fact that Einarr Þorgilsson is far from popular as a chieftain. In his dealings with Þorleifr *beiskaldi*, he applies the same cold humour as when he is informed that Einarr Þorgilsson has had the farmhouse at Hvammr burned down: “Ok er menn kómu á fund Sturlu ok sögðu honum tíðindi, hann kvað Einar mundu elt hafa frýjulaust eina nótt [75].” Páll the priest regarded Sturla as overbearing, in spite of his fair words; and Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson called Sturla and his father-in-law Böðvarr Þórðarson powerful and cunning chieftains. Sturla had by then displayed the audacity to evaluate the injuries of Þorbjörg of Reykholt at a huge price, after having cajoled and threatened Páll the priest into allowing him to make the judgement himself. Sturla's bare-faced cheek reaches its high point when he pretends to believe that the injury to Þorbjörg was the result of a conspiracy against him, and awards himself compensation of 200 hundreds. He maintains that he is following the precedent of Hafliði Másson, the wisest of men, who had, however, awarded himself only 80 hundreds for injuries inflicted by Þorgils Oddason of Staðarhóll, as recounted in *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* (chapter 31). Páll regarded the judgement as proof of Sturla's effrontery and shamelessness, and refused to pay up. And the saga says: “þótti öllum mönnum mikil undr, er honum [Sturlu] kom í hug at kveða slíkt upp [111].” This view was shared by Jón Loftsson, whom the saga presents as highly respected and a skilled peacemaker – in fact every dispute in the saga ends by his intervention. Sturla realises that the case is turning against him, and so he has his father-in-law Böðvarr speak for him, while he stays in his booth. No doubt the inference is that Sturla was depressed, but also that he was considering what to do, just as Þorgeirr the *goði* did in olden times, for at the end of the saga his eloquence is highlighted:

Ok einn dag, er menn kómu flestir til Lögbergs, þá gekk Sturla fram á virkit fyrir búð sína, því at þat var oft hátt hans at setja á langar tölur um málaferli sín, því at maðrinn var bæði vitr ok tungumjúkr. Vildi hann ok, at þat væri jafnan frá borit, at hans virðing yrði víðfræg [113].

The saga reports his speech, which ends with the words: “Nú kann vera, at ek hafa eigi vit til at sjá mér hlut til handa, en vilja mynda ek halda sæmð minni [113].” Sturla has met his master in Jón Loftsson, when he attempts to gain wealth and power outside his own dominions. His honour is in Jón's hands, and he must submit to settle.

Annette Lassen has said:

Sturla er den magtfulde mand, der handler uden hensyn til almindelige normer. Ligesom Odin bevæger han sig ikke inden for den almindelige verdens tilladte grænser. På denne måde kan Sturla beskyldes for at være skyldig i opløsning af det bestående. [...] Det er med slet skjult foragt, at Thorbjörg, mens hun sigter mod Sturlas ene øje, kommenterer Sturlas beundring af Odin. Hermed sigter hun måske også til, at Sturla, som Odin, har indgået en kontrakt med kaoskræfterne [2003:117–118; cf. Tranter 1987:119–23].

Sturla becomes depressed when he hears of Þorbjörg's death, because he believes he will not be able to pursue his ambitions against her sons after her death. This is not the only similarity between Sturla and Óðinn, who also share the qualities of cunning and wit. Peter Foote

writes: “Sturla’s most distinctive characteristic is his wit and the nature of this remains constant throughout the saga. It is most typically of a mocking sarcastic kind. It is clear that his remarks were remembered, as were *lausavísur* in other instances, as central points for the narrative [1984:22].” This is precisely the quality which emerges in his speech at Lögberg, where he presents himself as an orator, a man of law and a wit. At the same time, the saga brings out the striking differences between Sturla and Einarr Þorgilsson. E. V. Gordon made this very point, that the characters of the sagas had aesthetic notions regarding their conduct, and that this was their compass, for they had little idea of morality and none of sin (1957:xxxiii). The characterisations emerge from performance, because the events are staged, and the plot is driven, by the diverse desires of the characters. They want honour and respect, just as Sturla says in his speech (Baumann 1986). But the respect Sturla covets is not that of a forbearing man, but derives not least from his skill with words, which is ironic. He wants to be remembered for his wit, which is, however, invariably coloured by his slyness. Not least as a wit does he wish to resemble Óðinn. But Sturla’s ambition and domineering behaviour to others led to his relative, Bishop Brandr of Hólar, declaring that he is believed to lack compassion, and pointing to other similarities between Sturla and Óðinn.

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The Genealogies of West-Icelandic Family Sagas and their relation to the Sturlung family

Jens Ulff-Møller, Department of History, St. Johns University Queens, USA

Elaborate genealogies are a prominent feature of Icelandic family sagas. Hundreds of characters are mentioned in family sagas relating to Western Iceland, such as the Greenland sagas, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, Gísli Súrsson's saga, etc. It is, however, necessary to determine whether these characters were real people by searching for their names in the *Landnámabók*, the register of the earliest immigrants to Iceland. The abovementioned sagas deal with apparently unrelated kinship groups, but when using a computerized genealogy program on the comparable genealogies in the *Landnámabók*, the different kinship groups appear to be different parts of the extended family of the Sturlungs. In the database, more than 700 persons belong to the Sturlung family, being either directly related or married members of the kinship group. In my paper, I will first present the methods I used to establish the genealogical database, then I will present the *Landnámabók* as a historical source and discuss how the genealogical information might have been preserved correctly in an oral family tradition. Finally, I would like to address the position of the Sturlungs and their relation to specific persons mentioned in the sagas.

Computerized Genealogies

In order to keep track of the genealogy of a large number of people, it is convenient to enter the names in a computerized genealogy program. Several programs are available – the one I have used I found free of charge on the internet (www.myheritage.com). The program enables you – by entering the names of parents, children, siblings – to create ancestor lists, descendant lists, and relations between two persons.

At the previous Saga Congress in Durham, I investigated Icelanders with Celtic or Irish background, but I did not enter their descendants in a genealogy program. In this paper I expand upon this background by studying their descendants. I started with the family of Björn buna, Ketill flatnefr, Auðr djúpúðga, Björn Austræni, Helgi Magri, Rafarta Kjarvalsdóttir, Eyvindr Austmaðr, Gjaflaug Kjallaksdóttir. Gísli Sigurðsson created the figure reproduced in Figure 1, below, which shows that the family also included Greenland and Vinland explorers. The family tree is, however, far from complete and much more complicated than it is possible to show in such a figure (as I will demonstrate with further examples during the oral presentation of this text at the Saga Congress).

With the descendants of the people listed in Figure 1, the resulting family tree consists of more than 700 relatives from up to around ten generations, and it is possible to enter even more names that are mentioned in the *Landnámabók*. This is an astonishingly high number, considering that the *Landnámabók* mentions only a total of about 3,000 people.

Genealogical information is not usually skewed, as it focuses on one kinship group of the author – whom you would find toward the end of the descendant list. It is therefore not surprising that the author of the *Landnámabók*, Ari fróði Þorgilsson (1068–1148), appears toward the end of the computerized list of descendants of Björn bunau in the database.

It is, however, much more surprising that the Sturlung dynasty, and in particular the founder of the dynasty, Hvamm-Sturla Þórðarson (born c. 1115), and his son Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241), appear to occupy a more central position in the genealogy than Ari fróði. For example, Ari fróði did not mention either the name of his wife nor that of his maternal grandmother. The Sturlung family is well known for writing sagas, but it seems that they also

The Landnámabók

The Landnámabók is considered to be the most reliable historical record of the settlement of Iceland. The authors of the Landnámabók Ari Þorgilsson (1068–1148) from Snæfellsness and Kolskeggr Ásbjarnarson (from eastern Iceland) compiled the Landnámabók in the beginning of the twelfth century. The original version is, however, lost and it is difficult to determine its original extent. It must have been shorter than the versions that are now extant, and it might have been less focused on the Sturlung family, since the major extant version, the Sturlubók, was compiled by Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284), and the other major version, the Hauksbók, was written around 1306–08 by Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334). The edition of the text, by Jakob Benediktsson, should be consulted for more information about all the extant versions of the Landnámabók.

The Landnámabók seems not to be a complete register of all important Icelanders, since it records 435 initial settlers and lists only some 3000 descendants. Ari fróði's Íslendingabók chapter 10 (from ca. 1100) presents in grand totals a number of Þingfararkaupsbændur in the four districts of Iceland that does not correspond to the distribution of the people in the districts according to Landnámabók. The background for the list was probably the introduction of the tithe by Bishop Gizurr in 1097, which involved an assessment of the estates of peasants who paid Þingfararkaup, and who would also be obliged to pay the tithe to the Church. The numbers of peasants from this list for the western and northern districts only were entered in the Landnámabók. Another list from 1311 corresponds to the earlier list if the numbers were stated in normal hundreds (Thorsteinsson, p. 47–48), whereas the later list states the numbers in long hundreds of 120; the total number was 3,812 taxpaying peasants who paid a total of 38,120 ells in tax (Thorsteinsson, erroneously writes 38,000 ells, p. 102). (For more information about long hundreds in Icelandic agriculture see Jens Ulff-Møller, "The Use of an Archaic British-Scandinavian Counting system in the Icelandic Non-Monetary Economy.")

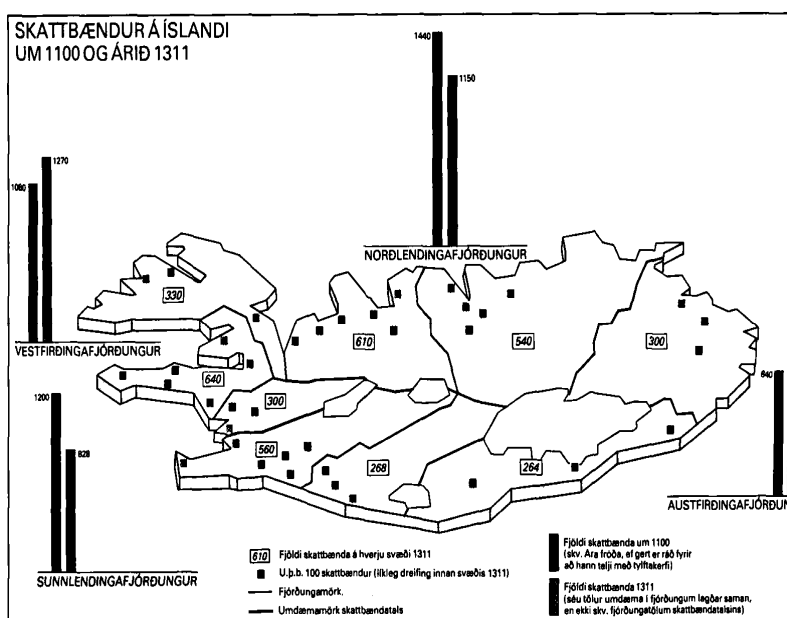


Figure 3: Árni Daniel Júlíusson (ed): Íslenskur sögu atlas: 1. bindi. Þingfararkaupsbændur (converted from long hundreds) ca. 1100 and Skattbændur in 1311.

<u>Fjórðung</u>	<u>Þingfarakaupsbændur 1100</u>		<u>Skattbændur 1311</u>	
	<u>Normal</u>	<u>Long Long</u>	<u>Decimal</u>	
Norðlend. (Eyfirðinga)	xii	1,200	1,440	ixC ok lxx = 9 C 70= 1,150
Austfirð. vii hundroþ heil	700	840	ccccclxxxiv=	4 C 84= 564
Sunnlend. (Rangv.)	x	1,000	1,200	viiijC xxxviiij =8 C 38= 998
Vestfirð. (Breiðfirðinga fj.)	ix	<u>900</u>	<u>1,080</u>	dxxxx ok xx =9 C20= <u>1,100</u>
<u>Total no. Peasants =</u>		<u>3,800</u>	<u>4,560</u>	31 C 92= <u>3,812</u>

The number of farmers with large holdings and around 3,800 peasants mentioned above relates to one generation, whereas the the Landnámabók records up to ten generations of farmers. The exact number of farmers in each of the four districts of Iceland mentioned in Landnámabók is not available, but it is possible to obtain a rough estimate from counting the number of pages assigned to each district in the Íslenzk Fornrit edition:

Landnámabók: Number of Pages pr. District:

Vestfirðingafjórðungr: p. 31–210 – 180 pages p. 210. níu hundruð bónda

Nordlendingafjórðungr: p. 211–287 – 77 pages p. 286 tólf hundruð bónda

Austfirðingafjórðungr: p. 288 – 366 – 78 pages

Sunnlendingafjórðungr: p. 337 – 397 – 60 pages

It seems that Western Iceland, which receives twice as many pages as the northern and the southern quarter, is overrepresented, whereas the northern and southern districts, which both have more Þingfarakaupsbændur than western Iceland, are underrepresented in comparison to the Íslendingabók.

It should also be noticed that the people mentioned do not represent the general populace, but were aristocratic (farmers with large landholdings and their families); people from the lower classes such as freedmen or slaves (such as Vifil and Erpr) were mentioned only to the extent that they had a relation to the higher classes.

The low coverage of Southern Iceland in Landnámabók is particularly noticeable with regard to the people mentioned in the *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, which contains several errors. The most obvious is that Ásgerðr Askadóttir ens ómálga, who according to Landnámabók is Njáls father's mother, but in Njáls saga she is incorrectly mentioned as his mother (the Z version attempts to correct the error). She cannot possibly be his mother, as she flees Norway with the children at the time of Harold Fair-Hair (ca. 900) after her husband Ófeigr had been killed by the king's men; Njáll lived at the time of the introduction of the Fifth Court in 1004 (Robert Cook, p. xi):

“Njáll hét maðr; hann var son Þorgeirs gollnis, Þórólfs sonar. Móðir Njáls hét Ásgerðr ok var dóttir Áskels hersis ins ómálga [...] Sonr hennar var Holta-Þórir[...]“ (Njáll xx. Kap.).

“Ófeigr hét ágætr maðr i Raumdælafylki; hann átti Ásgerði dótt ur Ásks hins ómálga. Ófeigr varð missátt við Harald konung hárfagra ok bjósk af því til Íslandsferðar. En er hann búinn sendi Haraldr konungr menn til hans, ok var tekinn af lífi, en Ásgerðr fór út með börn þeira ok með henni Þórólfr bróðir hennar laungetinn[...]. Börn Ófeigs ok Ásgerðar váru Þorgeirr gollnir ok Þorsteinn flöskuskegg, Þorbjörn kyrrir ok Álöf elliðaskjöldr[...]” (Landnámabók, S341, H299).

In contrast to the Landnámabók, Njáls saga does not know the history of the family in Norway. The author of Njáls saga might have confused his parents since Ásgerðr married a second time to Þorgeirr enn hörzki, and not Þorgeirr gollnir, who was her son.

In contrast, the Landnámabók does not know the names of Njál's children, nor Ásgerðr's freedmen, Sigtryggr (xxxix kap.) – and Bjálfi father of Kaðall, father of Björn hvíti and his wife Valgerðr, whose mother according to Njáls saga is the sister of the father of Gunnar of Hlíðarendi (who is mentioned in the Landnámabók), but she and her family are otherwise not known from any other source. (Njáls.s. 39, 148 kap.).

But can we trust the genealogies presented by the author of Njáls saga, when he does not have the information to present correctly the parents of the eponymous protagonist of the saga? None of the West Icelandic sagas appear to have a similar lack of command of basic genealogy as that found in Njáls saga.

Oral Family Traditions?

The origins of this genealogical information have been much discussed. Scholars such as Gísli Sigurðsson (in *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*) consider the sagas to be orally transmitted traditions, but a closer study of the genealogies reveal that the sagas relate to specific families in which they are composed. I would therefore like to define these traditions more specifically as “oral family traditions” since the information they contain is confined to prominent families such as the Sturlungar.

Axel Kristinsson (p. 4) considers saga-writing to be connected to the political situation of the Icelandic Commonwealth; the sagas served a social and political purpose, irrespective of their literary qualities or the message that the sagas may have conveyed. They did not promote a specific ideology but were rather an instrument to be used in the complex political and social situation at the time of their creation.

The political development of Iceland led to a power struggle between the major principalities which turned into a civil war by 1235. Originally a system of 39 chieftaincies (*goðorð*) had by 1100 developed into four principalities dominated in the South by the Haukdælir and Oddaverjar in the south and in the North Hafliði Mátsson's family at the Húnaþing-district, and the Ásbirningr in Skagafjörður (Thorsteinsson, p. 65–67).

The old principalities did not produce saga writing. In the twelfth century, new principalities emerged, and in particular the Sturlung family became powerful in western Iceland by merging several *goðorð* into a new, powerful principality. Later, in the “Sturlung Age” these rivalries that enabled the Norwegian king to become increasingly involved in Icelandic conflicts, as Icelandic aristocrats vied for his support. In 1262 he finally managed to get the Icelanders to accept his sovereignty and thus put an end to the conflicts. It was in these times of trouble that the Icelandic sagas flourished.

The genealogy database I have constructed reveals that the Sturlung family tried to enhance their position through ties by marriage, in particular with the Oddaverjar and with the principalities in the north. That may have triggered the conflict that arose with the Haukdælir. Previously the family had been unremarkable, but suddenly they began to play a central role in the history of Iceland and the writing of sagas might be considered a way they tried to advance their status in society by justifying their dominant position, by providing a distinguished genealogy. Figures in the sagas such as Eric the Red's wife Þjóðhildr, Vifill, Guðríðr and Þorfinnr Karlsefni, Egill Skallagrímson and Ólafr pá, and Snorri goði (Gísli, p. 262) were all related to Hvamm-Sturla Þórðarson. The Celtic immigrants (in particular the families of Björn buna and Auðr en djúpauðga, (Gísli, p. 77) were almost all ancestors of the Sturlungs; they brought the Celtic variant of Christianity to Iceland, which was not recognized by authors of histories recounting the Christianization of Iceland, probably because they would not

acknowledge the importance of the Christianity that was connected to inferior families and slaves.

Members of the Sturlung family, in particular Snorri Sturluson and Sturla Þórðarson, wrote several of the saga texts, and it cannot be a coincidence that they in particular wrote about their own ancestors in order to promote the position of their family. The sagas and the genealogies should therefore not be considered mainly to be literary entertainment, but a way to enhance the position of the Sturlungs during the thirteenth-century power struggles, when civil war raged among rival chieftains in the “Sturlungaöld.”

It is often argued that the family sagas relied to a large extent on **oral traditions**; but how could a genealogy of several hundred people possibly have been preserved correctly for up to two hundred years? It seems likely that some basic genealogical tables must have been available, at least for the author of the Landnámabók.

A widely used method was to discern lineages from the farmstead where they lived, or to trace the descendants from a significant person, such as Snorri goði in Eyrbyggja Saga (Ch. 65). For example: “Snorri married his daughter Thordis to Bolli Bollason, and the Gilsbakki people are descended from them.” – “Halldor was the greatest of all Snorri’s sons. He lived at Hjardarholt in Laxardale, and from him the Sturlungs and the Vatnsfjord people are descended.” The saga probably confused him with Halldór Ólafsson (Vatnsfjörðr farm is situated in Vestfirðir and has an early circular graveyard. Þorbjörg Ólafsdóttir, daughter of Ólafr pá Höskuldsson (a Christian) was first married to Ásgeirr Knattarson and then to Vermundr according to Egils saga, ch. 79, Laxdæla saga, ch. 31. Grettis saga mentions the second marriage, ch. 52. The Landnámabók does not mention the marriages).

Another method of preserving genealogies in oral tradition might be to remember one ancestor of a famous person per generation. For example, saint Jón’s eight ancestor generations involved a total of 255 ancestors. By limiting the number of ancestors mentioned to one ancestor per generation the number is only eight. This method may exemplify how a genealogy was preserved orally:

“Helgi bjóla, son Ketils flatnefs, fór til Íslands úr Suðureyjum. Hann var með Ingólfi hinn fyrsta vetur og nam með hans ráði Kjalarnes allt milli Mógilsár og Mýdalsár; hann bjó að Hofi. Hans son var Víga-Hrappur og Kollsveinn, faðir Eyvindar hjalta, föður Kollsveins, föður Þorgerðar, móður Þóru, móður Ögmundar, föður Jóns byskups hins helga.” (Landnámabók, 11. k.).

It is, however, also possible that the genealogies were recorded in writing. Precious tapestries were hung up at the winter feast, and they could have depicted people; these tapestries may have represented the family genealogies (Gisli Surrson’s saga, ch. 15).

Grethe Jacobsen asserts (p. 302) that her statistical analysis shows a significant underrepresentation of the number of women in the Landnámabók, a disparity that has the purpose of hiding a Celtic maternal ancestor. That might certainly be an explanation in some cases, such as Þjóðhilðr’s maternal grandmother, whose name is not mentioned, although the grandmother might have been the reason why Þjóðhilðr became Christian. But in the method presented above, limiting the ancestors remembered to mentioning one person per generation only would lead to a greater representation of fathers at the expense of mothers – regardless of their ancestry. Often concubines are not mentioned, and they may also have been non-Celtic women. (Ruth Mazo Karras, Marie Egekvist).

Using a genealogy program, people who are not mentioned become more discernible as their ancestors are also left out. Some of the persons that are not mentioned in texts even had a central position in the genealogy. For example, it is puzzling that the author of the Landnámabók, Ari fróði, did not mention the name of his wife and the family of his mother’s

mother, and a similar branch is missing in the genealogy of Sturla Þórðarson from Hvammr. Similarly, the wife of Snorri Þorfinnsson Karlsefni is not mentioned.

Individuals in the Landnámabók Genealogy

What makes Icelandic genealogies particularly difficult to trace is the lack of surnames in Icelandic naming tradition. Therefore the editor of the Landnámabók Jacob Benediktsson tried to construct “families” on the basis genealogical tables of 35 settlers or main farmsteads – similar to the method mentioned above (the appendix, “ættaskrár” (p. 401–440). I entered these family groups in the genealogy program, but the number of tables is insufficient for entering all kinship groups of the Sturlungar, in particular the descendants of Höskuldr and Ólafur pá, as well as Þjóðhildr’s family fit poorly in these tables.

The 35 genealogical tables are, however, misleading and confusing because they are interconnected. The family of Björn buna (II) continues in the Kjalleklingar (VII), the family of Auðr djúpúðga (IX), Helgi magri (XVII), the Þórsnesingar (VIII), and the Hvammverjar (IXb), a.o.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated that a computerized genealogy program can be used to study the kinship groups of the Icelandic sagas. The genealogical information must first be verified in a comparison with the Landnámabók. The results have shown a relationship between the family of Björn buna (Auðr djúpauðga) and the Sturlung family that dominated Iceland in the thirteenth century. More research and comparison of texts is still needed.

Genealogies: Sturlungar

Björn buna, Ketill Flatnefr, Björn Austræni, Kjallakr Bjarnarson, Hrólfr Kjallaksson, Sölvi Hrólffson á Geitlandi, Þórðr Sölvason, Magnús Þórðarson, Þórðr Magnússon, Helga Þórðardóttir Magnússonar, Guðný Böðvarsdóttir mother of **Snorri Sturluson**.

Björn Austræni, Kjallakr Bjarnarson Austræna, Gerðr Kjallaksdóttir, Guðlaugr Þormóðarsson auðgi, Guðlaugr Gunnlaugr Þorfinnson, Þórdís Guðlaugsdóttir, Þórðr Gilsson Snorrason, **Sturla Þórðarson Hvammr**.

Björn Austræni, Kjallakr Bjarnarson, Hrólfr Kjallaksson, Sölvi Hrólffson, Þórðr Sölvason, Magnús Þórðarson, Þórðr Magnússon, father of Helga Þórðardóttir, mother of Guðný Böðvarsdóttir mother of **Snorri Sturluson**.

Björn Austræni, Kjallakr Bjarnarson, Gerðr Kjallaksdóttir, mother of Guðlaugr Þormóðarson auðgi, father of Þorfinnr Guðlaugsson auðgi, Guðlaugr/Gunnlaugr Þorfinnsson, Þórdís Guðlaugsdóttir, mother of Þórðr Gilsson Snorrasonar, **Sturla Þórðarson (Hvammr)**.

Rafarta Kjarvalsdóttir, mother of Þuríðr Eyvindardóttir Austmanns, mother of Þorgerðr Þorsteinsdóttir Rauda, mother of Höskuldr, Ólafur pá Höskuldsson Bergþóra Ólafsdóttir pá, mother of Kjartan Þórhallsson, Smið-Sturla Kjartansson adopted, Þórðr Gilsson Snorrasonar, Sturla Þórðarson (Hvammr), **Snorri Sturluson**

Snorri goði Þorgrimsson viii, Halldór Snorrison goði, Þorkatla Halldórsdóttir, mother of Þórdís Guðlaugsdóttir viib,x, mother of Þórðr Gilsson Snorrason, **Sturla Þórðarson (Hvammr)**, **Snorri Sturluson**.

Genealogies: Ari fróði Þorgilsson (Íslendingabók, Landnámabók)

Björn Austræni, Óttarr Bjarnarson ens Austræna, Helgi Óttarsson, Ósvífr enn Spaki Helgason, Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir, Gellir Þorkelsson, Þorgils Gellisson, **Ari fróði Þorgilsson**.

Snorri goði Þorgrímsson, father of Þórdís Snorradóttir Goða, wife of Bolli Bollason, son of Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir, mother of Gellir Þorkelsson, father of Þorgils Gellisson, father of **Ari fróði Þorgilsson**.

Rafarta Kjarvalsdóttir, mother of Þuríðr Eyvindrdóttir Austmanns, mother of Ólafr Feilan Þorsteinsson, Þórðr Gellir, Eyjólfur Þórðarson Gellis, Þorkell Eyjólfsson, Gellir Þorkelsson, Þorgils Gellisson, father of **Ari fróði Þorgilsson**.

Genealogies: Snorri goði Þorgrímsson (Laxdæla s., Eyrbyggja s.)

Ketil Flatnefr, Auðr Djúpúðga, Þórsteinn Rauði, Ólafr Feilan Þorsteinsson (Hvammr, Lax), Þóra Ólafsdóttir Feilan, Þórgrímur goði Þorsteinsson Þorskabíts, **Snorri goði Þorgrímsson**.

Snorri goði Þorgrímsson, Þórdís Snorradóttir, wife of Bolli Bollason son of Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir.

Genealogies: Gisli Súrsson

Auðr Djúpúðga, Þórsteinn Rauði, Ólafr Feilan Þorsteinsson, Þóra Ólafsdóttir feilan, Börkr Digri Þorsteinsson Þorskabíts, Þórdís Þorbjarnardóttir Súrs, **Gísli Þorbjörnsson Súrs**.

Snorri goði son of Þórdís Þorbjarnardóttir Súrs, sister of **Gísli Þorbjörnsson Súrs**.

Genealogies: Þjóðhildr Jörundardóttir (Grænlandinga s. Eiríks s.)

Ketill Flatnefr, Þórunn hynna wife of Helgi magri Eyvindarson, brother of Björg Eyvindardóttir Austmanns, Jörundur Úlfsson ens Skjálga, **Þjóðhildr Jörundardóttir**.

Þjóðhildr Jörundardóttir, daughter of Jörundur Úlfsson ens Skjálga, brother of Atli Rauði Úlfsson, Jörundur Þorgilsson, Snorri Jörundarson, Gils Snorrason, Þórðr Gilsson, Sturla Þórðarson (Hvammr), **Snorri Sturluson**.

Þjóðhildr Jörundardóttir, father: Jörundur Úlfsson ens Skjálga, Þorbjörg Knarrarbringa Gilsdóttir, mother marries Þorbjörn Haukdælski Björnsson brother of Jórunn Bjarnardóttir married to **Höskuldr in Hjarðarholt**.

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From the History of the Obscene: Evident and concealed meanings of the nickname *Pambarskelfir*

Fjodor Uspenskij, Institute for Slavonic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

In Norway of the 11th century one could hardly find a man who not originating from a family of jarls or kings who would be as powerful and famous as Einarr, son of Eindriði. The social or, if I may say so, political life of this Norwegian *bóndi* was very long and in the main part extremely successful. His career began in the reign of king Óláfr Tryggvason. Already at that time Einarr was regarded as so valiant a warrior that he was admitted to the famous king's ship 'Long Serpent' against all the rules: according to the sources only men not older than sixty and no younger than twenty could be in the crew, while Einarr was only eighteen (Hkr 1: 426).

After Óláfr Tryggvason's defeat in the battle at Svöldr Einarr not only did not fall into disgrace, but, on the contrary, became a close friend of the jarls Eirík and Sveinn the real rulers of Norway. These close relations were even sealed with marriage: the jarls married their own sister Bergliot to Einarr. For rather a long time he was in opposition to Óláfr Haraldsson (the Saint), direct conflicts between them occurred, however, we do not find any of Einarr's actions mentioned in the description of the famous battle of Stiklastaðir where all known *bændr* were opposed to the king. Einarr managed to be out of this conflict that ended, as we know, in the death of St Óláfr (Hkr 3: 26–27; cf. Msk: 24). Some years later Einarr appeared to be one of the first who recognized the killed king as a saint (Hkr 2: 515).

Most likely, it was due to such peculiar neutrality, that Einarr together with Kálfr Árnason was the head of the embassy to the Rus' to the court of prince Yaroslav the Wise, where the young son of Óláfr the Saint, Magnús, was brought up. As we know, the result of this mission was Magnús coming back to Norway where he became the king. In Magnús' time Einarr's power and glory reached the fullest flower. In contrast to Kálfr who soon quarreled with Magnús, Einarr became the adviser and personal friend of the young king whose reign, unfortunately, appeared to be not very long.

The funeral of Magnús the Good, according to the kings sagas, was a peculiar beginning of the end for this powerful *bóndi*. Einarr's increasing influence and popularity excited the apprehensions of Magnús' co-ruler and successor, his uncle Haraldr the Hard Ruler. Haraldr believed that the fact that Einar had so many followers and a big suite could show his intention to take power in the country. The words and behavior of Einarr were so independent, as if Haraldr did not exist at all. Haraldr the Hard Ruler was not one of those who could put up with such a situation, and during a feud Einarr and his son Eindriði were treacherously killed at Haraldr's order.

Thus, here is the course of life of a man whose name for a long time remained in the memory of other generations. The tradition kept not only the name and deeds of the famous Norwegian, but also his peculiar nickname that impresses one as being very personal and evidently not monosemantic – *Pambarskelfir*. The translation of this nickname in a certain sense depends on which of the possible interpretations will be accepted. The historians of the 19th century interpreted it from the romantic viewpoint, as 'bowstring shaker'. The word *Pambarskelfir* allows such interpretation, because the element *pömb* means 'bowstring' and *skelfir* is nomen agentis from the verb *skelfa*, meaning 'to shake, to hit, to frighten'. However in the beginning of the 20th century Finnur Jónsson paid attention to another meaning of the word *pömb* – 'belly, paunch', and from the Bowstring Shaker the famous Einarr turned to Paunch

Shaker (Finnur Jónsson 1907: 215). Afterwards some works appeared supporting the earlier heroic-romantic version of the nickname ('That who shakes the bowstring') (Saltness and 1968: 143–148). This question has not been solved so far, researchers have not yet decided whether Einarr's contemporaries wanted to laugh at him or glorify him.

The difficulties of the translation are mainly concerned with the fact that the term *þömb* and its derivatives are relatively rare in Old Norse. We merely do not dispose of the representative number of contexts where this word is not used within this nickname, to prefer one of the meanings to the other, making the exact choice. There is a scaldic text of the beginning of 11th century called *Grámagaflím* where *þömb* refers to a big, grown belly of a woman, who got pregnant having eaten a fish with a gray belly (Skj 1 B: 276). It should be noted that there is no existing text earlier than the 15th century, where this word would have had the meaning of bowstring, we can only find it in the Icelandic rimur of 1400 (Rimnasafn 1905–1912: 207–208), however, we must remember that these Icelandic rimur had been composed earlier and probably occurred in the oral tradition.

On the other hand, such scarcity of data from the Old Icelandic sources is at least partially supplemented with the information from modern Scandinavian languages. Thus, Finnur Jónsson and Richard Cleasby point out the derivatives of this root in the modern Norwegian and Icelandic languages: *þamba* 'fill with some beverage' or *þamb* in *stand á þambi* 'with a stuffed belly, puffed-up' (Cleasby 1957: 730; Finnur Jónsson 1907: 215). In the lexicological records of these authoritative scholars, the meaning of bowstring is recognized as the secondary definition in respect to the meaning 'belly, stomach'. The motivation of such transfer of meaning seems rather understandable, the common semantic component here is, as it seems, characteristic of the object as 'pulled, tensely curved' (otherwise: Cleasby 1957: 756). At the same time, even if we consider the meaning 'bowstring' secondary we cannot regard it as the late one, because the contrary is proved by etymological data in different languages (de Vries 1977: 605, 631; Alexander Johansson 1956: 436–437). The absence in the early sources cannot be the doubtless proof of the absence of this meaning in the old language.

Anyway, the element *þömb* included in Einarr's name is rather exotic. The stomach was more often called (and in the nicknames, too) *magi*, *kviðr*, *líf*, *vömb*, and the bowstring was called *streng*. Evidently, in the routine usage, the use of this rare polysemantic term outside of a composite word due to dispersion of the denotates would require quite a definite character. The term *þömb* as it is, would mean either a stretched bowstring or a stuffed belly. The introduction of *þömb* in a composite referred it to the field of names and poetical expressions where such simplicity of meanings would be by no means obligatory.

Here we have taken liberty of proposing that the composite *þambarskelfir*, by its form was not a complete mystery for the medieval audience. Moreover, the peculiar diffusion of the stem *þömb* ('belly' and 'bowstring') gave to the expression that special character of word-play that allowed the word to become a nickname and be attached to some man in the opinion of his contemporaries. The double sense, the combination of the lofty and the low, the interaction of the two registers of the language, perhaps, gave the nickname its stability and viability. In other words, we do not have any necessity to reject one of the meanings of this word, in this case, we should accept all its polysemy.

At the same time, it should be born in mind that the very ambiguity of the nickname at different stages of its existence in the tradition, naturally challenged the choice of this or that meaning. This concerns not only the modern researcher but also those who composed the sagas at the end of 12th–13th centuries. It is quite obvious that their choice, never being explicitly expressed, nevertheless, was definitely more close to the lofty meaning of this name 'Bowstring shaker'. Apparently, this accounts for the numerous saga stories of Einarr who could perfectly shoot a bow and had no equal in this art. In this respect, one of the main episodes is very interesting in the description of the already mentioned battle at Svöldr: "Einarr

þambarskelfir was aft in the middle hold (by the mast) of the Serpent; he was shooting with his bow (*skaut af boga*) and shot harder than all others. He shot at Eirík the Jarl and struck the tillerhead right above the jarl's head, and the arrow went as far in as its own bands. The jarl looked at it and asked if they knew who had shot it; but at the same time there came a second arrow so near the jarl that it flew between his side and his arm and struck so deeply into the headboard that the point stuck out on the other side. Then the jarl said to a man who was called Finn and who was said by some to be a Finn: 'Shoot the bog man in the middle hold'. Finn shot and the arrow struck the middle of Einarr's bow at the moment when he was drawing his bow for the third time. The bow burst into two parts. Then said King Óláfr: 'What burst there so loudly?' Einarr answered: 'Norway from thine hand, O King!' 'So great burst has not yet befallen,' said the king; 'take my bow and shoot with it', and he threw his bow to him. Einarr took the bow and straightway drew it beyond the point of the arrow; he shouted: 'Too weak, too weak is the king's bow' (*ofveykr, ofveykr allvalldz bogi*). He threw the bow back, took up his shield and sword, and fought" (Hkr 1: 448–449).

Here, the author together with the participants of the events, praises Einarr's art. As for Einarr, as we can see, he utters words with the aphoristic prophecy concerning the fate of Óláfr Tryggvasson, and in some sense, a panegyric to himself. Indeed, the cause of Óláfr failed, but didn't it fail, at least partly, because Einarr lost his bow? The king's bow appeared to be weak for such an archer as Einarr, and the king would not hold his supreme power. As many other saga aphorisms, Einarr's words have a momental communicative trend, expressing an immediate reaction to the concrete events, and at the same time, generalizing them and transferring them to other level of interpretation.

Besides, in this episode one can see the influence of the universal tradition stemming from antiquity, but, apparently quite present during the middle ages. Generally, the force required for shooting an arrow appeared to be the main manifestation and the criterion of the power and valour of a man. Due to this power, for all the famous men, their bows seemed to be somewhat a part of themselves, nobody except the owner could pull his bowstring, nobody else could use the arms. Frequently, it was by this ability that a hero who kept incognito could be recognized by enemies and friends. As a famous example of the kind may be remembered the famous scene of the beating of the fiancés from Odysseus or the legends about Robin Hood. The individual power of a man (the sexual power included), apparently was readily associated with being a skilful warrior, although, this theme is considerably broader than the problems we are to solve in the present paper.

Now I will give some additional examples as the evidence of the fact that in the saga tradition, Einarr's image was, first of all, connected with the theme of shooting. In a number of sagas the description of the clever shooting as it is occurs, is not connected to this or that battle: "It is said that Einarr had been the strongest man and the best bowshot (*allra manna sterkastur ok beztr bogmaðr*) in Norway, and he shot more skillfully than other men. He shot an arrow without point through a raw, wet ox hide that hung from a pole. He was before all others at skiing and he was the greatest in all sports and the strongest" (Hkr: 27–28).

As it has been already noted, neither in this fragment, nor in any other available saga sources, are there specific remarks of the compiler of the saga, where it was directly said that Einarr was nicknamed due to his above listed qualities. Nevertheless, all the descriptions of Einarr resemble the comments to his nickname very typical for saga narration. The prosaic narration somehow turns into a longer description something that in the nickname was described by a word or word combination (and in poetry it could have been expressed by a single line).

Thus, in the sagas, there is an evident bent for the lofty version of the interpretation of nickname *þambarskelfir*. However, as it was convincingly shown by Kari Ellen Gade in some saga episodes the ambivalent double-sense character of this nickname could be played up.

This ambivalency, in particular, is used by the researcher in order to elucidate a rather peculiar scene where the quarrel between the king Haraldr the Hardruler and Einarr begins (Gade 1995: 153–162; cf. Sayers 1995: 536–547; Gade 1995a: 547–550; Liberman 1996: 100–101). At the feast the king made Einarr drunk and told one of his kin to weave some straw (or several blades of grass?) and, according to Flateyjarbók (Flat 3: 350), to put it in the nose of the sleeping *bóndi* (which seems quite sensible from the physiological point of view) or by the earlier version of the Morkinskinna (Msk: 178–180), to put them into Einarr’s hand, making him grasp it firmly. Further, and here the two versions coincide, the jester was to give the old warrior a shove with an exclamation: “Let’s get ready, Einarr!” That was done. As it had been expected by the mockers, Einarr woke up, jumped to his feet and suddenly farted. When he realized what happened and that all this had been a put-up job in order to mock at him, Einarr, enraged, left the feast. The next day Einarr came back with a lot of people and killed his affronter, a relative of the king. This was the very reason why Einarr and his son Eindriði were murdered by the order of the konung.

Why did Einarr consider the insult at the feast deserving of such revenge as immediate murder? Kari Ellen Gade believes that it was not just a practical joke, the matter was, that the king Haraldr in such manner, played up the double meaning of the nickname of his opponent and tried to hint at Einarr’s losing his former strength and power. That who stretched the bowstring in the battle at Svöldr, now squeezes a bunch of straw, that who was making the best shots with his bow, can only make shots of quite another kind. In other words, only Einarr’s stuffed belly now is able to produce a crash heard by all. With this interpretation, it is evident that the compiler of the saga (in particular of the version that we find in the Morkinskinna) admits the possibility of the wordplay with the meaning of the nickname, and, hence, of the ambivalent character of the name.

Thus, the interpretation by Kari Ellen Gade admitting the polysemantic character of Einarr’s nickname, is rather close to that we have above asserted, however, the scholar concentrates only on the way that Einarr’s nickname could be comprehended in the epoch of saga writing, but not on the time when Eindriði’s son had received it. In my opinion, the polysemy of this nickname is by no means the product of the literature tradition, that it originally had been intrinsic to Einarr’s naming. Then, why did his contemporaries give him the nickname that due to a rather exotic *þömb* so readily acquired ‘the lowered’, non-romantic meaning?

To answer this question it is necessary to investigate what extra meaning could be implied in this rude naming of Einarr. Who or what is described by the composite word *þambarskelfir*? Is it rather a naturalistic description of a man who is so stout and heavy, that he shakes with his own belly? In this case, it seems surprising that Einarr, holding this nickname and having such figure already being eighteen years old, could fight with valour and, against all the rules, was admitted in the king’s own crew on board the ship Great Serpent. Scholars have already noted this discrepancy. Those who supported ‘the belly’s theory’ advanced the proposal that Einarr had got this nickname only in his old age when he had grown markedly fat, and it was transferred to his young years, so to say, antedated (Finnur Jónsson 1907: 216). However, the supporters of ‘the bowstring’s theory’ were quite justified to regard this explanation as artificial (Saltnessand 1968: 144). Besides, in the sagas we cannot find mention of Einarr’s constitution being considerably changed with years (in the sagas there is no detailed description of Einarr’s appearance), neither were there any stories about Einarr’s getting this new nickname in his old age. However, the stories about getting and changing nicknames for new ones were so significant for the composers of the sagas, that one can hardly imagine omission of such an important event in the life-story of one of the most famous persons of the 11th century. Even the linguistic proper connotations of *þömb* obtained from all that is known about Einarr, seem to contradict the idea of the usage in the adjacent positions of the words *skelfir* and *þömb* for the description of a fat man advanced in years. Thus, it is most likely that

if Einarr was ‘Paunch-Shaker’, then he had been called so since the time, when he, quite young, got in the thick of the military and political events.

Moreover, in one of its meanings, this nickname, apparently, suited just a young warrior, exceeding others in his strength. This assertion requires both linguistic and semiotic comments. The verb *skelfa* from which the element *skelfir* is derived within Einarr’s nickname, is in turn a derivative from the strong verb *skjálfa* ‘to shake, to tremble’. As for the casual weak verb *skelfa*, it means, respectively, ‘to make tremble, to make shake’, nomen agentis of *skelfa* having clearly marked subjective-objective orientation. In other words, that who shakes is somewhat opposed to the thing which his actions are aimed at, thus the object of the action is, most frequently, in a certain sense, outside the subject. Such characteristics of nomen agentis of the verb *skelfa* are manifested in epithets and nicknames. For example, an Icelandic settler living in the 9th century is called Vikingr *Skáneyrarskelfir*, i.e. ‘the terror of Skáne inhabitants’ in *Landnámabók* (Ldn: 114) and an *Ásgeirr* who in revenge notched all the crew of some Norwegian ship in the saga and in the same *Landnámabók* gets a nickname *austmannaskelfir* ‘terror of the Norwegians’ (Ldn: 117, 225; Floam: 12–13). Composing epithets including the element *-skelfir* (*danaskelfir* ‘terror of the Danes’, *liðskelfir* ‘terror of the army’) are used for the naming of Magnús Barefoot in a number of cases in scaldic poetry (LP: 372, 505)¹. Thus traditionally the nicknaming by words ending with *-skelfir* is obviously heroically-related.

In the background of those nicknames and verb-derived characteristics given to the warriors who were making the inhabitants of Skáne, Norwegians or Danes tremble, nickname of Einarr, son of Endriði, where the *-skelfir* component is attached to the poly-semantic element, one of it’s meanings being ‘belly’, seems even more unexpected; some shift of meaning appears to be even more evident. Most likely such play of words is partially explained by the fact that it may not be Einarr’s own belly that it’s pointing at. The matter is, we have a rather representative number of contexts, where various physical actions applying to the bellies designate sexual contacts, or, to be exact, are actually being euphemistic descriptions of coitus. Frequently but not obligatorily, this description is pronounced by some saga character and presents challenge, abuse, or mocking.

The action may be designated, for example, by the verb ‘to clap’ (*klappa*). In *Eyrbyggja* saga it was said that Gunnlaugr son of Þorbjörn the Stout was eager to learn: “He was often at Mávahild where he learned magical lore from Geirríð Þórólfsdóttir, for she was skilled in witchkraft. One day when Gunnlaugr was on his way to Mávahild, he came to Holt and had a long talk with Katla. She asked him whether he intended to go to Mávahild – ‘to make love to the old thing’ (literally: ‘to stroke the old hag up the belly’ – *klappa um kerlingar nárann*) (Eb: 41).

In *Fóstbræðra* saga the following is said about the death of one of the characters: “So as Þorgrímr’s people realized that to attack Þorgeir is much more dangerous than pat their wives on the bellies (*klappa um maga konum sínum*). But they were slow in their effects and Þorgeir cost much to them[...].” (Ftb: 122). In the *Grettis* saga we find a rather long description of how Grettir avoided common work on board the ship during the voyage, insulted other people, and was quite unbearable. Besides, his companions suspected that he had seduced a woman, the wife of their helmsman. At last, a quarrel broke out, and Grettir was told: “You

¹ Especially interesting are the designations of the person as *yðskelfir* ‘bow shaker’, though it gives us less than we may think at first sight. This word does not occur in the old scaldic poetry, we can find it only in the *Háttatal* by Snorri Sturluson in the list of other words meaning ‘man, warrior’ (SnE: 155). It is hard to say to what extent this epithet was oriented to Einarr’s nickname; this word, perhaps, was constructed by Snorri and did not belong to the genuine poetic tradition (cf. Saltnessand 1968: 146).

better like to clap the belly of the helmsman's wife (*klappa um kviðinn á konu*) than discharge your duties on board of the ship" (Gret: 56–57).

Perhaps, the verb *klappa* is used in phrases of this kind so readily due to its semantics, but also because it forms alliterating combinations (*klappa um kerlingar nárann*, *klappa um maga konum*, *klappa um kviðinn á konu*) (cf. Scott 2002: 230, 240 n. 15). However, in the euphemistic description of the kind, not only this very verb may be used. In *Njáls saga*, for example, a very similar abuse is expressed with the help of other lexical means: "Then each blamed the other and Þjóstólfr said that all Glúmr was good for was lying with Hallgerðr" (literally: 'to go crawling on Hallgerðr's belly' – *bröлта á maga Hallgerði*) (Nj: 42).

Let us note that the euphemism in question is not a stable phraseological unit consisting of rigidly fixed lexical units. Rather it represents the combination of concepts and may be described by the formula: 'an active action + the belly of the woman', each element being able, as we can see, to be designated in different ways. For example, the verb *bröлта*, as it had some erotic connotations (Mág: 149; cf. Fritzner 1: 204) and the verb *klappa*, quite neutral from this viewpoint, acquired the corresponding meaning only in the combinations we are interested in. Thus, despite a certain variability in the lexical context of this construction, we have reason to speak of its integrity and stability (being the only one periphrastic description of the action future that we meet in sagas, cf. Jochens 1995: 71–77). In the sagas the semantics of the verb in phrases of this kind, generally speaking, are partially neutralized, this verb must refer to an active and, so to say, fast action. The concrete sense of the action does not have the decisive meaning, because the indication of this action must substitute an other term with the explicit obscene meaning. The semantic load is transferred to the other element of the periphrastic description – to the belly of a woman.

To my mind, Einarr's nickname *þambarskelfir* belongs to this very kind of euphemistic characteristic. Undoubtedly, being a nickname, it differs from non-nickname expressions used in saga narration by a number of grammatical parameters. The verb is substituted by nomen agentis, which is more than it should be, because verbal nicknames proper, were not typical of the Scandinavian anthroponymic tradition.

As it is shown by the above presented examples, the belly of a woman could also be designated by various words (*magi*, *nári*, *kviðinn*) and the word *þömb* fits well in this list. It is important to remember, that in the example from scaldic poetry where the word *þömb* occurs, it is related to the growing belly of a pregnant woman. Here the form of genitive that we can see in Einarr's nickname correlates with the above mentioned glorifying epithets like 'terror of the Danes', and apparently according to the literal translation of the nickname, the construction 'terror (shaker) of the belly' should be used, implying that in the present case it was a belly of a woman, and the nickname as a whole has the meaning of a fututor.

If this interpretation is correct, then this nickname is obscene, mocking and noble at the same time. This although does not by any means annul the previously advanced thesis about the polysemantic nature of this word and about the possibility of its usage in two different registers, high and low. It is not random that both its constituents allow such an ambivalent interpretation. Indeed, if the derivative from the verb *klappa* would be used here, Einarr's nickname would have become really obscene and would have lost its heroic meaning, and as we risk to suggest, it would not be possible for this nickname to last throughout his life, judging by his reputation and social position. With the existing double meaning of the nickname, there is a great possibility for choice: it may be interpreted as a heroic name ('Bowstring shaker'), or as a mocking, but decent name ('Paunch-shaker'), or finally one can see it as a truly humorous, yet actually respectful name, that correlates with all the dignity of the man (fututor).

Evidentially, Einarr's descendents had chosen the first interpretation of the nickname, which we can observe in the sagas' version of his life story. As we remember, in the majority

of saga texts his name is associated with archery, but not with his corpulence or great sexual activities. It is difficult to imagine that Snorri Sturluson, for example, or other saga composers did not understand that the word *pömb* meant not only ‘bowstring’, but also ‘belly, paunch’ – however, this knowledge did not always appear important. It’s actualization takes place in episodes when Einar’s opponents, and first of all, konung Haraldr, want to laugh at the old man. The extreme undesirability of such actualization for the nickname holder is demonstrated in the corresponding fragments of *Morkinskinna* and *Flatejyarbók*.

Moreover, if our speculations are correct in principle, then the obscene shade of this nickname was probably quite evident for the saga composers, however, it fit neither the lofty praising, nor the humiliating mocking. It may well be so, that this is the reason why we only find decent and heroic connotations of this nickname in the sagas; the euphemism is quite obvious, due to its prevalence and stability, but such presentation creates a certain veil over it.

Thus, the nickname *þambarskelfir* appears to be a kind of chest with not just double, but a triple-bottom. We suppose that the polysemy of this word determined the choice of the nickname for Óláfr Tryggvason’s young warrior. Such polysemantic nature, from the very beginning forming a great space for meaning and association juggling, is seemingly more typical for the poetic language of the scalds, than the common speech. It is even possible that such nickname was given to Einarr by one of the scalds from the konung Óláfr’s following, although assumptions of such kind undoubtedly belong to the field of the researcher’s free fantasy.

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Hrólfs saga kraka – A History of Editing

Tereza Vachunová, *Arnarnagnæan Institute, University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

This paper gives the history of editing *Hrólfs saga kraka*, an Icelandic *fornaldarsaga*, from the first edition to the present. The investigation of the developments within traditional textual criticism is combined with the analysis of the printed book editions as artefacts¹, looking into their book design and paratextual features. The production, distribution, and reception of the editions is mapped and placed in broader historical, political and social contexts.

This case study is a work in progress and it is a part of my PhD project on the post-medieval reception of sources pertaining to the legend of the Danish king Hrolf Kraki and his contemporaries, from the Reformation to modern times.

Editions and Manuscripts

The Icelandic text of *Hrólfs saga kraka* has been published in the following editions:

- Biörner, Erik Julius, 1737: *Nordiska Kämpa Dater*. Stockholmia.
- Rafn, Carl Christian, 1829–30: *Fornaldar Sögur Norðrlanda*. Volumes 1–3. Kaupmannahöfn.
- Ásmundarson, Valdimar, 1885–89: *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*. Volumes 1–3. Reykjavík.
- Ásmundarson, Valdimar, 1891: *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*. Volume 1. Reprint. Reykjavík.
- Jónsson, Finnur, 1904: *Hrólfs saga kraka og Bjarkarímur*. København. (STUAGNL 32).
- Vilhjálmsson, Bjarni & Jónsson, Guðni, 1943–44: *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. Volumes 1–3. Reykjavík.
- Jónsson, Guðni, 1954–59: *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. Volumes 1–4. Reykjavík.
- Slay, Desmond, 1960: *Hrólfs saga kraka*. København. (Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, Series B 1).

51 manuscripts with the Icelandic text of the saga are now known. Most of the manuscripts belong to the collections in Copenhagen and Reykjavík, some are located in Sweden and a few copies are to be found in Norway, Great Britain and Germany.

The manuscripts date from the 17th to the 20th century. The existing editions are based on the oldest manuscripts, i.e. the ones from the 17th century, mainly from the Copenhagen collections and, in two cases, the Stockholm collection.

Editio Princeps

The first edition of *Hrólfs saga kraka* appeared in Erik Julius Biörner's *Nordiske Kämpa Dater*, published in 1737 in Stockholm. The book is a collection of 14 *fornaldarsögur* that are presented in the Icelandic original together with a Swedish and Latin translation. The editor and translator Erik Julius Biörner worked for the *Antikvitetsarkiv* (Archive of Antiquities) (Schück 1935:27) and, as is apparent from the preface to *Nordiske Kämpa Dater*, his intention with publishing the volume was to contribute to research in Swedish history in the spirit of Gothicism.

The Gothic movement (KLN, *göticisme*) was predominant in 17th century Sweden. Its name is derived from the idea that the ancient Goths were identical with Geats, or Swedes. The culmination of the movement was Rudbeck's opus *Atland eller Manheim* (1679–1702), where he identifies Sweden with the legendary Atlantis. The historical research made in the spirit of Gothicism strived to prove that the Swedes belong to the most ancient nations in the world and that Sweden is the cradle of humankind. This view of history was politicized while

¹ The term artefact is defined by Matthew J. Driscoll in his forthcoming article “The Words on the page”: Thoughts on philology, old and new.

Sweden was developing into a Baltic superpower. At Biörner's time, however, Sweden's political status had been reduced and the ideas of Rudbeck were gradually losing favor among historians. His enthusiasm was nevertheless shared and supported by the influential count Gustaf Bonde, who had a private interest in the Gothic past (Lindroth 1978:643).

Also, the original text was presented as a source of the Gothic language, which, according to Biörner, was the predecessor of Swedish and was transported to Iceland by the 'Gothic' Norwegians. The Latin translation is a part of the edition, because it is supposed to grant readers appreciation of the Gothic source (Biörner, 1737, 3–5).

The Icelandic text is based on Sth. Papp. fol. nr 25. The manuscript was written in Stockholm in 1686 by Helgi Ólafsson, most likely for the *Antikvitetskollegiet* (The College of Antiquities). It is a conflation of three manuscripts, Papp. fol. nr 1, Papp. 4to nr 13, and Papp. 4to nr 17, and it thus gives the 'textual essence' of all the manuscripts available in Stockholm at the time (Busch 2002:144). The variants from the exemplars of 25 are combined or given in brackets as alternatives (Slay 1960: 130).

The edition is a single-text edition; the variants given in the original MS are reprinted within the text. The choice of a single text may have been motivated by the fact that critical editorial methods had not been developed at the time and that one, conflated, MS was considered sufficient.

The spelling seems to reproduce that of the original (MS not available to me yet), with the major difference that there are no diacritic signs, apart from the tittle, just like in the Latin text. Proper names and interesting words are given in italics. Both the Icelandic and the Latin version are printed in roman type, as opposed to the gothic type of the translation. This, and the missing diacritics, might have been a deliberate imitation of Latin. Or, more prosaically, the diacritic marks may simply have not been available in the roman type. It was also the practice to omit accent marks during the first centuries of printing in Iceland (Karlsson 2004:51).

The spelling of the printed text is inconsistent and reflects manuscript and print spelling of the post-reformation period, e.g. *b* is used randomly both in medial and final position, consonant clusters like *lld* appear, *ck* is used for *kk*, *-ann/-an* ending is irregular. This 'modern' representation is, understandably, not a good example of the archaic features of the language.

The publication was financed by the Archive and the book was manufactured by its printer, Horn (Schück 1935:343–349). What makes the book special is not merely the scope of its contents, but also its physical size – the voluminous quarto format makes a stately appearance. It is richly decorated with flower ornaments, geometric patterns, and classicist motifs, such as cornucopias, typical for book-design in the earlier Carolingian epoch. The costly book was probably intended for the private libraries of nobility and scholars.

Yet, the publication had unexpected consequences. Biörner had the book printed without censorship. His, perhaps unintended, indirect critique of the new Swedish nobility stated in the preface caused great upheaval in the political circles (Busch 2002:136). The already distributed copies were withdrawn, the incriminated section was removed and replaced, and the censor's approval was added. In some copies circulating today, both the censored and the uncensored part are preserved.

The opus may not have brought as much immediate success as Biörner had hoped, but it was an exceptional edition for its time by its scope and equipment and it made the *fornaldarsögur* available to scholars and authors, inspiring many a neo-Gothicist work of art. It lasted long into the 18th century and continued living even as popular reading (Nilsson 1950:41).

Fornaldar Sögur Norðrlanda

The Icelandic term *fornaldarsögur* is frequently applied to the corpus of sagas also known as legendary sagas or mythical-heroic sagas, even though the definitions of this corpus vary (Driscoll 1997:4). The term was coined by Carl Christian Rafn (1795–1864) in his three-volume edition *Fornaldar Sögur Norðrlanda*, published in Copenhagen in 1829–1830. This edition includes a text of *Hrólfs saga kraka*, a Danish darling among the *fornaldarsögur*, which is the opening piece of the whole series, being the first text in volume one.

Rafn's accomplishments are innumerable and most of his work was published under the heading of *Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab* (Royal Society of Antiquaries) that he himself established in 1825. The aim of the Society, as stated in article 1 of its Regulations, was to edit and interpret the Old-Icelandic texts and to contribute to Old-Norse Studies, 'og derved til at vække og nære Kærlighed til Fæder og Fæderland' (and to thereby awaken and cherish love for fathers and fatherland) (Jensen 1977:14). It is apparent from this statement that the activities of the Society were influenced by the spirit of Scandinavianist national romanticism. The publishing of the Society was vast and its membership was international and prestigious. (Jensen & Steen Jensen 1988:214).

The editions, on the other hand, were by no means intended for an exclusive readership and they were an alternative to the scholarly editions of the Arnamagnæan Commission. The subscribers to the *Fornmanna Sögur* series were 2% of the overall Icelandic population and apprentices, schoolchildren, servants, and maids are on the list (Jensen 1977:13). The annual report of the Society ascribes this success to the extraordinarily low price of the publication (*Hovedberetning* 1928:7). The *Fornaldar Sögur Norðrlanda*, as Glauser points out, were expensive and, yet, one third of the circa hundred and fifty Icelandic subscribers were peasants and farm-hands (Glauser 1994:129). This also reflects the high level of literacy in the country.

Rafn had published some of the *fornaldarsögur* earlier in a Danish translation under the title *Nordiske Kæmpe-Historier* (1821–1826). He nevertheless decided to publish the original text and a new translation under the auspices of the Society. The edition is a sort of hybrid usable both for scholars and for the broader Icelandic market, since it was published in Copenhagen, but both its main text and commentary are in Icelandic. The value of the texts as historical sources is questioned in the preface (Rafn 1829:V)

The edition, which claims to be critical, greatly benefits from the progress in textual criticism and historical linguistics. It is a best text edition, the main text is slightly emended by variants from other manuscripts, abbreviations are silently expanded, and spelling is normalized. Descriptions of the emendations together with variant readings are listed in the critical apparatus and they are referred to in the text by corresponding numbers. The edition is equipped with a preface that gives a 'full and precise' description of the manuscripts used.

Separate guidelines for spelling, text selection, criticism and scholarly equipment of the edition titled 'Regler at iattage ved Udgave af den islandske Text' (Rules to be observed when editing the Icelandic text)² from 1824, are located in the Manuscript Department of The Royal Library of Copenhagen under Ny kgl. Samling, 1599, 2°. C. C. Rafns Papirer, 4. Oldskriftselskabets arkiv. Text selection, according to Rafn, has the following criteria: 'Til Grund lægges en Codex af en god Orthographie, der fortæller Begivenhederne uden svævende Vidtløftighed, hvor Udtrykket er reent og ufordærvet ved Afskriveres Skjødesløshed eller vilkaarlige Konstlerier.' (The basis should be a codex with good orthography, one that narrates the events without long-winded dreamery, where the expression is clean and unspoiled by sloppiness or capricious mannerisms of the scribes.) (Rafn Unpublished:Unpaginated)

² Silvia Hufnagel has drawn my attention to the existence of this document.

The basis of Rafn's edition is AM 9 fol., written by Jón Erlendsson í Villingaholti, most likely for Brynjólfur Sveinsson, bishop of Skálholt. The exact date for the manuscript is not to be determined. It can range 1639–72, the time when Jón Erlendsson lived in Villingaholt (Slay 1960:6). It is a fine, carefully written manuscript with explanatory marginal comments, partially in Latin, indicating that it was intended for scholarly use. All subsequent editions of the saga were based on this manuscript, with the exception of the edition of Desmond Slay.

Rafn chose the text, because he considered the manuscripts by Jón Erlendsson to be most reliable and well written, probably copies of vellum manuscripts, and he thought that AM 9 fol. was likely the oldest manuscript of the saga (Rafn 1829:X).

The other manuscripts that Rafn used for his edition are nearly all the MSS of the saga in the Arnarnagnæan collection, together with Gks 1002 fol., and Biörner's edition. Rafn describes the text of Biörner's edition as more verbose, but he considers the extensions unimportant and not eloquent (Rafn 1829:XI). No serious attempt is made to establish genealogical relations of the MSS, other than that they are older than 9. Variants, as Rafn states in the preface, are only given where the main text is unclear, has a rare word or where the other manuscripts supply good readings that can shed light on the text (Rafn 1829:IX). The construction of this apparatus therefore more or less depends on the editor's feeling for the text and it is neither objective nor complete.

The normalization of the spelling is performed in order to make the reading of the text easier and more comfortable for both Icelanders and foreigners (Rafn 1825:16). Some of the normalized spelling rules are: accent is added for long vowels according to pronunciation, circumflex *â* for original *vá* that became *vo*, grave accent *è* for *ie, j, v* for consonants and *i, u* for vowels, *ö* for *au/av*, where it is pronounced as such but *au* for the diphthong (Rafn 1825:15–16). The rules had been developed by Rasmus Rask, the Danish linguist, in his orthography system for Modern and Old Icelandic (Karlsson 2004:59–60). It is quite certain that Rafn's orthography is an application of Rask's system, not only because of Rask's overshadowing influence at the time, but also because the two were colleagues and friends, Rask being the first president of the Society.

The edition was printed by Popp, known for prints of satisfactory quality at reasonable price (Ilsøe 1992:196). The book is an octavo format, which was quite common at its time, just as it is today. The design is rather sober with no illustrations and a minimum of decorative ornaments. A specific feature is that the whole text is set in roman type at the time when gothic type was prevalent both in Denmark and Iceland. This may, again, be explained by the influence of Rask, who promoted the roman type for its clarity.

The edition had a prolonged lifetime in Iceland, since it was used as a basis for Valdimar Ásmundarson's *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda 1–3*, printed in Reykjavík in 1885–89. Valdimar was also an editor of *Fjallkonan*, a popular educatory magazine. Valdimar used Rafn's text, which he criticizes for being done carelessly 'alls ekki vönduð', and emends it with the help of JS 27, fol. Valdimar's large-scale editions, produced in cooperation with bookseller Sigurður Kristjánsson, represented a revolution in the printing of saga-literature in Iceland (Kvaran 1995:164). Valdimar's lightly decorated, normalized edition without critical apparatus reached wide and its first volume was reprinted in 1891 (Driscoll 2003:261).

Hrólfs saga kraka by Finnur Jónsson

Finnur Jónsson (1858–1934) was probably the most productive editor in the history of Old Norse textual criticism, a professor at the University of Copenhagen. He became involved in the directing of all editing societies in the field that existed in Copenhagen at the time (Helgason 1934: 139) and he himself produced over fifty editions. *Fornaldarsögur* were appar-

ently of a marginal interest to him, since he edited only one of them. Nevertheless, this may merely indicate that little attention was generally paid to this genre at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The only *fornaldarsaga* Finnur Jónsson edited was *Hrólfs saga kraka*, published by Samfund til Udgivelse af Gammel Nordisk Litteratur, STUAGNL, (Society for Editing Old Nordic Texts) in 1904. The Society was established in 1879 and was a follower of the Nordisk Litteratur Selskab (Nordic Literary Society) that had produced popular editions in 1847–1870 alongside Rafn's Royal Society. The purpose of the STUAGNL stated in the first article of its Rules in their English version is the following: 'The object of the Society is to publish and explain Northern Literary Monuments from ancient times' (Årsberetning 1883: unpaginated attachment). This stark definition has an air of objectivity and does not seem to come under any particular aesthetic or political discourse, but, perhaps, that of scientific exactitude and clarity.

Finnur Jónsson gives a promising description of the society. According to him, the Society initiates a new era, and it has been editing sagas in a modern critical way – the manuscripts are carefully studied and evaluated, and the aim is to reconstruct the original text as much as possible. The main text is accompanied by a complete critical apparatus with various kinds of information. (Jónsson 1918: 44)

With respect to the weight of his work, Finnur's approach has been criticized mainly because of the fact that he did not give himself the time to study the whole manuscript tradition and to establish the relationships between the texts. He also often discarded some manuscripts as worthless, overlooking that they had a good text (Helgason 1934: 149–150).

All Finnur's editions are made in the same habitual way, and so is *Hrólfs saga kraka*. The edition, is based on AM 9 fol., described above. Variant readings from three other AM manuscripts are listed in the apparatus. In the preface, the mutual relations and chronology of the manuscripts are established, but no stemma is given. Finnur chooses 9 as base text, because he considers it to be a copy of a vellum manuscript. The remaining manuscripts are dismissed as worthless. The variant apparatus includes all 'virkelige afvigelser' (real deviations), 'men udeladt de ubetydeligste og ligeegyldigste varianter, f.eks. forskellige ordomstillinger og lign.' (but the least important and trivial variants are omitted, such as various changes of word order, etc) (Jónsson 1904:I–V)

The spelling is normalized more or less to the standard normalization known from *Wimmer and Íslensk fornrit*. Since the manuscript and its text are so young, Finnur says that 'der var ingen anden udvej' (there was no other solution) than to insert some old forms for the late Icelandic ones (Jónsson 1904:V). Some of these forms he lists, for example *-r* for *-ur*, *eigi* for *ei*, *þykk-* for *þyk-*, etc. The normalization was not supposed to give very old forms, therefore no distinction is made between *æ* and *ǣ*, as is otherwise done in *Fornrit*. The distinction between *ø* and *o* is kept.

The books in the STUAGNL series are sextodecimo size and usually not particularly thick, which makes them a handy pocket format. The format, together with the relatively affordable price, which was 5,50 kr. (Årsberetning 1904:17), indicates that the publication was meant for wider public. The members of the STUAGNL in 1904 are, nevertheless, mainly intellectually oriented individuals and institutions, such as professors, teachers, and libraries (Årsberetning 1904:7–13).

The edition gives a compact combined text, authored by Finnur Jónsson, but lacks some interesting variations that are characteristic for the manuscript transmission. Because it is normalized and has a relatively broad critical apparatus, Finnur Jónsson's edition remains the standard edition of *Hrólfs saga kraka* today, referred to in studies on literature, culture and religion.

Indirectly, it found its way to a much broader audience, as it was used in *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* (Reykjavík, 1943–44) of Bjarni Vilhjálmsson and Guðni Jónsson and again Guðni Jónsson, *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda* (Reykjavík, 1954–59). Guðni Jónsson was a professor of Icelandic studies and a prolific editor: ‘Enginn núlifandi Íslendingur annar en Halldór Laxness mun jafn fyrirferðarmikill í íslenskum bókahillum og Guðni Jónsson’ (No contemporary Icelander, other than Halldór Laxness, fills as much space in the Icelandic bookshelves as Guðni Jónsson) (Þorsteinsson 1974:5).

Desmond Slay’s edition

Desmond Slay (1927–2004), a professor at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth was for a long time associated with the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen, where his editorial approach was formed by Jón Helgason (1899–1986), the leading personality of Old Norse philology over several decades (Hines 2004:105–107).

Helgason eventually founded an unofficial school, where knowledge was handed down personally, but was never codified in a separate theoretical treatise (Jensen 1989:211–212).

The editor’s role was to decide the relation between the manuscripts, to present all material relevant for the knowledge of the oldest forms of the texts, and to give the history of the text and the manuscripts. The main innovation was that Helgason stressed the study of the complete manuscript tradition in search for copies of early manuscripts transmitted in young manuscripts that had previously been rejected as worthless.

The orthography of the manuscript, both in main text and variant apparatus, had to be followed precisely, because the text should also be of use to historical linguists. Therefore all variation, also from the secondary manuscripts, is recorded in the apparatus, apart from obvious mistakes that the scribe himself would have corrected, to enable the user to appreciate the later reception of the text as well (Jensen 1989: 213–214).

Helgason’s editorial approach has had an output in the *Edititones Arnamagnæanæ* (since 1958) and Slay’s edition of *Hrólfs saga* with an accompanying volume of thorough manuscript description is a product of the Helgasonian school. The text of the edition is AM 285 4to and Slay admits that there is ‘no decisive reason for choosing 285’. Any other primary version could have been used, but 285 is just as good a basis for reconstructing the common original when ‘corrected’ (Slay’s own inverted commas) (Slay 1960:XI). Although Slay valued AM 9 fol. high, he, perhaps, wanted to offer a different text than the one that had often been edited before.

285 is supplied with a critical apparatus from four other reliable primary MSS. The spelling of the text and variants keeps close to the manuscripts, but it is not a diplomatic representation. Capitalization and punctuation is added, abbreviations are silently expanded, the number of graphemes is reduced, or rather substituted by the signs that are available in the type. The purpose is, again, to give the reader the opportunity to reconstruct the common original even though the editor does not do that explicitly and he does not give a stemma. The obvious drawback of this method is that it is not particularly user-friendly and unlikely to be approached by the majority of students and scholars, who are usually interested in an easily readable text.

The manuscript description provides a great amount of critical information on the whole textual tradition. The variant apparatus and lists of variants for the secondary MSS give an impression of the stylistic and scribal variation in the treatments of the text. Ursula Dronke, nevertheless, points out in her review that Slay’s choice of orthographic representation, although restricted by the available type, is directly ‘outlandish’ (Dronke 1957–61:459).

These problems could be solved by contemporary technology for electronic editing. All of the ‘primary’ texts of the saga could be assembled in an electronic database that would display multiple levels of transcription ranging from a digital facsimile to a normalized version. Representative sections of secondary manuscripts would also be included, as well as available information on the manuscript transmission, given in a searchable, or even interactive, form³.

Since Desmond Slay’s examination of the manuscript tradition, two manuscripts have appeared that are not included in his treatises and articles and one scribal hand has been identified.

Final Remarks

This case study has shown some methods of establishing and representing a text, going hand in hand with the selection of target audience and the type of edition. Furthermore, the material artefacts have been interpreted as evidence of the social environments inhabited by the individual textual manifestations.

According to type, the material can be divided into three scholarly, one semi-scholarly, and four popular editions, reprints included in the count. Out of the scholarly and semi-scholarly editions, only the earliest one does not operate with any sort of hierarchy between MSS and their variants. The remaining three editors strive to approximate the most original form of the text. Their treatment of the MS material is more or less relational and hierarchical, and although none of them draws an actual stemma, they all suggest a similar genealogical relationship between the manuscripts.

In the modern era of editing, the definitions of the editor’s role and responsibilities are shifting. The Helgason-inspired editor, Slay, has a non-authoritative approach towards the material, which the reader himself is supposed to puzzle together being given as much objective information from the editor as possible. The other examples from this group are fixed texts with a strong authorial presence of the editor.

Editions can wander down and up the user social strata and scholarly editions are regularly ‘recycled’ in the form of a popular edition that can place the adjusted text in completely new social contexts.

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³ A recent discussion about the possibilities of electronic editing is in Matthew J. Driscoll’s forthcoming article “The words on the page”: Thoughts on philology, old and new

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The Archaeological Material Culture behind the Sagas

Helena Victor, Dept. of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University, Sweden

This paper discusses the possibility to use archaeological material culture from Scandinavia to understand some phenomena common in the Saga material, especially the Fornaldarsagas. A typical motive in several sagas is the reopening of graves in mounds, *haugbrot*, where the retrieval of swords is of a specific topos, a case in point being *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*.

The genre of Fornaldarsagas is one of the primary groups of the Icelandic saga literature (Jakobsson et al 2003:7) and the term *Fornaldarsögur* was established by Carl Christian Rafn (1795–1864) who composed three volumes with the title ‘Fornaldarsögur Norrlanda’. The Danish term *fornalder* is related to the time period in which the Sagas seem to have taken place and describes the time before Iceland were colonized (Jakobsson et al 2003:7). The age of the writing of the Fornaldarsagas is widely debated, both regarding their actual date and the first recording. The recording has traditionally been considered younger than the other saga genres, but Tulinius (2002) suggest that they are contemporary with the Icelandic sagas, i.e., recorded sometime during the 13th and 14th centuries.

Since the sagas have been recorded several hundred years later and describe a mythical past, their use as a historical source is inappropriate. Some of the phenomena in the Sagas, however, are described with such a consistency that one have to put forward the question – is there some factual information in the descriptions? Clunies Ross argues that it is likely that the Fornaldarsagas contain more factual information on Old Norse rituals than other literature genres. The reason for this is partly that they clearly deal with the remote past and partly that the treatment of a remote past gave the author the liberty to create at “fantasy” genre where forbidden subjects could be handled more generously (Clunies Ross 2002: 23).

In this paper I will put forward some arguments that the origin of some of the most important ritual themes in the Fornaldarsagas may have their origin as early as during the Migration period (5–6th century). This statement is based on several similarities between the archaeological material and reoccurring themes in the sagas.

The archaeological material

Treatment of Gold

The first similarity is the treatment of gold. A typical motive common in the sagas is the use and treatment of gold objects. The Migration period gold in Scandinavia occur in three main groups. The first is the solidi-coins which are not going to be further debated here. The second is a large amount of jewellery, especially neck rings, arm rings, finger rings. Also pieces of decorations on swords belong to this group. The last group is the gold rods.

The gold rods have been coiled into rings, often in several rows. In many sagas, like *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, gold rings are used to state riches and status. Gold rings for the arms and the necks are also mentioned. In *Rígsþula* strophe 38, it is described that Jarl spread golden rings and chopped up rods of gold. (Brates translation: “slösade ringar, högg sönder guldten”.) The rings are cut and the swords are adorned with rings. The cutting of gold rings and gold rings on the handle of the sword is a typical Migration period trait. It is only during the Migration period that gold objects are treated in this manner in Scandinavia.

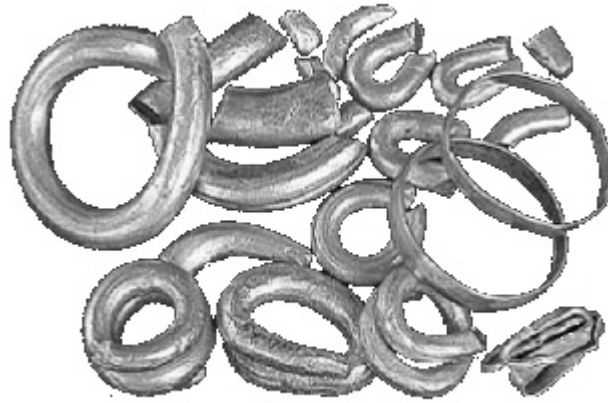


Figure 1. Pieces of cut coils of gold rods from Rångsta, Hedesunda sn, Gästrikland (SHM14045) in the middle part of Sweden dated to the Migration period.

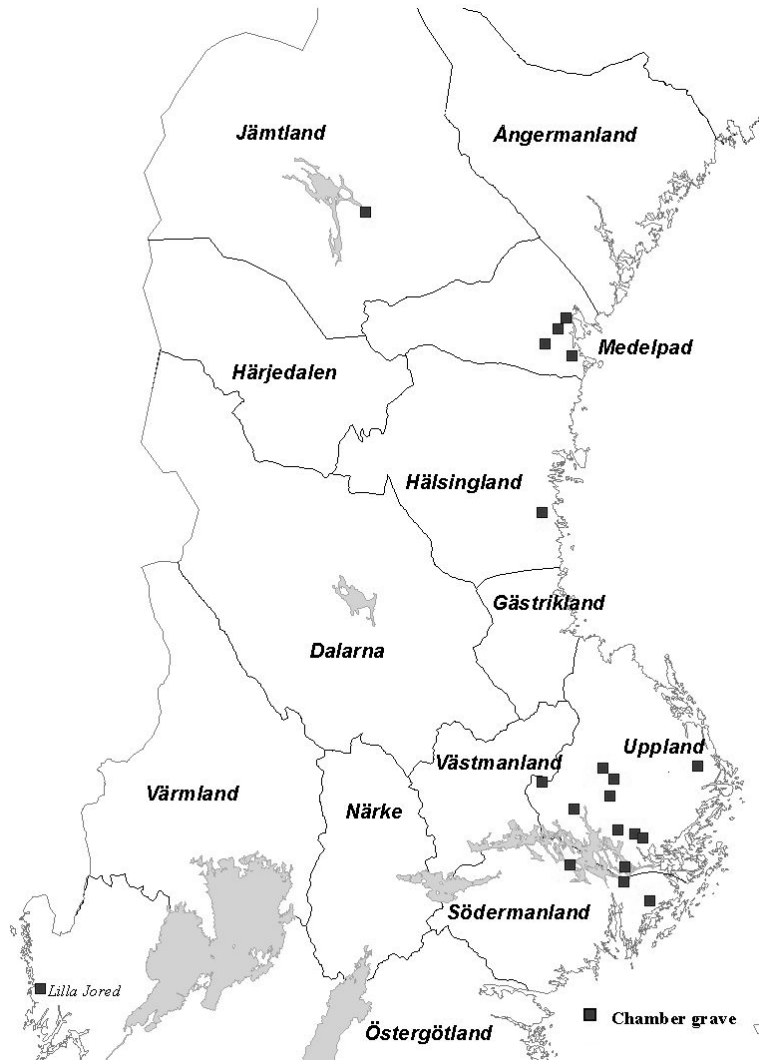


Figure 2. Map showing migration period chamber Graves from the Mälaren Valley and in Northern Sweden.

Chamber graves

In the project Deaths Snug Chamber we have focused on the Migration Period chamber graves in Scandinavia, especially in the Mälär Valley and southern part of Norrland where almost all of the graves are located. About 40 graves are known (fig. 2). The chamber graves are dated to 480–510 AD and they represent a new way of using old traditions in order to manifest an upcoming elite with contacts with the Roman Empire. They generally appear to be male burials and when grave goods are still present, they often contain glass, gold, silver and weapons. This type of artifacts only occurs in a very small amount of graves. Only 0,1 % of the population has been buried in chamber graves in the Mälär Valley and Southern part of Norrland. It shows that the chamber graves are constructed by and for an elite and is a clear manifestation of an affinity (Fischer & Victor 2008).

The definition of the chamber grave must be twofold. First, there is the very basic antiquarian definition that it is a room, or chamber, constructed of wooden planks or timber and that it is immobile. The chamber is covered with some kind of external grave structure composed by stones, gravel and/or soil. The burial contains an inhumation. By contrast, the more important definition of the chamber grave is that of attempting to understand and hence define the ideological intention behind it. The chamber grave, then, must be defined as a conceived room, in which the deceased is able to live on, move around, eat, drink, and rest. The buried individual may be regarded during the burial ritual as if not bereft of life. It would appear that this is often the case in the Migration Period chamber grave burials of Scandinavia given the arrangement of grave goods. Here, one gets the impression that the buried are resting in a liminal state where they are not really dead (Fischer & Victor forthcoming; Ljungkvist & Victor forthcoming).

The undisturbed Högom grave (Ramqvist 1992) from Medelpad in Norrland is frequently employed as a model example of a spatial structure in relation to the damaged and partly pilloaged 40 chamber graves in Central Sweden. The Högom grave is one of the best examples of a chamber grave from Scandinavia excavated in modern times partly because it was so well preserved and partly because it was never plundered, or rather never reopened as we prefer to call it. Most of the excavated chamber graves outside of Norrland proved to be in a very bad condition, where most of the construction, contents and body have been destroyed (Ljungkvist & Victor forthcoming).

When guided by the Högom example, one may find that the chamber grave structure in general is rather clear. In essence all graves were equipped and furnished in the same way. The chamber grave can be conceived of as a structured room. There is a bed for the deceased where he is lying fully dressed, in a state of inertia. He lies with his sword to the right and his shield on top. Next to the bed is an array of feast gear including Roman glass beakers. Below the bed are the armory and the food storage. Here we find cooking gear, hygiene utensils, equestrian equipment and weapons. The chamber is equipped for living a life of feast in the hall (Fischer et al forthcoming). This also follows the general type of description we find in the Old Norse Sagas.

Reopening the graves-Haugbrot

When discussing the chamber grave problematic, one thus must consider oral sources such as Old Norse alliterative poem like “The Waking of Angantyr” (Ney 2004:120–127). The Old Norse sagas have the breaking into mounds, and the retrieval of swords as a frequent motif, signified by the Old Norse term is *haugbrot*. Haugbrot in different forms is a common theme in several sagas. My definition of the term is rather loose. It is a re-entering of a grave in order to contact the dead and/or retrieve an object from the graves interior.

Contrary to the chamber graves in Norrland, the contemporary examples from the Mälars Valley have systematically been reopened and the sword blades have all been removed while other precious heirlooms have been left behind. Two cases in point are Lilla Sylta where the hilt has been broken to pieces in order to retrieve the blade (Victor *et al* 2005), and Lovö, chamber grave 3, where the scabbard has been left behind although the sword was removed (Lamm 1973). The retrievals have occurred relatively soon after to the constructions of the graves, presumably within one or two generations (Fischer & Victor 2008; Fischer *et al* forthcoming). The subsequent question concerns the reason why people consciously sought to retrieve the sword blades? A look at the Old Norse sources may provide a clue.

When breaking into the mound, the deceased is still an active subject. The chamber grave itself should not *a priori* be regarded as shut off from time – it is still part of it. The subject inside may arguably be located between several different phases of the past, the present and the future. The buried inside may communicate with the living on the outside (Fischer *et al* forthcoming). Some examples of communication with mound dwellers can be seen in figure 3.

Figure 3. Examples of living persons in Fornaldarsagas communicating in some way with a mound dweller.

<i>Living person</i>	<i>Mound dweller</i>	<i>Saga</i>
Hervör	Angantýr	Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks
Ásmundr	Aran	Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana
Agnarr	?	Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar
Göngu-Hrólfr	Hreggviðr	Göngu-Hrólfs saga
Hrómundr	Þráinn	Hrómundar saga Grípssonar
Vilhjálmr bastardr	Ívarr	Ragnars saga loðbrókar ok sona hans
Men of king Hjörleifr	?	Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka

This two-way communication is not unique but rare. In “The Waking of Angantyr” from the Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks a chamber graves open up at night surrounded by supernatural fires (Fischer *et al* forthcoming). Where Hervör addresses her dead father in the mound accordingly:

*Vaki þú, Angantýrr, vekr þik Hervör
einka dóttir ykkur Tófu,
sel þú mér ór haugi hvassan mæki,
þann er Svafrlama slógu dvergar.*

Wake up Angantyr! Hervör awakes you,
your only daughter with Tofi.
Hand me out of the howe the sharp sword
that dwarfs for Svafrlami forged.

Hervör’s motive is the reclaiming of the sword and this is not by far the only example from the Old Norse literature where the sword in particular was retrieved from mounds, for the most part by descendants of the buried person.

The swords in the sagas concerning haugbrot have specific names which can be divided in three main groups.

Group 1: *-nautr*. these swords are gifts and are generally brought into the mound to fight the mound dweller or are gifts from the dwellers (ex. *Jökulsnautr* from Grettis saga, Gänge-

Rolfs sword *Hreggviðarnautr* and *Vélfreyjunautr*, *Skefilsnautr* is a gift to Þorkell in *Reykðæla saga* og *Víga-Skútu* and *Bjarnarnautr* is a gift to Hörður in *Harðar saga* og *Hólmverja*).

Group 2: *-ingr*, *-ungr*. Heirloom sword who has been/will be in use for a long time by the family (ex. *Tirfingr* from 'Hervarar Saga ok Heidreks' and *Sköfnungr* from *Hrólfs saga kraka* ok kappa hans).

Group 3: magical names, like *Mistillteinn* from *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*.

The naming, and the category of names bestowed on the swords indicates the symbolic significance of the swords. Accordingly, since the swords, especially the blade, consistently have been removed from the reopened chamber graves in the Mälär Valley, one has to assume that there were some common denominators to be found in the literature and in the late Migration Period practice. Thus Hervör's motives, i.e. reclaiming an heirloom, a sword of power, gives us an explanation for the reopening of chamber graves and the recollection of swords in the Mälär Valley during the later part of the Migration Period. In a time of crisis, the need for symbols of power and past glory becomes accentuated in an effort to bring back that past grandeur (Fischer & Victor 2008; Fischer et al forthcoming).

Our project has also shown that most of the Swedish Chamber graves from the Migration Period have been built with initial intention of reopening the chamber later in time (Ljungkvist & Victor forthcoming). The central wooden structure has been produced with methods that were meant to preserve the wood and the interior objects. A coating of charcoal, birch bark and probably tar have been used to hinder the decomposition of the structure. Since all chambers have been reopened rather close in time, there must have been an initial intention and a general acceptance of the tradition of reopening, making *Haugbrot* in the graves. This general acceptance does not exist during later times (Omland 2002).

Some distinct traits of burials are mentioned in the Sagas. The dead person is usually buried unburned. The normal burial trait during the later Iron Age was cremations, even though when Christianity's impact made inhumation graves more common at the end of the Viking Age. The burial customs in Scandinavia during the Migration period was also cremations, but the chamber graves contained inhumations.

The Goths and the Huns

As in the Sagas the evident culture in these graves is an aristocratic milieu acting in an international network. An example is the regular contact between Scandinavians and the Goths and the Huns which is often described in the Sagas. The Huns first appeared in Europe in the 4th century north of the Black Sea around 370 and soon continued westward into Europe. The Huns began their first real attack on the East Roman Empire in 395 (Thompson 1996). They soon became a military force to be feared and large areas, especially in the eastern part of Europe came under their command. The Roman emperors had to pay huge sums of gold in tribute to Attila. The Huns lost their importance during the end of 5th and during the 6th century (Thompson 1996).

The Goths were Germanic tribes who traditionally are considered to have emerged from the southern part of Sweden. After several wars with primarily the Roman Empire they finally established powerful successor-states of the Roman Empire in France, the Iberian Peninsula and Italy.

Since the Goths and the Huns controlled a large part of Europe it is clear that they had a lot of contacts with the different Germanic tribes both on the continent and in Scandinavia. Contemporary archaeological artefacts in Sweden, like solidi coins, glasses, brooches, belt buckles and combs originate from the area where they ruled during 5th–6th century (Fischer 2008; Fischer & Victor 2008). The artefacts clearly show a direct contact between the Scandinavians in the Migration period and the Hunnic and Gothic peoples.

It is thus interesting to note how often the Huns and the Goths occur in the Sagas. In for example *Hervarar Saga ok Heidreks*, chapter 10 it is described how Heidrek travels with his army to *Húnaland*, the land of the Huns: “Þat var eitt sumar, at Heiðrekr konungr fór með her sinn suðr í Húnaland”.

In the same saga, chapter 14–15, a large battle between the Huns and the Goths is described. Lönnroth states that this section of the text must have an older origin but he also states that it is probably impossible today to reconstruct the history behind this section, even though he also makes an implicit connection to the Migration period (Lönnroth 1995:21).

In *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* Aran has a son with the daughter of a king of the Huns. The son is the king's heir. And in *Völsunga saga* Hunaland is also mentioned several times.

Conclusion

Reopening of chamber graves occur during two separate time periods in two different areas. They occur in the eastern part of Sweden (Ljungkvist & Victor in press) during the Migration period and in Norway during the Viking period (Soma 2007:16ff). The traditional understanding is that the graves occurring in the saga has its origin from the Viking period, but the handling of the swords, the repeated mentioning of the Goths and the Huns, the treatment of the chamber graves and the treatment of gold are some examples of anomalies that indicate a different time frame for the origin of the sagas.

Regarding the archaeological record it is thus reasonable to ask the question: can parts of the Sagas have an origin in the Migration period?

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The reproduction of Old Icelandic close front rounded vowels (<y>, <ý> and <ey>) in a 17th c. manuscript (AM 105 fol) of a part of *Hauksbók* (AM 371 4to)

Francesco Vitti, Dept. of English Studies, Durham University, England

It is widely attested that between 1300 and 1600 a large number of changes deeply transformed the Icelandic language, especially from the phonetic and phonological point of view. In particular, vocalism was radically transformed. The relevance of these changes, both qualitative and quantitative, can be considered an important element in the defining of the Icelandic language between the 14th c. and the 17th c. as Middle Icelandic.

The main focus of the present paper is to investigate a particular aspect involved in these changes: the reproduction of the old rounded vowels <y>, <ý> and <ey>¹ in a 17th c. manuscript (AM 105 fol) copy of AM 371 4to, the part of *Hauksbók* containing *Landnámabók* and *Kristni saga*.

According to the results I presented in an earlier article (Vitti 2007) copyist Jón Erlendsson (1600 ca. – 1672), active in the parish of Villingaholt from 1639 until his death, reproduced in *Kristni saga* (in AM 105 fol) the graphemes <y>, <ý> and <ey> in a surprisingly accurate way, despite their 17th c. derounded pronunciation. This accuracy could not be found in the reproduction of other analysed graphemes, whose phonological values were also affected by change in the period between the production of the exemplar (*Hauksbók* AM 371 4to, 1302–1310) and the production of the copy (AM 105 fol, ca 1650).

In order to understand why this happened and how it can be explained, I have widened my research about the reproduction of these specific graphemes to encompass the overall length of AM 105 fol. The analysis of the entire AM 105 fol, carried out by extending the research to *Landnámabók* (1r – 83r line 7) and aggregating the results to those related to *Kristni saga* (86r line 24 – 95v line 3, the pages from KS that are lost in 371 4to are not included in the analysis), confirms what emerged from my previous research. My results are therefore based on the analysis of two hundred and five folio paper pages (*Landnámabók*) and eighteen folio paper pages (*Kristni saga*), containing on average 23–26 lines.

Jón shows an extremely high accuracy in reproducing <y>, <ý> and <ey> in a 17th c. context, a result strengthened by the huge number of conservative occurrences in Jón's orthography.

In addition, the exceptionality of this accurate reproduction is clearly seen also in the extremely low presence of “wrong” reproductions of Old Icelandic close front rounded vowels, that is the use of <i>, <í> and <ei> instead of <ý>, <y> and <ey> or vice versa. In order to get a better perspective on this issue I will give a short survey of this phonological change. The short y and long y (<ý> and <y>) and the diphthong <ey> became derounded and coalesced with the short and long i (<i> and <í>) and <ei>; this change began in the last quarter of the 15th c. and was accomplished in the 17th c. (Stefán Karlsson 1989: 7). This can be illustrated with the following scheme, which also includes the standard phonological notation:

<ý> /y:/ > <í> /i:/; <y> /y/ > <i> /i/; <ey> /œy/ > <ei> /ei/

Other scholars indicate more or less precisely this same period for the consolidation of this change in the greater part of Iceland: Jóhannes L.L. Jóhannesson (1924: 124–129) assumes that it prevailed between 1560 and 1600; Björn Þórólfsson (1925: xv–xvii) says that the vow-

¹ The characters within the symbols [...] indicate the graphemes both in the exemplar and in the copy; the characters within the symbols [...] indicate the phonological notation. FJ refers to the transcription of AM 371 4to made by Finnur Jónsson: 1892–96105 refers to AM 105 fol

els <y>, <ý> – expressing old rounded sounds /y/, /y:/ – were not replaced by <i>, <í> before 1500; Lejström (1934: 333) too indicates the 16th c. as a turning point; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (1994: 35) states that the change did not reach most of the country before 1570. According to this information it is plausible to assume that derounding was accomplished when AM 105 fol was copied (ca 1650), except in some areas in North Western Iceland and North Eastern Iceland, where it survived throughout the 17th c. (Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, 1994: 80–89).

Some major studies of the Icelandic language and its orthography in the 16th and 17th c. can help us in understanding how the derounding process is reflected in the work of copyists from that period. Haraldur Bernharðsson (1999: 140) illustrates how three major 17th c. copyists, Björn Jónsson á Skarðsá (1574–1655), Þorleifur Jónsson í Grafarkoti (ca. 1570–?) and Jón Gissurarson á Núpi (1590–1648) use an orthography revealing a derounded pronunciation. In fact, those three scribes often write <i> for <y>, but they often also write <y> for <i> (1999: 140, 143). In his study of *Guðbrandsbiblíá* (printed in 1584) Oskar Bandle also identifies a tendency to mix up <y>, <ý> and <i>, <í> (Bandle: 1956, 73). At any rate, an important distinction has to be made: Bandle points out that these examples of ”wrong” orthography are extremely few given the overall length of the text (Bandle: 1956: 73).

As far as <ey> > <ei> is concerned Haraldur Bernharðsson indicates that Björn Jónsson clearly tends to use the grapheme <ey>, because he often writes <ey> instead of <ei>, but there are no occurrences where he uses <ei> instead of <ey>. These tendencies cannot be found in Þorleifur Jónsson, who sometimes writes both <ei> instead of <ey> and <ey> instead of <ei>. On the other hand Jón Gissurarson uses <eý> instead of <ei> or <ey> (1999: 141).

Guðbrandsbiblíá presents for the derounding <ey> > <ei> a similar pattern to the one related to <y>, <ý> and <i>, <í>. The derounding process can be seen in the switched use of <ey> and <ei>, even though the relatively low number of occurrences of this kind shows that this process was not fully accomplished (Bandle 1956: 88–89). In this case we see again the more conservative character of *Guðbrandsbiblíá* on account of its earlier date, previous to a fully accomplished derounding process.

Comparative analysis

For my comparative analysis of the text I have used the photographic edition of *Hauksbók* (ed. Jón Helgason: 1960) with the support of the transcription made by Finnur Jónsson (1892–96: 130–145). As for AM 105 fol, I have used the digital edition of it on www.sagnanet.is. The analysis has brought to light four different kinds of results:

The occurrences where Jón copies correctly <ý>, <y> and <ey>, which are the largest number.

A very few occurrences where he copies “wrongly”, using a grapheme that reflects the derounding or using another grapheme.

A very few occurrences where he corrects a “wrong” orthography into an orthography reflecting the exemplar.

A very few occurrences where Jón writes words using the graphemes <ý>, <y> (<ey> is not attested) not attested in the exemplar.

These four kinds of reproductions, although very different in quantity, can give us some indications of the way Jón worked. In addition, through the comparison of the “wrong” and the correct occurrences with the accurate ones more light can be shed on the reason for the exceptional accuracy in the reproduction of OI close front rounded vowels.

Occurrences with a conservative orthography

Almost the totality of the occurrences shows a surprisingly conservative orthography. In fact, out of a total of 724 occurrences in the exemplar of *Landnámabók* (AM 371 4to) with <y>, 721 are reproduced with a conservative orthography in AM 105. As for the diphthong <ey> we have a very similar proportion; in fact, out of 439 occurrences with <ey> in *Hauksbók*, 437 show an accurate reproduction.

The same pattern can be found in the copying of *Kristni saga*: out of 65 occurrences of <y>, 64 show a conservative reproduction; and out of 41 occurrences the diphthong <ey>, 40 show a conservative orthography. It is important to point out that in *Hauksbók* there is no use of the quantitative accents. On the other hand Jón uses the quantitative accent, in a very inconsistent way. However, the kind of double quantitative accent he uses, <ÿ> and <eÿ>, is typical of late medieval (from 1350) and early modern Icelandic manuscripts (Brøndum-Nielsen 1954: 145), which implies that the insertion of these accents has an innovative character.

The exceptionality of this accurate reproduction, uncommon for a 17th c. copyist, could have different explanations, but an answer to this phenomenon can be given by taking into account the few but indicative occurrences diverging from the conservative copying.

Occurrences of orthography diverging from the exemplar

In Jón's copy of *Landnámabók* there is only one occurrence that clearly reveals a derounded pronunciation; it is found on AM 105 fol, 57 verso, line 2. Here Jón copied the name Yngvilldr (FJ 87, 29) as Ingvilldr. See the picture below:

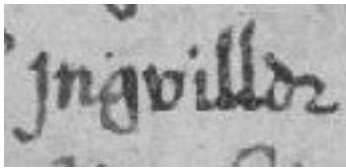


Figure 1.

Also in *Kristni saga* there is only one grapheme revealing this derounding: *leysa* “to loosen” (FJ 138, 35) > *leisa* (105 90 recto, 23).

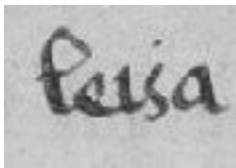


Figure 2.

Besides these two cases, there is an occurrence where Jón transcribes n. sg. dat. *myklu* “much” (FJ 139,14) as *miklu* (105 90 verso, 14).

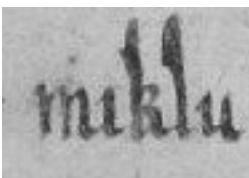


Figure 3.

However, this can hardly be considered a reflection of the derounding because *myklu* and *miklu* were free variants already in Haukr's time (see Hreinn Benediktsson 2002: 359). Jón writes <i> in *miklu* probably because it was the only form he was familiar with. According to

the online edition of the *Orðabók Háskólans* there is only one example of *myklu* in 16th, 17th and 18th c. texts. It is in *Vidalinspostilla* (printed ca. 1718–20).²

But there is another occurrence, to be found in *Landnámabók*, that can give us a relevant insight into the exceptionality of Jón's conservative orthography, i.e. *klyffjū* (klyfjum), f. pl. dat. of *klyf* “a pack or trunk on a pack-horse” (FJ 23, 12), as *kluffjū* (105 15 verso, 26).

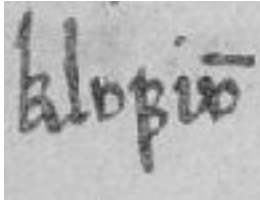


Figure 4.

If the other occurrences can easily be explained by the 17th c. derounded pronunciation, corroborated by the shifting orthography of other contemporary scribes, it is surprising that Jón uses the grapheme <u>, which expresses in modern Icelandic a long close front rounded vowel /y:/ in this phonological environment.

There are two more occurrences in Jón's *Landnámabók* where <y> is copied as <i>; both appear in the name *Eysteini* (capital E is missing) in the dative (105 65v 16 and 22), which in *Hauksbók* is written as *Eysteyni* (FJ 100, 11 and 16).

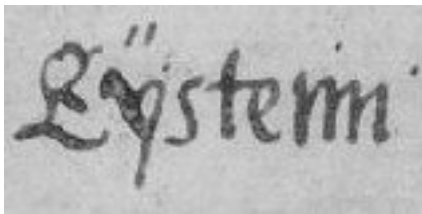


Figure 5.

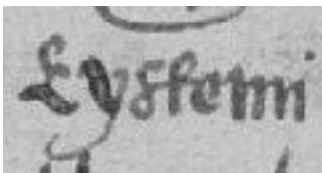


Figure 6.

However, I would not consider that these occurrences relate to derounding, since the usual form for this name is *Eysteinn*. This means that Jón adopted the most common orthography. In addition, *Hauksbók* itself shows in other circumstances the usual orthography (e.g. FJ 100, 15, in the same sentence as the above mentioned examples). This is another element that shows how Jón was consistent in copying these graphemes.

There is another occurrence showing Jón's orthographic awareness, which is quite similar to the previous one. In *Hauksbók* we find attested the by-form *herbyrgis* (FJ 77, 21), more commonly written *herbergis*, n. sg. gen. of *herbyrgi*, “inn”, “room”. Even in this case Jón chooses the usual form, writing *herbergis* (150 50v 19). In this case, no more than in the earlier ones, can we talk about derounding, since the passage is <y> > <e> not <y> > <i>; we can only assume the copyist opted for a more common usage, as we previously saw with *miklu* and *Eysteinn*.

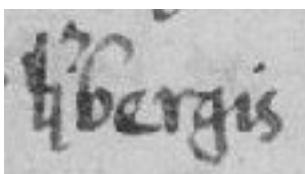


Figure 7.

² (<http://www.lexis.hi.is/corpus/leit.pl?lemma=myklu&ofl=&leita=1&flokkar=16.17.18.%F6ld&m1=myklu&l1=Leita&lmax=1>)

Occurrences of corrections

In *Landnámabók* I found three occurrences that appear to be a correction from <i> and <ei> into the conservative forms <y> and <ey>.

The first one is *flyðu* 3. pl. pret. of verb *flyja* “to flee” (FJ 27, 5) > *flyðu*³ (105 18r 6). By observing how <y> was written it is possible to determine that Jón first wrote <i>, still visible in the central part of the letter, and then, when he realized that he had made a mistake, he traced successively a <y> around the <i>. The picture below shows quite clearly how Jón wrote this grapheme in two phases.

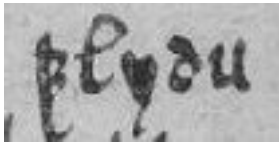


Figure 8.

The second occurrence is the name *Yngvilldr* (FJ 98, 2) > *Yngvilldr* (105 64r 15). This case recalls the occurrence listed above. Here Jón copied the name *Yngvilldr* (FJ 87, 29) as *Ingvilldr* (105, 57v 2). In this case it seems likely that Jón initially also wrote a capital i (<J>), but he realised the mistake and corrected it into <Y>, adding two dots. The picture below shows what the corrected grapheme looks like.

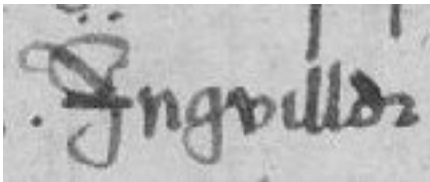


Figure 9.

The last occurrence of this type is found in the place name *Reyðar vatn* (FJ 109, 30) > *Reyðar vatn* (105 72v 6). Even in this case it is possible to assume a correction from <i> into <y>: the grapheme seems to have been written first as a vertical line with a dot over it, an <i>, and then Jón added a diagonal line on the left with two more dots on it when he realised the mistake.

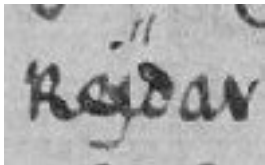


Figure 10.

In *Kristni saga* there is a case showing Jón Erlendsson’s awareness of his mistake: in AM 105 fol 91r 1 the diphthong <ey> in the word *þreytt* (past p. of verb *þreyta* “to dispute”) was apparently first written *þreitt* and then corrected into *þreytt*. The way <y> was written recalls the occurrence of *Reyðar* listed above: first a vertical line with a dot over it, which originally was <i>, and then a diagonal line on the left with one more dot on it. Moreover Jón’s trace of the second short diagonal line in *þreytt* is lighter than the trace of the first vertical line, suggesting that they were written at two different moments. See the picture below.

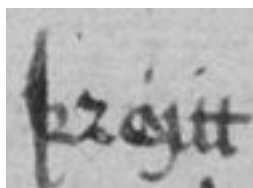


Figure 11.

³ The bold style in the grapheme indicates a correction.

These corrected <y> graphemes appear to be very different from the others in AM 105 fol because those are usually composed of two diagonal lines, where the one on the right is longer and continues downwards, as shown in pictures 5 and 6, in other words the usual feature for this letter at that time in Iceland (Svensson 1974: 198).

Occurrences with the graphemes <y>, <y> (<ey> is not attested) inserted ex-novo

I group in this section the occurrences which show how the use of <y>, <y> is rooted in Jón's orthography. In fact, the occurrences listed below are found in Jón's own additions that do not correspond to any text in the exemplar.

The first two examples are from *Landnámabók*: two commentaries inserted by Jón in the *Landnámabók* and containing the word *fýrr* in the sentence *Þetta skal fýrr inn koma i kapitl'*, therefore using a conservative orthography. These two cases are of great interest because they show how Jón used <y> and <y> in a spontaneous way, even regardless of his actual pronunciation of the phonemes represented by these graphemes.

The first one is in 105 34v 13:

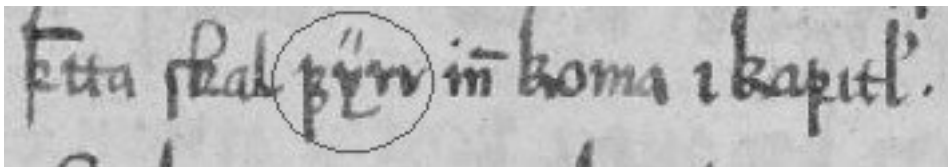


Figure 12.

The second one is in 105 35r 22 and is slightly different, *ok aa þetta fýrr at vera kapitlans er sípar er ritað*:

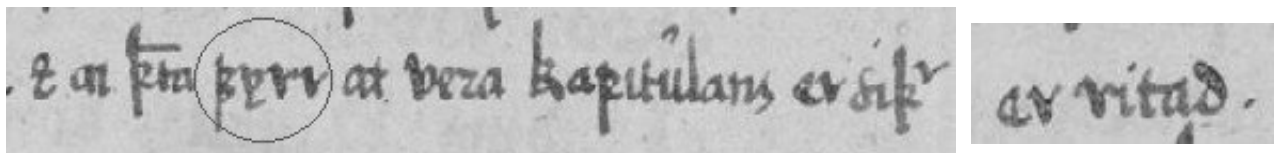


Figure 13.

In *Kristni saga* I found another interesting occurrence, which shows how the scribe makes a clear choice by using in his copy a more common form of a word. In fact the adjective *kvirran*, (sg, acc. of *kvirr/kyrr* “calm, quiet”) to be found in FJ 139, 18, is copied as *kyrran* (105 90v), although the by-form *kvirran* present in the exemplar has a grapheme that expresses an unrounded phoneme as /i/.

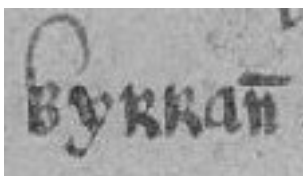


Figure 14.

Did Jón Erlendsson have a rounded pronunciation?

The outcome of my analysis clearly shows that Jón Erlendsson was unusually accurate in copying the graphemes <y> and <ey>. This accuracy has been observed in many facts, first of

all the extremely high quantity of conservative orthography present in the text, despite its remarkable length. In addition, the few occurrences that have a diverging character show a tendency toward an archaic reproduction. This is seen in the few examples where Jón corrected the “wrong orthography” into the conservative orthography (examples 8, 9, 10, 11), which number twice as many as the occurrences that attest an orthography showing the derounding (examples 1 and 2). The other examples in the second group are interesting, but their divergence from the exemplar is not directly related to the derounding; examples 3, 5, 6 and 7, however, show that Jón chose the more common form within a traditional orthographic use, in fact both *miklu* and *Eysteini* belong to the medieval orthographic use.

However, there is an occurrence that has great relevance since it seems to contradict the derounding process, *klyffū* (klyfjum) > *kluffū* (see example 4). Even though this is an isolated case, as the cases showing derounding are, it is extremely important because it could suggest that Jón’s pronunciation was still rounded. In fact the grapheme <u> was pronounced in 17th c., and still is, as the short front close rounded vowel /y/. Given this, is it possible to assume that Jón’s exceptional accuracy depends on an archaic rounded pronunciation? We know that the rounded pronunciation survived in some peripheral areas, more precisely in north-western Iceland and north-eastern Iceland. On the other hand we know that Jón was born and lived all his life in the south west, his parents came from the same region and so did his wife (Íslenzkar æviskrár, b. III: 105–6). Therefore from the historical sociolinguistic point of view it seems quite improbable that Jón had a rounded pronunciation. Another possibility might be that Jón had been in contact with speakers from the Icelandic regions where the rounded pronunciation was still in use, or even with speakers from continental Scandinavia, in particular Norwegians, who had a rounded pronunciation both of <y> and <u>. However, we do not need to seek very far from Villingaholt in order to find a speaker with a rounded pronunciation, or at least who had knowledge of it. In fact, bishop Brýnjólfur Sveinsson was born and spent his childhood in Holt, in the Öunarfjörður area in north-western Iceland (Íslenzkar æviskrár, b. I: 286). We know that Jón was the bishop’s closest collaborator and was followed by him in his copying work (Springborg 1977: 69). Therefore we can assume that he might have had a derounded pronunciation or that he at least had knowledge of it. This fact could help us to understand the extreme accuracy of Jón’s copying work as for these graphemes.

If we look at the occurrences presented in the last group we can see this issue from another perspective without totally excluding the sociolinguistic explanation. If we look at examples 12, 13 and 14 we realise that Jón used the graphemes <y> and <ÿ> (unfortunately <ey> is not attested) spontaneously: in one case he opted for a form containing <y> instead of a less common form in the exemplar containing <i> (example 14) and there are two cases where he uses the words *fÿrr* and *fÿrr* in two short comments. These examples, in particular the last two, testify to how the use of <y> and <ÿ> was an intrinsic feature in his orthography.

Jón Erlendsson’s social role, Brynjólfur Sveinsson, *Guðbrandsbiblía* and the old rounded pronunciation

In this connection we need to take into account Jón’s social role. He was a man of the church, a Lutheran minister who was certainly acquainted with the religious literature, especially that produced after the Reformation, which was brought into Iceland by the Danish king Christian III in the middle of the 16th c. The most important religious book of the newly reformed Iceland was *Guðbrandsbiblía*, a work that had a great influence not only in the spiritual world, but also on the Icelandic language. As previously mentioned, Oskar Bandle pointed out that the occurrences where <y> and <i> are used in an incorrect way are extremely few given the overall length of the text, especially in comparison to the usual mixing of these two graph-

emes in 17th c. texts (Bandle 1956: 73). The same result is presented for <ey> (89). Given this, my assumption is that Jón used *Guðbrandsbiblía* as a model for the orthography of <ý>, <y> and <ey>. However, this gives only a partial explanation because the minister is not so accurate with other features, as I showed in my previous article about *Kristni saga*.

Jón probably did not have any rounded pronunciation: the example *klyffū* > *kluffū* is interesting but it cannot prove a pronunciation of this kind, and Jón's mistake could also be due to the influence of the second <u>. It may be possible, however, that he heard this pronunciation from Brynjólfur Sveinsson or that he was made aware of its existence by him. This might be an explanation from a language contact angle. However, there might also be an explanation based on the reception of orthographic patterns. In fact, Jón could have acquired the distinction between the old rounded and the derounded pronunciation through the reading of *Guðbrandsbiblía*, which presumably would have been a linguistic model for a person, like Jón, operating within the Icelandic reformed church. These two explanations have to be seen as complementary: the orthographic model offered by *Guðbrandsbiblía* may have been focused on the old close front rounded vowels through the collaboration with Brynjólfur.

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Further Remarks on Ohthere's *Beormas*

Vilmos Voigt, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

In the 9th century A.D. (more probably between 871 and 899) two voyagers (Ohthere of Halgoland/Halogaland and Wulfstan from the English Mercia) travelled along the Northernmost shores of Europe and of the Baltic sea. Their reports to King Alfred were incorporated into the so called *Old English Orosius*, a translation of world geography, including references to *Terfinnas* and *Beormas* peoples living around the Kola Peninsula and the Archangel region of today's North Russia. From about 1230 Old Icelandic works (e.g. *Heimskringla*, *Egilssaga*, *Fagrskinna*, *Kormakssaga*, *Landnámabók*, *Flateyjarbók*, *Bósasaga*, *Hálfssaga ok Hálfrefreka*, the two *Hálfðanarsaga*, *Sturlaugssaga* and especially the *Órvar-Oddssaga*) and the Scandinavian Latin sources (e.g. Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, the *Historia Norvegiæ*) mention considerably later the terms *Bjarmaland*, *Bjarmar*, *Byarmenses*, *Byarmorum*, *Biarmenses*, *Biarmia*, which thus were common words in the 13th century Icelandic.

The identification of Bjarmia with the place name and ethnonym *Perm/Permian* started already some centuries ago, and has been discussed several times. The excellent monograph by Alan S. C. Ross (The *Terfinnas* and *Beormas* of Ohthere) was written in Leeds and Helsinki 1934–1938, and was published first with some additions 1940, and reprinted 1980, with a very valuable afterword and commentaries by Michael Chesnutt. Ross and Chesnutt have used also the important works of Russian and Finnish scholars, and their joint opinion was very sober, pinpointing to some difficulties of the *Bjarm/i/a* 'Perm' etymology.

Unfortunately they did not use the excellent critical edition of Orosius (*The Old English Orosius* by Janet Bately – Oxford 1980), with rich commentaries on "Beormas" too. Bately (referring to oral information by the English Finno-Ugrist, Michael Branch) stressed the fact that Ohthere, even if knowing some of the language of the Lapps (named regularly as Finns) living in today's North Norway, could not understand the language of the Lapps from the Kola peninsula, and still less of any "Permian" language (i.e. the today's Zyryan/Komi).

A noted Hungarian Finno-Ugrist, Erik Vászolyi (in his 1967 article) has raised the question: whether at the time of Ohthere's "Bjarmian" visit could live any Zyryan/Komi as high north as the shores of the White Sea. The origin of the Russian name for the city Perm, is not very clear either, and there is little hope to find any (written) indication to that toponyme from as early as about 871 – 899.

The famous Finnish ethnographer Kustaa Vilkuna (1956), quoting the modern (North-)Finnish dialect word *permi* 'itinerary merchant', has supposed that *Permian* (and thus *Bjarmian*) was neither a local, nor an ethnic appellation, but a name for a profession. (It is a clever remark, but I have to add, that such a circumstance does not exclude any ethnic or local connotations, especially for the periods, centuries earlier.)

According to my assumption, Ohthere's *Beormas* is an ethnonym with a clear reference to a not-settled population, engaged in primitive traffic and exchange of goods. Later the same name was used for people living at the same geographic area, and was used both for the Zyryans and by the Russians, who have founded the town Perm before the 14th century.

The crucial problem is the following: is in Old Icelandic literature the notion of "Bjarmia" an old (already by the end of the 9th century existing) phenomenon (which we can not connect with the actual Viking raids at the White Sea area) – or is it a fantastic term from the 12th – 13th century, based upon the history of the conquest of the Finnish territories by the early Swedish kings, or by the then contemporary Varangian raids/expeditions?

For the saga writers and their audience in the 13th century the term "Bjarmian" was not directly borrowed from the Old English Orosius, but was inspired by a then widely known appellation for peoples living in the Far North in today's Russia. It is important to stress that the

connection opens the gates for accepting other (of course not documented in contemporary written sources) borrowings from Upper North European traditions in the sagas.

As we may say today, Ohthere (at the end of the 9th century) could not meet and speak with the Zyryans or Russians in Bjarmia. But the saga writers and their audience in the 13th century may have done it easily.

Perhaps I have to add that other important Old English/Old Icelandic terms in Ohthere's report (e.g. *(Ter)finnas*, *Gandvik*, *Jómali* etc.) call for specific further studies.

The Prosimetrum: Orally Derived Literature?

Sabine H. Walther, Bonn, Germany

Although many other cultures from Ireland to China know *prosimetra*, the mixture of prose and poetry seems to be peculiar to Icelandic literature. Not only are many sagas what in rhetorical terms would be called *prosimetra*. But also the *Codex Regius* and the *Snorra Edda* show alternating parts of prose and poetry. In this perspective, it seems to be outdated to assume or even to reconstruct pure poems which would only “satisfy esthetic urges of our own, may facilitate scholarly analysis or may give a general air of neatness” (Wood 1962, p. 52). But whose “esthetic urges” do the *prosimetra* satisfy? Are they reflections of an oral tradition? Is true what Wood (*op. cit.* p. 48) said: “The *Codex Regius*, and the *Völundarkviða*, are as near to any actual oral tradition as we are likely to get. They would, even, seem to be the written record of Germanic oral tradition.”? Or do prose frames “provide means of textualizing the oral tradition” (Irwin 1995, p. 32)? And are *prosimetra* as a whole a genuinely literary pattern? We must consider that this form existed already during the classical antiquity and that some of the most widespread works in the Middle Ages – Boethius’ *Consolatio Philosophiae* and Martianus Capella’s *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* – are *prosimetra*. They shaped the taste of authors throughout Europe and so this form became popular and productive during the 12th and 13th centuries. Can we put the *Snorra Edda* and the prosimetrical sagas in this continental context? Or is it something completely different?

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Estranged Bedfellows: Saga Scholarship and Archaeological Research in Iceland

Elisabeth Ida Ward, Dept. of Scandinavian Lang. and Lit., Univ. of California, Berkeley, USA

In 2004, the National Museum of Iceland opened a new permanent exhibition entitled *Þjóðverja til*, or in translation, the Making of a Nation. That title in my mind raises some very difficult questions: what is a nation? How in the world is it made? The curators did not, I do not imagine, expect visitors to stop in their tracks at the title and fall into deep philosophical musings over these questions. Rather, they hoped this title was direct and clear, assuming, and probably rightly so, that the public would share with them the idea that a nation is a political fact and its formation a historic process. The exhibition format surely confirms this. It is laid out in chronological order, starting with the settlement of Iceland immediately upon entering the gallery, and proceeding along on the first floor through the Protestant Reformation of 1550. Upstairs, post-reformation and modern Iceland follow in order as one proceeds from the back of the hall forward. The case organization highlights the political power struggles between opposing factions within each of the distinct time periods: the pagans and the Christians; the Church and the common man; Norwegian kings versus Icelandic chieftains, Lutherans versus Catholics, traders versus farmers, Danes versus Icelanders, women versus men. The historical interpretation here seems to be that the Icelandic nation has always existed in nescient form, but it needed to exert itself to get out from under a series of struggles, in order to become.¹

What interests me about this exhibition is that, as the curators who made it willingly acknowledge, this narrative was decided first. The objects in the collections of the museum were not analyzed for what they say about Icelandic history, and then cases and themes built up from there. Rather, historians that specialize in Icelandic history worked with museum staff to develop an outline, and then appropriate illustrative objects were found. There is nothing inherently wrong with such an approach: it is often advocated within the museum field as an affective mode for ensuring an exhibition's core message gets conveyed.

But I would like to argue in this paper that indeed the National Museum had no other alternative but to adopt such a historicist (and nationalistic) frame. Because the two other fields in Iceland that investigate the past, archaeology and saga scholarship, are currently irreconcilably opposed to one another.

An Initial Infatuation

Most saga scholars are generally familiar with the history of their field, of the antiquarian interest that led to manuscript collection and the changes in scholarly approaches over the last 50 years. There may be a bit less familiarity with the relationship between this field and the field of archaeology. Archaeology as a discipline did not come into its own until the late 19th century, and indeed this young field has had remarkable theoretical shifts about every 15 to 20 years (see Trigger 1989 for an overview). The methodological practice of archeology has been more stable, though the advent of GPS and 3D modeling is promising to revolutionize this as well. What is also beginning to emerge through such online forums as the World Archaeological Congress Listserve is the degree to which archaeological practice is country-specific, both theoretically and methodologically.

¹ I would like to thank the American Scandinavian Foundation for sponsoring my research at the National Museum. My complete review of the exhibition is forthcoming in *Nordisk Museologi*.

In the case of Icelandic archaeology, the existence of the remarkable body of saga narrative texts, and the manuscripts that contain them, has had a profound impact on the practice of Icelandic archaeology. Starting already with the work of Árni Magnusson, the sagas were taken as narratives that told of genuine historic events, that in fact provided a remarkable degree of information about the goings on in settlement and commonwealth period Iceland. When archaeologists such as the Dane Daniel Bruun started working in Iceland, it was therefore a given that the primary function of archaeology was to locate the archaeological remains of sites named in the sagas. In some cases, this led to really wonderful interpretations of the archaeological record; a large bone ring found beside Rangá River, in the context of other bits of weapons, has been interpreted as belonging to a named saga character, Gunnar of Hliðarendi's brother, Hjörtur, who was said to have died in a battle beside the Rangá River. The bone ring bears the image of a stag, and the name Hjörtur means stag. But in many other cases, the evidence for any relationship with a known saga narrative was much more shaky. Surveys of valleys were conducted with the relevant saga in hand, and covalence between the two achieved by simple assumption, no excavation even needed in some instances. This led to a number of errors in interpretation, as Adolf Fridriksson has convincingly pointed out (1994).

Working Together

This general lackadaisical approach to archaeology in Iceland carried over into the management of Icelandic material cultural heritage, which was very poor before the 1940s. When tilling their fields, farmers would sometimes notice archeological remains or items, and after removing the artifacts from the soil, would either keep them in their house, throw them out, or perhaps reuse them. What material was properly excavated was shipped off to the National Museum of Denmark, and nicer items also ended up in the hands of affluent collectors, particularly in Norway and England.

Nationalistic calls to rectify this situation began in the 1860s, when Sigurður Guðmundsson, with support from the Bishop of Holar, began to call for farmers to donate what they found to create an archaeological collection. It grew over time and was housed in various attics of civic buildings throughout Reykjavík. Then in 1944, legislation to build a museum for the collection was enacted as one of the first orders of business for the new independent Icelandic parliament. Kristján Eldjárn who became the head of this National Museum starting in 1947, later became president of Iceland. Under his stewardship, organized archaeological investigations were undertaken, although the tradition of farmers bringing found items to the museum collection continued. More recently, material excavated by archaeologists before 1944 and stored at the Danish National Museum has been sent to the Icelandic National Museum. This is part of a worldwide repatriation effort, wherein archaeological finds are thought to most rightly belong in the country from whence they were excavated. Such an idea is based on the assumption that cultural boundaries correspond with geographic boundaries, and although perhaps not incorrect, nevertheless also supports a nationalistic agenda.

The nationalistic aims of archaeology in Iceland dovetail rather nicely with the nationalist developments in saga scholarship. Calls for the return of the manuscripts Árni “borrowed” began with a letter signed by the bishops in Skálholt and Holar in 1837, though of course this matter was not settled until the 1970s. Starting in the 1950s, the Icelandic school of saga scholarship began emphasizing the purely Icelandic origins of the sagas, written by known authors starting in the mid to late 12th century. This was a radical break from the previous opinion that the Family Sagas and Sagas of Poets were derived from oral tradition within Iceland, and that the Legendary Sagas, Eddic and skaldic poetry were derived from oral history stretching back to pre Viking-Age Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Germany.

A number of scholars have written on the political efficacy of such a research approach; it sustained the demand of the Icelandic government to have the manuscripts returned to Iceland (Byock 1993, Sigrún Daviðsson 2000). It also gave Icelandic saga scholars a specific avenue of inquiry to pursue that freed them from the scholarship of continental experts on the sagas. I would also note from a scholarly standpoint that it allowed for very detailed, manuscript-specific research to be carried out, promising to shed considerable light on the relationship between texts.

So during the period from about 1940 to say 1980, both saga scholarship and archaeological research in Iceland were doing their part to gather evidence of a distinct Icelandic national identity separate from a Danish/Norwegian or continental identity, one through the means of demonstrating a unique literary culture, and the other through the preservation Icelandic material heritage. These scholarly efforts, while valuable in their own rights, were also fully in keeping with the demands of a newly independent nation, struggling to define itself.

Going Separate Ways

One of Kristján's most significant undertakings was *Kuml og Haugfé*, a volume published in 1956 which reviewed all of the pagan burials and Viking Age artifacts found in Iceland to that date. In the preface to that volume, Kristján discusses the limits of the sagas to shed any light on the Viking period in Icelandic history. Indeed, the book as a whole, illustrating the fabulous variety of pagan burials in Iceland, the exotic finds of Roman coins, and with pictures and drawings of swords and jewelry from the Viking Age, is a rather clear effort on Kristján's part to stake out a territory for Icelandic archaeology that was absolutely distinct from saga scholarship. Thus the period from 874 A.D. until 1000 or even 1100 was safely in the hands of archaeologists. And it was a cool period, full of interesting questions and fascinating finds.

At about the same time that archaeology was carving out this niche for itself, saga scholars started retreating from efforts to create a base of knowledge about manuscript production pre-1200. Before the 1970s, major work had been undertaken to track down the provenience of saga manuscripts based on handwriting analysis and other means, and to compare manuscripts so as to postulate lost originals that would account for various versions of a saga. This is by no means a completely forgotten avenue of scholarly research, but it had its hayday in the 1960s and 70s judging by the publications on the subject (Lönnroth 1964; Ólafur 1966).² It seems to have run its course to some extent, and the hopes of scholars to retrieve a semblance of a text that significantly predates existing manuscripts has waned.

During this period, the two fields were in relatively stable territory, archaeology focusing on the Viking Age and saga scholars staking out the medieval period. Because these two time periods were understood to be both historically and culturally distinct, the fact that they were being researched via two fields that are radically different in terms of methods and theories was not seen as a major problem or issue. But both were putting forward a chronological understanding of history and seeking to add facts about events to add to that historical understanding.

² For the Mapping Nordic Literary Cultures project (partially coordinated by UC Berkeley, where I am a graduate student), I surveyed all the manuscripts pre-1500 whose provenience has been teased out by scholars through handwriting analysis, and other means, and indeed I find the result of this considerable scholarly effort to be truly remarkable. This data will be embedded into a searchable map interface that will be piloted at UCLA in the winter of 2009, and later put on the web.

Breakdown in Communication

In the 1980s and 90s, as critical theory in literary studies reached saga scholarship, along with its more tempered, text focused new historicism, saga interpretation turned towards the issues of the creation of categories and intellectual constructs through which the medieval writers and medieval audience would have understood their world. The assumption here is that literature has some social efficacy mainly for the readers and writers, not in a unbiased factual sense. And certainly, the idea that the sagas are understood not to be trying to convey information about the past they represent (i.e.: Viking Age Iceland) but rather the time period in which they were written, a point made clearly by the Icelandic school in the 1950s, continues to hold sway. I am not doing this intellectual trend justice, but I assume most are familiar with its contours. What I want to emphasize is what affect it had on the field of archaeology.

Until the mid 1990s, all archaeological research in Iceland was done under the egis of the Icelandic National Museum. But within the context of a widespread privatization move by the Icelandic government, a contract archaeology model was adopted instead. The Icelandic Institute for Archaeology was established, and has been awarded most of the major research projects. The University of Iceland also started an archaeology division, and conducts some of its own projects. The Museum maintains a staff archaeologist, who has had an ongoing project in Bessastaðir. A major excavation in downtown Iceland was recently awarded to a new, smaller archaeological research firm.

Each of these firms has the right to retain objects they excavate for a 10-year period, while they finish writing up reports and conducting analysis. When that is complete, all artifacts are to be stored at the National Museum. The National Museum still retains the right to grant or not grant archaeological excavation permits, but otherwise is not really in the excavation business.

The privatization of archaeology in Iceland, although certainly having an economic impetus, was also, I believe, the result of the trend in saga scholarship towards textual criticism and the general abandonment of the search for provenience.

The anonymity of the manuscripts, and the difficulty of finding 100% verifiable provenience, has given prominent archaeologists in Iceland today reason to argue that the sagas ought not to be thought of as telling us anything at all about Iceland before 1400, ie: the date to which existing manuscripts can be dated with certainty. Texts that survive only in paper manuscripts from the 1700s ought not be thought to tell us anything about Icelandic culture before 1700.

This is not the normal argument to take the sagas with a grain of salt, because after all the material had been in oral circulation for a long time. No, this is an argument that the family sagas are completely worthless to tell us anything predating the date of the manuscript. There is a difference here of 300 years. Saga scholars think the sagas may not tell us much about life in Iceland in 900, but can tell us something about life in Iceland in 1150. Archaeologists in Iceland are on the other hand arguing the manuscripts are only valuable in so far as the period in which the existing manuscript dates, i.e.: 1385 at the earliest, most 1500 or later.

Archaeologists working at the Archaeology Institute and other places have therefore begun to define the time period before 1300 as pre-historic Iceland.

There are several reasons why this is a helpful development; when archaeological research is carried out in a wide-scale manner with an open mind, patterns emerge about land usage and settlement strategies that would certainly never come to light if archaeologists were still using the sagas as a sort of road map for where to dig. It has re-energized the field of archaeology in Iceland, which has seen a burgeoning of digs in the last few years, and not only at Viking Age sites. But, because this argument developed during an era of archaeological privatization and competition for funds, one must indeed ask if, by giving archaeologists a 400 to

500 year period all to themselves, there is not also a very practical, non-intellectual basis for this reach into the medieval period by Icelandic archaeologists.

Other than the possibility of financial motivations, is there any other reason to be wary of these developments of the last 10 years in the fields of archaeology and saga scholarship in Iceland? Each has been a predictable response not only to what has come before, but also to what the other field has been doing. As saga scholarship has retreated to a narrow focus from its optimistic beginnings of telling the whole story, archaeology has expanded to fill the void. This could in a way be seen as the sign of a very good dynamic between the two fields.

But the problem in my mind rests not so much in the division of Icelandic history into distinct phases, but that the two fields are becoming increasingly estranged in terms of what sort of questions they believe they can answer. As literature looks towards individual actors and their intellectual constructs and motivations, archaeology in Iceland continues the sort of regional survey methods of economic and environmental archaeology that seek broad social patterns within a material basis.

Hope for Reconciliation

And it is here that I return to the National Museum of Iceland. The new permanent exhibition on display at the museum is the result of a purely historical approach, though of course in best practice with social history, it is the history of classes and groups, not the history of great men. There is one display about environmental change in Iceland, but otherwise, the archaeological work of the last 30 years is widely missing. Iceland's literary culture, what the sagas tell us about Icelandic history, even its manuscript production technology, is nowhere to be found. My aim here is not to criticize the exhibition, nor to suggest they redo it anytime soon! But I do feel the exhibition is indicative of the problematic relationship between saga scholarship and archaeology that has developed over the last 10 to 15 years. Because these fields cannot be meaningfully engaged on the same topic and time period, the overall interpretation of Icelandic history and culture suffers. In fact, it seems to me that the two fields are creating two competing understandings of Iceland's past, without perhaps even meaning to do so.³

I believe there ought to be a way, if the notion of history and the past has any efficacy at all, for these two fields to speak to one another. And I would like to suggest one particular avenue that this may be fruitfully attempted: the question of identity. Identity formation is an energetic process that expresses itself not only in literary musings and about foreigners, or in heated discussion during negotiations of legal rights, but also in the artifacts one carries around and uses everyday. Identity is in fact constantly being formed and negotiated. And identity is, for better or for worse, built on that which came before as well as that which it encounters anew. There are multiple levels of identity for any single individual, and those identities change through time. But the range of available identities is also cultural prescribed, because identities are social. Thus issues of identity negotiate between the individual and the group, and they negotiate between the synchronic and diachronic.

For instance, as an anthropologist, I take 'nation' to be not a question of political process, but rather a question of identity. It is entirely conceivable in my mind for the National Museum of Iceland to have framed its core exhibition around the question, "When and how did people start thinking of themselves as Icelandic?" This is an important question to ask, because if it is not asked, then the nationalistic rhetoric of the 20th century that assumes there has always been a bounded, natural thing called the Icelandic Nation⁴ will go unchallenged.

³ Such an outcome would perhaps in itself be interesting, in so far as it would confirm James Clifford's suspicion that culture is a false category, a fiction of modern scholarship.

⁴ It is certainly not unusual or strange that the permanent exhibition takes the nation to be a given, a constant actor in the narrative of the march of history. It would indeed be rather counterproductive for the museum exhi-

Unfortunately, that question cannot be asked without the assistance of the research fields responsible for contributing knowledge about the Icelandic past. Over the last few years, saga scholars such as Ármann Jakobsson (1997) have suggested that the sagas are not by necessity supporting the idea of an Icelandic national identity. However, given that literary studies are now confined to only saying something about the cognitive world of the individuals responsible for generating the existing manuscript, there is little means of engaging the wider question of the dynamics of identity formation by reference only to the literary sources. Furthermore, we cannot say much of anything about identity issues in 14th century Iceland unless we can say something about the identity formation dynamic that preceded that period. Gisli Sigurðsson's resurgence of the oral composition model (2004) has attempted to reinvigorate some discussion of identity issues that may have a basis in Viking Age and early Commonwealth Iceland, but his folkloric methodology has not as of yet become widely applied.

I believe a certain degree of urgency lies in finding a way to engage Icelandic archaeologists on this issue. We have no hope of answering, in my mind, how the nation was made until we have archaeological means to investigate identity issues in 'prehistoric' Iceland. Theoretical and methodological models do exist in the field of archaeology to approach this; Ian Hodder (1986) for instance clearly believes artifacts and other material culture objects have a role in identity formation, that they not only project an existing identity but also actively participate in the formation and flux of identity through time.

A few studies have taken note of identity issues expressed via material culture (i.e. Smith 2003), but that is very rare; of more concern are mapping trade links and economic or environmental impacts caused by the Norse settlement of the North Atlantic.⁵ Iceland is usually assumed to be a logical unit of analysis, which in fact serves to bolster the nationalistic interpretation rather than question it.

In order to approach the question of identity formation in 'prehistoric' Iceland, one would need to creatively re-imagine what uses objects could have been put in daily practice by individuals. Are stones carried in belt purses only healing stones used for religious purposes, or could they also be markers of local identity? Could a differential distribution of wooden artifacts versus soapstone artifacts within a household or between households be indicative not of social distinction but of competing identity dynamics? By refocusing our interest from artifacts as indicative of large economic or environmental processes, and instead seeing them as single items used by individual people in their daily lives, the lived experience can start to be grasped, and in this way, archaeology can come closer to issues of identity that occupy modern saga scholarship.

This effort has the potential not only to free Icelandic history from the hegemony of nationalism, but it might also ensure that two fields that are supposedly researching the lives of the very same group of people would find a way to jointly contribute to an overall understanding of Icelandic history. It sure would be nice to get these two estranged bedfellows talking to one another again.

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bition to even allow room for the idea that the world would and could still exist without such a thing as 'Iceland' as a separate category, since the primary function of the Icelandic National Museum, like all national museums, is to bolster the naturalness of the nation.

⁵ I am referring here to the work of the North Atlantic Biocultural Organization, which has done a remarkable job of gathering information about environmental change from the time of settlement through the early medieval period throughout the Norse population areas (Norway to Greenland).

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Om højsædestolper, klokker og døre

Jonas Wellendorf, CMS, Universitetet i Bergen, Norway

Blandt dem som beskæftiger sig dagligt med norrøn litteratur, er det blevet mere og mere klart at også den islandske litteratur er en del af samme kredsløb som den øvrige vesteuropæiske middelalderlitteratur.¹ Forestillinger, motiver, fortællinger og tanker som cirkulerede i mere centrale dele af middelalderens vestlige Europa, vandt også genklang i nord og reflekteredes på forskellige mere eller mindre åbenbare måder i den norrøne litteratur. I dette bidrag er det mit ærinde at præsentere nogle middelalderlige paralleller til et af de velkendte motiver i islændingenenes middelalderlitteratur; nemlig højsædestolpeudkastningen som leder til at de islandske landnamsmænd finder ud af hvor de skal slå sig i det nye land. Parallellerne jeg vil præsentere, kommer fra hagiografiske tekster, og selvom det ikke er umuligt at netop de tekster jeg vil fremdrage på en eller anden måde har været kendt på Island, vil jeg gerne indledningsvis slå fast at jeg betragter dem som paralleller og ikke som kilder. Både de islandske passager og de andre tekster jeg vil fremdrage, betragter jeg som udtryk for samme tradition, men det betyder ikke at de er direkte afhængige af hinanden.²

De fleste folk har oprindelsesmyter, og disse inkluderer gerne fortællinger om migrationer fra et sted til et andet. Sådanne myter ser ud til at være så indgroede at selv guderne endte op i Nord som følge af en lang vandring. I fortællinger om sådanne grundlæggende migrationer er der ofte forskellige ingredienser som går igen. I den islandske tradition er bl.a. den frihedselskende norske stormand som ikke vil gå ind under Haraldr hárfagrís ág, et af de elementer som mødes mere end een gang. En anden komponent i fortællingerne om besiddelsestagningen af Island som mødes med en vis hyppighed, er fortællingerne om udkastning af højsædestolper.

Før dette motiv præsenteres i lidt højere detaljeringsgrad kan det det være nyttigt at minde om at det står hen i det uvisse præcis hvad højsædestolperne var. Det er det norrøne ord *þondvegissúlur* (pl.) som her oversættes med 'højsædestolper'. Ordet forekommer i de eksempler jeg har været i stand til at lokalisere, altid i pluralis, og en logisk konsekvens af dette må være at antage at højsædestolperne mindst har forekommet i par. Navnet forbinder stolperne med højsædet, og hvis de ikke har stået i direkte forbindelse med dette, så sandsynliggør navnet alene den antagelse at man dengang forestillede sig at højsædestolperne indtog en prominent plads i den bygning de nu engang stod i.

Højsædestolpeudkastning er et integreret element i landsnamsfortællingerne allerede fra fortællingen om den første succesfulde landnamsmænd, Ingólfr. Landnámabók beretter om hvordan Ingólfr og hans fosterbror Hjörleifr må forlade deres hjemtrakter, og om hvordan Ingólfr holder et stort blot eller offergilde for at finde ud af hvad der er gunstigt at gøre (*leitaði sér heilla um forlög sín*, SH7).³ Hvordan dette skal have foregået er igen uvist, men han fik i alle fald det svar at han skulle tage til Island (*fréttin vísaði Ingólfi til Íslands*, SH7). Om Ingólfrs fosterbror Hjörleifr står der derimod at han aldrig ville blote. Ikke desto mindre

¹ På trods af at teksten her er affattet på dansk vil min præsentation på sagakonferencen være på engelsk. En grundigere diskussion af emnet for denne artikel vil være at finde i Wellendorf (*in spe*). Der er også en mere omfattende bibliografi.

² De færreste i dag vil betragte højsædestolpeudkastningen som den beskrives i den islandske middelalderlitteratur, som en beskrivelse af en form for ritual der faktisk har været praktiseret af landnamsmænd som kom til Island i årene omkring 900 (og de praktiske problemer forbundet med et sådant ritual vil da også være betragtelige). Landnámabóks værdi som historisk kilde til landnamstiden er for nylig blevet kraftigt betvivlet fra arkæologisk hold (Adolf Friðriksson & Orri Vésteinsson 2003). I herværende artikel betragtes højsædestolpeudkastningen primært som et element i landnamsfortællinger, uden at der tages stilling til fortællingernes eventuelle historicitet.

³ Landnámabók citeres efter Jakob Benediktssons udgave (1986). S = Sturlubók, H = Hauksbók, M = Melabók.

følger Hjørleifr med til Island. Det første Ingólfr gør når han får landkending, er at kaste sine højsædestolper overbord. Igen er det ligesom offergildet gjort *til heilla* (SH7). Han sagde videre at han ville slå sig ned på det sted hvor højsædestolperne drev i land. Herefter steg han i land ved Ingólfshöfði. Hele Ingólfrs rejse er tilsyneladende forløbet uden problemer. Afslutningen af Hjørleifrs rejse går knap så glat. De følges ad til Island, men så snart de ser land, altså når Ingólfr kaster sine højsædestolper overbord, skilles de. Hjørleifr bliver drevet vestover af strømmen og løber tør for drikkevand. Om bord har Hjørleifr nogle irske trælle, og de laver en slags grød, kaldet *minnpak*, af mel og smør, for at slukke tørsten. Siden blev det dog regnvejr så de kunne samle regnvand i stedet. Deres *minnpak* mugner, og til sidst kaster de det overbord. Det driver i land på Island og giver navn til den nu ukendte geografiske lokalitet Minnpakseyrr. Denne korte fortælling er altså i bund og grund en ætiologisk fortælling om oprindelsen af et stedsnavn. Det er dog helt uproblematisk at læse et ekstra lag ind i den. Der er ingen tvivl blandt filologer om at *minnpak* er det samme som på irsk kaldes *menadach* (se Jakob Benediktsson 1986, 42 n. 5). I Dictionary of the Irish Language kan man da også læse at *menadach* er ‘gruel made of meal and water (or occas. butter)’ (Quin 1998, sv.). Ordbogen forklarer videre at det især er bodsøvende som indtager dette. Siden Hjørleifr ‘aldrig ville blote’ bør hans forhindrede landgang ses som en konsekvens af denne manglende respekt for de overnaturlige kræfter. De irske trælle ser ud til at forstå dette og laver en ret som normalt spises af bodsøvende, for at rette op på unladelsessynden. Om denne indirekte og ufrivillige bodsøvelse ville have gavnet Hjørleifr er uvist, for han når aldrig at indtage dette middel. Umiddelbart efter begynder det nemlig at regne, og da kan de samle det som drikkevand i stedet.⁴ Som vi ved, så går det ikke Hjørleifr ret godt, og allerede inden der er gået et år, har hans trælle myrdet ham. At Ingólfr derimod har heldet med sig må ses som en følge af hans korrekte optræden overfor de overnaturlige magter. Dette er i alle fald sådan Ingólfr fortolker det, for når han finder Hjørleifrs lig siger han: “Sådan går det alle som ikke vil blote” (SH8).

I mellemtiden har Ingólfr sendt sine trælle ud for at lede efter højsædestolperne han kastede overbord. Trællene leder længe, og det er først den tredje vinter efter deres ankomst til Island at de finder dem. Straks om foråret flytter Ingólfr til det sted hvor stolperne blev fundet. Forholdene på nye bosted er ikke lige så gunstige som andre steder, og en af Ingólfrs trælle klager over at de har passeret mange gode steder blot for at slå sig ned på et udnæs (*til illis fóru vér um góð heruð, er vér skulum byggja útnes þetta*, SH9). Trællens utilfredshed og Ingólfrs beslutsomhed er igen en indikation om Ingólfrs fromhed. Han gør som de overnaturlige magter viser han skal gøre, også selvom det ikke umiddelbart virker som om dette er fordelagtigt. I modsætning til Hjørleifr tror han ikke at han kan klare sig alene. Fortællingen om Ingólfr og Hjørleifr ender med at Landnámabók fortæller at Ingólfr var den berømteste af alle landnamsmænd. Han var den første som kom og slog sig ned på Island, og de øvrige landnamsmænd fulgte hans eksempel (*gerðu [...] eptir hans dæmum*, S9/H10). Denne afslutning gør det oplagt at se fortællingen om Ingólfr og Hjørleifr som en *dómisaga* eller et *exemplum*. Ingólfr er det paradigmatiske eksempel på korrekt opførsel som skal mane til efterfølgelse, mens Hjørleifr er det dårlige eksempel som skal afskrække fra efterfølgelse.⁵ Moralen ser ud til at være at mennesket ikke kan klare sig alene, men må lægge en del beslutninger i hænderne på overmenneskelige magter.

Ingólfrs efterfølgere...

I følge Landnámabók var der mange landnamsmænd som fulgte Ingólfrs gode eksempel. De fleste følger ham bare i en mere generel forstand og slår sig ned på Island, men der er også en

⁴ En alternativ tolkning af episoden gives af Sayers (1994, 134–135).

⁵ Dette stemmer i hovedsag overens med Meulengracht Sørensen (1974) analyse af episoden.

del eksempler på landnamsmænd som gør som Ingólfr og kaster deres højsædestolper i vandet. Det er Loðmundr inn gamli (S289/H250), Hrollaugr Rognvaldsson (S310/H270), Þórðr skeggi Hrapsson (H11) og Þórólfr Mostrarskeggi. Det sidste eksempel er interessant fordi at det her bliver tydeligt hvordan fortællingerne i Landnámabók udvikler sig. I den fragmentariske Melabók – den version blandt de bevarede som antages at give den bedste indikation om hvordan Landnámabók så ud i den nu tabte Styrmissbók-redaktion før udvidelserne i Sturlubók og Hauksbók (Jón Jóhannesson 1941) – fortælles følgende om landnamsmanden Þórólfr Mostrarskeggi:

Þórólfr Mostrarskegg nam land frá Stafá til Þórsár [ok] bjó í Hofsvági (M25).

Efterfølgende opregnes Þórólfrs efterkommere frem til nogle beboere på Melar.⁶ Dette afsnit om Þórólfr og hans efterkommere er ikke rigt på narrativt materiale, og fortæller ikke hvorfor han tog præcis dette område. I stedet angives blot den østre og vestre afgrænsning på landområdet med navnet på to floder, og en række af hans efterkommere bliver opregnet. Som hovedregel indeholder den bevarede del af Melabók ikke narrativt materiale, og det antages at Styrmissbók har været ligeså kortfattet.⁷ Sturla tilføjede en stor mængde materiale i sin redaktion af Landnámabók og gennemførte også en omfattende revision af dens struktur. Materialet til udvidelserne hentede han fra forskellige kilder bl.a. fra islændingesagaerne, som man på dette tidspunkt allerede var godt i gang med at skrive. Blandt afsnittene han udvidede, var også det ovenstående afsnit om Þórólfr Mostrarskeggi. Det supplerede han med materiale som for en stor dels vedkommende stemmer overens med Eyrbyggja saga, og som efter alt at dømme kommer netop fra denne saga. Nedenfor citeres et kort afsnit fra dette afsnit af Landnámabók. Indledningsvis fortælles der om Þórólfr at han flygtede fra kong Haralds undertrykkelse og var meget hengiven til Þórr som han dyrkede ivrigt. Teksten fortsætter:

En er hann [Þórólfr] kom vestr fyrir Breiðafjörðr, þá skaut hann fyrir borð öngvegissúlum sínum; þar var skorinn á Þórr. Hann mælti svá fyrir, at Þórr skyldi þar á land koma, sem hann vildi, at Þórólfr byggði (S85/H73).

Þórólfr sejler nu ind i fjorden, navngiver den, finder sine stolper, slår sig ned og bygger et hov helliget Þórr. Fortællingen giver også mange andre interessante detaljer om hans landnam, der i øvrigt ligesom i Melabók afgrænses af de to nævnte floder. Þórólfr følger altså lige som de andre landnamsmænd Ingólfrs eksempel, og er en god from hedning. Fremstillingen i dette tilfælde afviger dog fra de andre ved at stolperne beskrives som smykkede med et billede af Þórr og at de nærmest identificeres med Þórr – det er ikke stolperne, men Þórr selv som skal komme i land hvor han måtte ønske det.

Et par af Landnámabóks eksempler på højsædestolpeudkastning dubleres af materiale fra islændingesagaerne, og derudover findes der også to eksempler i Laxdæla saga og et i Kormáks saga som ikke har nogen parallel i Landnámabók. På baggrund af alle disse forekomster virker det sandsynligt at antage at højsædestolpeudkastningen blev en form for landnamstopos, som kunne tilføjes til en landnamsberetning for at vise at landnammet fandt som det sig hør og bør. Det virker ikke som om det er muligt at udpege et af teksteksemplerne som det primære og de andre som epigoner og derfor er det heller ikke muligt at datere den første forekomst. Ifølge Landnámabók er det selvfølgelig Ingólfr som var den første, og hvis hans fortælling også var den første som indeholdt en beskrivelse af højsædestolpeudkastning så må det være dateringen af denne fortælling som er det afgørende. Det er imidlertid ikke

⁶ At slægtsrækken føres frem til beboerne på Melar er et karakteristikum for denne redaktion af Landnámabók.

⁷ Man tænker sig alligevel at fortællingen om Ingólfr og Hjörleifr og højsædestolpeudkastningen fandtes i Styrmissbók (Jakob Benediktsson 1986, XCI), men det er vanskeligt at afgøre med sikkerhed.

muligt med sikkerhed at afgøre hvor gammel denne fortælling er, men Meulengracht Sørensen har argumenteret for at den stammer fra begyndelsen af det 12. århundrede (1974). Det var imidlertid ikke alle landnamsmænd som fulgte det gode eksempel Ingólfr. Kráku-Hreiðarr Ófeigsson fulgte delvis Hjørleifrs dårlige eksempel, og ikke uventet kunne det have gået ham bedre:

Þeir feðgar [Kráku-Hreiðarr og hans far] bjöggu skip sitt til Íslands, en er þeir kómu í landsýn, gekk Hreiðarr til siglu ok sagðisk eigi mundu kasta ǫndvegissúlum fyrir borð, kvezk þat þykkja ómerkiligt at gera ráð sitt eptir því (S197/H164).

Når det ikke går Kráku-Hreiðarr ligeså ilde som det gik Hjørleifr, må det være fordi der er nogle formildende omstændigheder. I stedet for at kaste sine højsædestolper overbord ville han nemlig blot påkalde Þórr, og så tage land der hvor Þórr mente han skulle gøre det. Hvis dette område allerede var optaget, ville han tage det med våbenmagt. Der sker dog det at hans skib forliser under landingen, og han får lov at blive vinteren over hos en vis Hávarðr. Denne Hávarðr råder ham til at skaffe sig land på fredeligere vis, og det ender med at den lokale stormand Eiríkr giver Hreiðarr et stykke land hvor han siden slår sig ned. Kráku-Hreiðarr får altså land til sidst, men kun som følge af en andens velvilje, og vi må sikkert forestille os at han indgik i en form for klientforhold til Eiríkr.⁸

Ovenstående eksempler viser at der er tale om et veletableret fortælle-mønster. Et interessant aspekt er imidlertid at disse fortællinger kan suppleres med en række andre fortællinger som må anses for at være varianter af den grundlæggende fortælling om Ingólfr. Landnamsmanden Hásteinn Atlason kaster sine senge- eller bænkestokke overbord (S370/H325), og de udfylder øjensynligt samme funktion som højsædestolperne i de andre fortællinger.⁹ Mere interessant er imidlertid Landnámabóks og Egils sagas fortælling om hvordan den aldrende Kveld-Ulfr dør midt på havet mens han er undervejs til Island. På dødslejet beder han om at man lægger ham i en kiste og kaster den i vandet. Hvis kisten driver i land på Island, skal hans søn Skalla-Grímr slå sig ned nær ved dette sted. Efter at være kommet til Island begynder Skalla-Grímr at undersøge landet, og det viser sig snart at Kveld-Ulfrs kiste er drevet i land lige i nærheden. Ikke overraskende slår Skalla-Grímr sig ned på dette sted (S29–30).¹⁰

...og forgængere?

De fortællinger som indtil videre har været fremdraget, har det til fælles at de alle uden problemer lader sig integrere i en hedensk kontekst, og forskere som Strömbäck (1970) og Birkeli (1943) har da også betragtet dem som udtryk for et hedensk ritual der blev praktiseret af landnamsmændene. Der er imidlertid to andre fortællinger i Landnámabók, de findes kun i H, som i deres grundstruktur svarer til højsædestolpeudkastningsfortællingerne men som forekommer i en tydelig kristen kontekst. Strömbäck betragter disse kristne versioner som sekundære varianter der viser “den gamla hedniska seden i kristen stöpfung”. Dette ser han som et tegn på “denna hedniska seds livskraft och stora betydelse” (1970: 138). Ser vi nærmere på de kristne varianter og deres mulige baggrund vil det imidlertid blive klart at den hedenske variant ikke nødvendigvis er den primære.

⁸ I andre tekster, som fx Eyrbyggja saga (udg. Scott 2003, 18), forbindes det at få land af andre eksplicit som mindre værdigt end at skaffe sig land på egen hånd.

⁹ Sæde- eller sengestokke var tilsyneladende også vigtige for landnamsmændene, og en række tekster, deriblandt Landnámabók (S89/H77) fortæller om hvilket besvær Eiríkr rauði gennemgik for at hente sine stokke tilbage fra Þorgestr Steinsson mjökisiglandi som havde lånt dem og ikke ville aflevere dem igen.

¹⁰ Fortællingen om Kveld-Ulfr mangler i H på grund af en lakune i håndskriftet (Jakob Benediktsson 1986, 69, n. 8).

Den ene fortælling handler om Ásólfur alskik (H21). Ásólfur præsenteres som kristen og som irlænder, og hans fortælling er en hel lille fortælling om en hellig mand.¹¹ Han er ikke landnamsmand i egentlig forstand, men kommer til Island og må bo forskellige steder som følge af konflikter med hedningene på Island der betragter ham som troldkyndig. Til sidst slår han sig ned på Akranes hvor han lever som eremit. Ásólfur bliver begravet efter sin død, og der følger en slags translationsberetning om hvordan hans jordiske rester senere bliver gravet op og skrinlagt i en ny kirke som bliver bygget på stedet hvor han boede. Kirken vies til den irske helgen Kolumkilli (Skt. Columba). For at kunne bygge kirken er det nødvendigt med træ, og en vis Illugi rejser udenlands efter materialet. Under rejsen tilbage til Island vil styrmændene på skibet ikke lægge til nær Akranes, så når skibet sejler mellem Reykjanes og Snæfellsnes kaster Illugi alt kirketræet overbord med en bøn om at det må drive i land der hvor Ásólfur ønsker det. Tre nætter senere driver alt træet i land ved Kirkjunes på Akranes, undtagen to stolper som lander længere mod nord. Det er umiddelbart klart at der er tale om samme type fortælling som de foregående, men der er alligevel en forskel, nemlig den kirketræet driver i land på et allerede kendt sted, nær Ásólfurs grav. På denne måde kan det siges at drive hjem i stedet for udpege et kommende hjem. Men det driver stadig i overensstemmelse med den overmenneskelige magts ønske, både Þórr og Ásólfur bestemmer hvor træet skal drive i land, og hvis Ásólfur havde fundet det opportunt at den kommende kirke skulle bygges et andet sted, så havde træet sikkert drevet i land der i stedet. Denne detalje om kirketræet betragtes som en tilføjelse i H, og den findes hverken i S eller i den største saga om Óláfr Tryggvason hvor fortællingen om Ásólfur ellers også findes. Hvor Haukr fik denne historie fra er uvist, men det er karakteristisk for hans version af Landnámabók at han udvider afsnittene som har med Irland at gøre.

Der er også en anden fortælling om en landnamsmand fra vest i H som heller ikke findes i S. Den handler om Órlygr Hrappsson (H15). Órlygrs farfar var Björn buna som var stamfar til så mange store landnamsmænd. Ligesom Ásólfur er Órlygr kristen, og han bliver pofostret hos den ellers ukendte biskop Patrekr på Hebriderne. Da Órlygr får lyst til at rejse til Island – hans rejse motiveres ikke på andre måder – udstyrer biskoppen ham med et kirkesamlesæt bestående af træ, klokke, en guldmønt og noget viet jord han kan lægge under en af kirkens hjørnestav som en slags alternativ kirkevielse (han vidste vel at der ikke ville være nogle biskopper på Island). Som en form for profeti beskriver biskoppen også grundigt hvordan landskabet ser ud på det sted hvor Órlygr skal bygge sin kirke på Island. Undervejs til Island følges Órlygr og hans fosterbror Kollr ad, men da det begynder at storme påkalder Órlygr Patrekr mens Kollr påkalder Þórr. Konsekvensen bliver at Órlygr kommer trygt i land i Patreksfjórðr, mens Kollr forliser. Næste forår sejler Órlygr mod syd og netop som han genkender den lokalitet Patrekr beskrev for ham, falder hans kirkeklokke overbord og synker til bunds. De sejler ind i fjorden og genfinder mirakuløst kirkeklokken i tangen på stranden. Landskabet passer til Patrekr's forudsigelse, og genfindingen af klokken er et utvetydigt tegn på at Órlygr er kommet til det rigtige sted. Igen er det tydeligt at fortællingen om Órlygrs landnam er skåret over samme læst som de øvrige beretninger der har været præsenteret ovenfor. Fortællingen afviger fra de øvrige fortællinger ved at objektet som falder i vandet ikke længere er et objekt som man med rimelighed kan forvente ville kunne flyde (og fortællingen antyder da heller ikke at den gør det). Ligesom Illugis kirketræ, dukker klokken op på et allerede fastsat sted, men ligesom de højsædestolpeudkastende landnamsmænd er det fastsatte sted ukendt for Órlygr før han faktisk ankommer der.

Der kan altså næppe være nogen tvivl om at de to sidst præsenterede fortællinger hvor landudvælgelsesmotivet forekommer i en eksplicit kristen kontekst tilhører samme tradition som fortællingerne hvor motivet er placeret i en hedensk kontekst. Det er tydeligt at samme

¹¹ Om Ásólfur se Jesch (1987) og Clunies Ross (2002).

motiv kan benyttes i forskellige religiøse kontekster så længe det numinøse objekt er tilpasset protagonistens religiøse overbevisning. Om der er tale om klokker, højsædestolper, sengestolper, forfædre eller kirketømmer gør egentlig ikke nogen forskel, funktionen er den samme.

Der er så vidt jeg ved ikke gjort meget ud af at pege på paralleller til dette højsædestolpeudkastningsmotiv i litteraturen om landnammet på Island,¹² men i det følgende vil jeg præsentere to. Den første findes i den hellige Ægidius' vita (BHL 93). Ægidius skal have levet i det syvende århundrede, først som eneboer nær Nîmes i Provence og sidenhen skal han have grundlagt et kloster. Hans kult var populær i middelalderen, og han blev også fejret i Nidarosliturgien. På et tidspunkt, det er uvist hvornår, blev hans vita også oversat til norrønt (udg. Loth 1967). Oversættelsen er kun fragmentarisk bevaret, men den passage som er den centrale i denne sammenhæng, er bevaret. Vitaet fortæller bl.a. om hvordan Ægidius rejser til Rom for at stille sit kloster under pavelig beskyttelse. I Rom ser han et par døre som er flot udskårne med billeder af apostlene. Han beder paven om at måtte tage dem med hjem og får også tilladelse til dette. I stedet for at transportere dem hjem til Provence på den almindelige måde kaster han dørene i Tiberen. Alle tror han er blevet afsindig, men når han kommer hjem til sit kloster får han at vide at et par smukt udskårne døre er drevet i land tæt ved:

EN hann [paven] jatade honum [Ægidius] þat. ok fieck honum til jarteignir þær er hann bad. enn þat uoru hurðir .ij. gioruar af tré þui er sipressvs heitir. Enn a [þei]m hurdum uoru Ristnar likneskiur hinna helgv postola. þær gaf hann Egidio til dyrdar mvsteris [hans] en hinn helgi Egidius tok hurdirnar ok let kasta <j> áá þáá er Tibvris heitir. [...] 000000 hendr gude ok bad hann styra þangat sem hann villde. Enn allir menn er stodv hia 000000 vera æran af þui vercki. er hann giorde. Enn sidan er hann hafde syst [ol]l sín erinde þaa hvarf hann heim aptur j Gallia. enn þáá er hann kom at stad þeim er heitir [Kab]ison ok dualdizt hann þar .iij. vetur þuiat hann var modr af ferdinne [...] enn sidann for hann heim til musteris sins. Enn suo ski[ott] sem hann hafdi heim komit. þáá var honum sagt at hurdir .ij. uoru Reknar þar áá straundunne [ok] at eingi madr hafdi fært þær. ok Ristnar ok þo unndarliga. Enn þegar hinn helgi Egidius heyrde þat [þa] vard hann feiginn ok þackade þat gude er hann let sier soma at styra hurdvnm heilum ok oskauddum suo langann veg siovar. Enn sidann baud hann at taka hurdirnar ok færa til musteris ok let hann Reisa þær upp j mvsteris dyrvnum til dyrdar musterinu [...] (udg. Loth 1969, s. 71–72).

På trods af at dette ikke er helt samme slags fortælling er der elementer som findes igen i de islandske fortællinger. Ligesom Illugis kirketømmer finder dørene hjem. På mirakuløs vis når de deres forudbestemte destination. Specielt interessant er det at dørene er udskårne med billeder af apostlene.¹³ Dette svarer til Þórólfrs højsædestolper som er udskåret med billeder af Þórr, og viser således endnu et eksempel på hvordan Eyrbyggja saga bundet af modeller fra den kristne forestillingsverden i sin fremstilling af norrønt hedenskab.

Selvom vi ved med sikkerhed at denne fortælling var kendt på Island i middelalderen, er det ikke nødvendig at argumentere for at det er præcis denne landnamsfortællingerne benytter som model, vigtigere er det at den viser at fortælle mønstret var kendt uden for Island også. Folk der har kendt højsædestolpeudkastningsfortællingerne vil når de hører vitaet (og omvendt, folk der har være bekendt med vitaet vil når de hører fortællingerne) kunnet have

¹² Bödl (2005, 159–160) nævner en tilsvarende fortælling om grundlæggelsen af Stockholm som findes i Messenius' *Sveopentaprotopolis* fra 1611, men eftersom Messenius vides at have været blandt pionererne når det gjaldt at benytte norrøne kilder, kan denne forekomst ikke med sikkerhed siges at være uafhængig af de norrøne forekomster.

¹³ I nærliggende latinske versioner som den latinske paralleltekst gengivet af Loth (1967) og af Treharne (1997, 25) er der tale om apostlene Peter og Paulus.

nikket genkendende til fortællingerne, og placeret dem inden for samme slags fortællingstype.¹⁴

Det andet eksempel er endnu tættere på de norrøne fortællinger, og det stammer fra den hellige Declans vita (*BHL* 2116). Declan blev ikke fejret i Nidarosliturgien, og der er ingenting som tyder på at hans vita nogensinde fandtes på norrønt. Declan var en irsk missionshelgen, og hans vita fortæller bl.a. om hvorfor han slog sig ned ved Ardmore nær Waterford: Han havde en lille sort klokke med magiske egenskaber som var blevet ham skænket af Gud, og engang han skulle krydse Det irske hav fra Wales, glemte en af hans følgesvende klokken på en sten på stranden. De er kommet til søs når de bliver opmærksomme på forglemmelsen, men Declan siger at de ikke skal fortvivle, og beder Gud om at han skal sende dem klokken. Og kort efter kommer en sten flydende gennem vandet med klokken liggende ovenpå. Stenen passerer dog skibet og Declan siger: "Lad os sejle efter stenen, og der hvor den flyder i land vil jeg lægge mit bispesæde." Stenen flyder forbi mange gunstige havne før den endelig lander på en lille ø som ligger lidt ud fra Irlands kyst. De går i land på øen, og selvom Declan er fuldt overbevist om at dette er det rigtige sted at slå sig ned og sender taksigelser til Gud, er der en af hans følgesvende som er mere skeptisk (udg. Plummer 1910 II, 42–43). Problemet er at øen er så lille at den ikke kan forsørge Declans mænd, men Declan er ikke desto mindre fast besluttet, og lidt senere bliver øen mirakuløst landfast.

Fortællingen har som nævnt mange ligheder med de ovenfor præsenterede fortællinger, og specielt interessant er det at et element som fortællingen om Ingólfr ellers er ene om, findes igen i Declans vita; nemlig den skeptiske holdning til protagonistens dømmekraft som udtrykkes af hans følge når han slår sig ned på et sted som ikke umiddelbart virker som et fornuftigt sted at bo. Men som begge fortællinger siden viser, handler protagonisten helt korrekt når han fromt adlyder de overmenneskelige magters bud.

Disse to paralleller til fortællingerne fra *Landnámabók* stammer fra hagiografisk litteratur, og de viser at fortællinger som på mange måder minder om de islandske landnamsfortællinger er mere udbredte end det normalt antages.¹⁵ Eftersom parallellerne forekommer i en utvetydig kristen kontekst bliver det naturligt at spørge sig selv om fortællingerne om Ørlygr og Illugi fra H virkelig er så sekundære som man har ment, og man kan overveje om det måske ikke snarere forholder sig omvendt. Der er ikke noget endelig svar på dette, og den fornuftigste tolkning er vel at se alle fortællingerne som forskellige udtryk for en og samme tradition. Denne tradition kunne da udformes på forskellige måder i kristne og ikkekristne kontekster uden at den ene gruppe nødvendigvis må betragtes som primær i relation til den anden gruppe.

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¹⁴ Det kan være at det er kendskab til højsædestolpefortællingerne som har bevirket at det norrøne vita lader Ægidius vente i tre år før han når frem til sin endelige destination (de andre versioner af vitaet jeg er bekendt med, lader ham blot vente tre nætter). Det er nemlig sådan i højsædestolpefortællingerne at de ofte tager en rum tid (flere år) før landnamsmanden finder søjlerne, og først derefter slår sig endeligt ned.

¹⁵ Jeg betragter det som sandsynligt at de to eksempler kan suppleres med flere hvis man leder systematisk efter dem.

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Kormáks saga and the naming of Scarborough – a likely story?

Diana Whaley, School of English, Newcastle University, England

Judging from *Kormáks saga*, two tenth-century Icelanders made an enduring mark on the English coast by founding and naming a stronghold that later turned into the famous Yorkshire castle, spa town and seaside resort of Scarborough.¹ It is a colourful story, and a gift to the tourist industry. But is it likely? Encouraged by an influential article (Gordon 1925), several distinguished toponymists have thought so, yet there are literary-historical reasons for scepticism (Arnold 2001) and there are alternative interpretations of the place-name, including one not previously considered. My purpose here is to weigh the onomastic and contextual arguments for a range of explanations, English and Scandinavian, and to consider how credible the saga evidence is. In the course of the discussion other English place-names, especially Flamborough, will come under review.

Starting with the sober facts of the early spellings, the forms in English documents are:

Escardeburch 1155x63, 1256

Scardeburch(h) -burgh 1159–1505

Scarðeborc c. 1200

Scartheburgh(h) 1208 etc.

Scareburgh 1414

Scarbrowgh 1573.²

The Icelandic form is *Skarðaborg* (*Kormáks saga*, *Flateyjarbók*; *Skarðabork* is found in *Orkneyinga saga*; Smith 1928: 105).

Prosthetic *E-* as in the earliest spelling is common at this period, cf. the *Domesday Book* (1086) spellings *Eschr(a)ingha* for Scrayingham and *Esneid* for Snaith (both Yorkshire), and can be ignored. This leaves forms that are reassuringly consistent, but there is uncertainty about the elements of the name and therefore about its genesis. The generic second element is clearly Old English (OE) *burh* or Old Norse (ON) *borg*, probably ‘fortification’, but there is some doubt as to which, while for the specific (the first or qualifying element), there are four main possibilities, two English and two Scandinavian, but all deriving from a Germanic root **sker-* and related to verbs meaning ‘to cut’: OE *sc(i)eran*, ON *skera*.

1) An obvious possibility is the ON masc. pers. n. *Skarði*, whose gen. sg. form *Skarða* would tidily produce the spellings we have: Middle English (ME) ones with medial *-e-* and ON ones with medial *-a-*. *Skarði* is a derivative of the word *skarð* n. ‘gap, cleft’ (de Vries 1977, *s. v.*) Whether this could be the *Skarði* of *Kormáks saga* is discussed below. The name is recorded fairly widely in the early Nordic world, as a forename (Lind 1905–15) and a nickname, apparently referring to a hare-lip or a cleft in the chin (Finnur Jónsson 1907: 205–6; Lind 1921). It is not recorded independently from England (to judge from Searle 1897 and *PASE*), and although it is possible in names such as Scarcliffe, and Scarcroft, the English generics in those names favour an English specific (see below).

This anthroponymic solution for Scarborough is the prevailing one in standard sources such as Smith (1928) and the dictionaries of Ekwall (1960), Mills (2003) and Watts (2004); Mills qualifies with ‘probably’. It does, however, entail either that an ON pers. n. forms a hy-

¹ National Grid Reference TA 0488

² All early spellings are cited from Watts 2004 unless otherwise specified. Alphabetical dictionaries of place- and personal names are cited without page number.

brid with OE *burh*, or that the original generic was ON *borg*, both of which situations would be possible but unusual in the toponymy of England.

2) The ON appellative *skarð* n. ‘cleft, gap, notch’ refers to gaps between hills in many early Icelandic and Norwegian place-names (e.g. several instances in *Landnámabók*, and see Rygh 1898), and Jørgensen (1995) assumes it in the Danish Skartved. It also appears in Scandinavian-influenced parts of England, e.g. Aysgarth, N. Yorkshire (*Echescard* 1086) or Scarth Hill, Lancashire (*Scarth* c. 1190). It is not a good solution for Scarborough, however. Since the gen. sg. is *skarðs* and no spelling of Scarborough shows inflectional *-s* one would have to assume the gen. pl. *skarða*, and to identify two or more gaps in the landscape to explain the name; the question of topography is addressed below.

3) A further possibility is that the specific of Scarborough is OE *sceard*, the cognate of ON *skarð*, with approximately the same meaning: a cleft, gap or pass between hills. Again, it is neuter, with gen. sg. *sceardes*, so again the *-a-* and *-e-* spellings could be explained as reflecting the gen. pl. *scearda* ‘of or characterised by gaps’, but a single gap is also possible if the medial vowel is epenthetic. The assumption of vocalic epenthesis is an explanatory convenience which is rarely discussed and would repay more systematic investigation, but such an assumption seems to be made by Mills (2003) and Watts (2004) for Scarcliff(e), Scarcroft and Shardlow (see below). As for the initial [sk], this could easily result from OE *sceard*: witness the two Yorkshire Skiptons, which are Scandinavianised Shiptons, far from the sea and unequivocally derived from OE *scē(a)p* ‘sheep’ rather than ON *skip* ‘ship’; and the Icelandic spellings for Scarborough would represent the standard treatment of a foreign place-name by Nordic speakers: compare the early eleventh-century form for Canterbury, *borg Kantara* in Óttarr svarti’s *Höfuðlausn* 10/4.

A topographical etymology for the name Scarborough is encouraged by the presence of striking landscape features. The town is overlooked by a dramatic promontory which rises steeply, then levels out around 70m. above the sea, and is all but cut off on the landward side by the steep escarpment of Castle Dyke(s). It is the site of prehistoric settlements, a fourth-century Roman signal station, a late Anglo-Saxon chapel, and a Norman castle which became the stage for a critical siege in the English Civil War. The headland is flanked by fine bays to the north and south. However, if the specific is ON *skarð* or OE *sceard* we need to look for one or more clear gaps in the landscape at Scarborough and none of these features would qualify.³ A possible candidate is The Valley, formerly Ramsdale and its upper continuation Burtondale, which runs north-south on the landward side of South Bay. It is flanked to the east by Weaponness and Oliver’s Mount, and to the west by a lower ridge of rising ground, so it might count as a *skarð* or cleft, especially at the point where it pierces the low hills which fringe Scarborough from the south. Gelling *et al.* 1970 (followed by Field 1980 and Room 1993) suggested that the name Scarborough originated in ON *skarð* ‘gap’, referring to this valley, and ON *berg* ‘hill’. To propose *berg* ‘hill’ when the spellings clearly point to OE *burh* or possibly ON *borg* is presumably motivated by the fact that if the promontory defences are the *burh/borg* they would be rather far – around a mile, depending on the point of measurement – from the *skarð*. However, it seems rash to ignore the unanimous evidence of the spellings, and the same difficulty could be overcome by assuming that the *burh/borg* is not the spectacular headland site but the prehistoric fortifications on Oliver’s Mount, for which there is historical evidence though not, so far, firm archaeological proof (Hall & Pearson 1995). A better solution still, however, is to assume that the *burh/borg* is, after all, on the headland, and that the *sceard/skarð* is not a separate feature from the *burh* but rather an attribute of it; that way we do not need to argue The Valley into a more convincing cleft than it really is. Evi-

³ Arnold (2001: 11), citing Pearson, favours the Castle Dyke(s) escarpment, but this would be a *scar* rather than a *skarð*.

dence for this would include *ðæt lytle sceard ðæt is on burhhlineas* ‘the small cleft that is on the fortification banks’ in a set of Worcestershire charter bounds (assuming scribal error or late grammar, since *-um* rather than *-as* would be expected; *LangScape*: L1599).

4) This brings us to the related possibility, not previously mooted but in my view preferable, of the OE adjective *sceard* ‘notched, cleft, hacked, damaged’. This occurs in tenth-century Northamptonshire charter bounds in *tō/of þām sceardan beorge* ‘to/from the notched hill or mound’ (*LangScape*: L623). A small group of comparanda may well contain *sceard* as either noun or adjective: Scarcliffe, Derbyshire (*Scardeclif* 1086, *Scardeclive* 1226, *Scartheclive* 1235); Shardlow, Derbyshire (*Serdelau* 1086, *Sherdelawe* 1231); and Scarcroft, W. Yorkshire (*Sc- Skardecroft(e)* 1160x75–1252, *Skarthecroft(e)* 1174–1348), whose generics are, respectively, OE *clif* n. ‘cliff, bank’, OE *hlāw* m. ‘hill, tumulus’, and OE *croft* m. ‘enclosure, small enclosed field’. It will be noted that the spellings of the specific match those for Scarborough (*Scarde-* 1159–1505). Scarcroft would suggest that the adj. *sceard* can apply to structures as well as natural features, and that is confirmed in the OE poem *The Ruin*, 3–5: *hrofas sind gehrorene, hreorge torras [...] scearde scurbeorge, scorene, gedrorene* (ed. Klinck: 103), ‘Roofs have fallen in, towers collapsed [...] storm-protections [are] notched, cut, perished’. Just as the poem views (probably) Roman Bath through Anglo-Saxon eyes, the place-name Scarborough could describe the Roman signal station in disrepair as (*sēo*) *scearde burh* ‘(the) notched fortification’.

The generic element in Scarborough is clearly either OE *burh* or ON *borg*, but more likely the former. As a place-name element OE *burh*, with its ME reflex, refers most often to Roman, Anglian or post-Conquest defended sites (though seemingly not to Viking fortifications) and produces dozens of simplex and compound place-names in *b(o)rough*, *burgh*, *bury* etc. It collocates with a wide variety of specifics, but rarely with ON words or pers. ns (Smith 1956: *s. v. burh*; Parsons and Styles 2000: *s. v. burh*), though two of the possible examples are on Yorkshire coast: Guisborough (with pers. n. Gígr) to the north of Scarborough and Flamborough (discussed below) to the south.

ON *borg* ‘fortification’ or ‘(terraced or domed) hill’ is quite common in the major and minor p. ns of mainland Scandinavia (Sandnes and Stemshaug 2000; Jørgensen 1995: *s. v. borg*), and to a lesser extent in Iceland. But definite examples are very rare in England, even in areas of strong Scandinavian influence, so that a name such as Scarborough is on the whole much more likely to be an English than a Scandinavian coinage.

The founding of Scarborough is, as E. V. Gordon (1925) showed, narrated in two medieval narratives – a rare luxury –: the early thirteenth-century skald saga about Kormákr preserved primarily in the fourteenth-century *Möðruvallabók*, AM 132 fol., and the Middle English *Chronicle* or *Story of Inglande* by Robert Mannyng, which is preserved in two late medieval manuscripts, Petyt 511 and Lambeth Palace 131, and located precisely in space (Bourne, Lincolnshire) and time (May 25th, 1338, 4 p.m). Gordon drew on these sources to argue that Scarborough was named after Þorgils, brother of Kormákr, Skarði being his nickname.⁴ The saga does not quite state either of these things, and therefore some scrutiny of the detail is in order. Chapter 27 of *Kormáks saga* reads:

En þeir bræðr herjuðu um Írland, Bretland, England, Skotland, ok þóttu inir ágæztu menn. Þeir settu fyrst virki þat, er heitir Skarðaborg. Þeir runnu upp á Skotland ok unnu mǫrg stórvirki ok hǫfðu mikit lið; í þeim her var engi slíkr sem Kormákr um afl ok áræði (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson: 298–9).

⁴ Gordon was followed by Smith (1928: 105–6), Ekwall (1960), Mills (2003) and Watts (2004), as well as Wilson (1970: 39–40). Varying degrees of scepticism are expressed by Gelling *et al.* 1970; Parsons *et al.* 1997: 129; Arnold 2001.

But the brothers [Kormákr and Þorgils] raided in Ireland, Wales, England [and] Scotland, and were considered most outstanding men. They were the first to establish the fortification called *Skarðaborg*. They went ashore in Scotland and performed many great deeds and had a large force; no-one in that army was equal to Kormákr in strength and determination.

The saga author does not explicitly state that *Skarðaborg* was named after anyone, but his audience might well have linked it with the Skarði who is addressed in three of the skaldic stanzas embedded in the prose (sts 53–55, in chs 18–19). The name *Skarði* is consistently spelled in the manuscripts, and secured by *hendingar* and alliteration; and the stanzas, along with others in the saga, are evidently older than the saga prose and quite possibly authentic (Gade 2001: 73–4). They are spoken by Kormákr, who contrasts his situation – valiantly battling the cold or overwhelming numbers in a fight – with the cosy marriage bed of his one-time fiancée Steingerðr. Skarði is clearly a close companion of the speaker, addressed as *sessi* ‘bench-mate’ in st. 54 and incited with the words *skulum tveir banar þeira* ‘we two shall be their slayers’ in st. 55.⁵ Then in the prose following each stanza, Þorgils, Kormákr’s trusty companion, responds with a comment on his brother’s obsession with Steingerðr. It therefore seems that the prose author equated Skarði with Þorgils, though again he does not do so explicitly, and the nickname occurs nowhere else in the saga’s prose or verse.

It hardly needs saying that *Kormáks saga* has little serious pretension to historicity, despite its broadly historical frameworks of Icelandic genealogy and Norwegian royal history. Its chronology, if taken seriously, would raise problems for the claim about Scarborough, since it allows very little time for the brothers to found and name a place of lasting significance. They are in Bjarmaland (Permian) with King Haraldr gráfeldr (‘Grey-cloak’) in AD 966, and Kormákr dies in 967. Hence they have hardly more than a year to complete a busy schedule of raiding all over the British Isles, found Scarborough, then return to Scotland and the death of Kormákr.

Moreover, if Þorgils founded Scarborough, which by c. 1200 was so imposing a feature of the North Sea coast, and which is mentioned in a number of other sagas (Arnold 2001: 13, n. 30), he gets surprisingly little recognition for it. He is not recorded in *Landnámabók* (ch. S62/H50; Melabók, fol. 12r), though Kormákr and his mother Dalla are, nor in other sagas except for one brief appearance in a genealogical passage in *Egils saga* (ch. 80) and another, as the joint owner of a good fighting horse in *Grettis saga* (chs 15, 29, 30).

Robert Mannyng sets the founding of Scarborough in a very different context. A British (*Breto(u)n*) king named Engle comes with his champion Skardying (variants *Scardying*, *Scarthe*), a giant in strength, to challenge the English, who have overrun his ancestral realm. Engle and Skardying terrify their enemies into submission and the land is named *Inglond*. Robert continues, citing a lost tale by Thomas of Kendal, with these lines:

*When Engle had þe lond þorgh,
He gaf Skardying Skarburgh
toward þe north bi þe se side,
a hauen it is, schippes in to ride.
fflayn was his broþer, so sais a tale
þat Thomas mad of Kendale;
Of Scarthe & fflayn Thomas seys,
What þey were how þey dide what weys.*

(Ed. Sullens: 440–1, ll. 14199–204; final couplet Lambeth 131 only.)

⁵ The edited text by Finnur Jónsson (1912–15: BI, 78) emphasises the bond with the phrase *hollr hjordrifr* ‘faithful sword-wielder’, but *hollr* is an emendation, and *Möðruvallabók* has ‘allz’.

This is clearly far from proving the Icelandic hypothesis for Scarborough.⁶ The action would presumably take place around the fifth century, not in the Viking Age, and Scarborough is named from a defending British hero not an invading Nordic one, though the names *Engle* and *Skardying* hardly look Brittonic. But such quibbles are not the point: the whole account appears so garbled that it does not prove anything.

E.V. Gordon ingeniously equated the two pairs of brothers *Scarthe* and *ffleyn* with Porgils and Kormákr, and proposed Flayn as the eponymous founder of Flamborough,⁷ twenty miles south-east of Scarborough. The early spellings for this are:

Flaneburc -burg 1086

Fleynesburg(h) -ai- -ei- C12th-1251

Fleynburg(h) -ai- -ay- -ei- [1114x24] c. 1300, 1244–1518

Flaymburgh 1461, *Flamburgh(e)* 1511, 1552,

The range of interpretative options is similar to that for Scarborough: a mix of personal names and appellatives, Scandinavian and English. All the spellings of the specific except the first are compatible with ON *fleinn*, which could be:

1) An ON pers. name *Fleinn*, quite probably a nickname, rare and of uncertain meaning but possibly ‘hook, barb, arrowhead’ or denoting someone who is grinning, ashamed or sharp-tongued (Lind 1921; Fellows-Jensen 1968). It has been suggested for the Normandy place-names Flainville and Fleinville (Mawer 1920: *s. n.* Plainfield). E. V. Gordon believed that the Flayn brother of Skarthe mentioned by Robert Mannyng was actually Kormákr, for whom no nickname is recorded but whose impetuous personality and skill with words would fit the epithet ‘barb, arrow’, and he proposed a neat and romantic scenario of two Icelandic brothers founding two coastal *borgs* twenty miles apart, and an intriguing situation in which Kormákr’s nickname was remembered in England but not in Iceland. However, one can only agree with the sceptics (and there are more in this case) that it is much more likely that the legendary Fleinn/Flayn was conjured up from the place-names, just like the eponymous Grim of Grimsby in the Middle English *Havelok the Dane* or Port and his sons, conjured up from Portsmouth in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* annal for 501.

2) An ON appellative, *fleinn* m. ‘hook, barb’, or ‘arrow’ in poetry. It can be used topographically in the sense ‘point or tongue of land’, as apparently in the Danish place-name Flenø and perhaps Flensborg (Fellows-Jensen 1972: 145), and this was the explanation of Flamborough favoured by Lindkvist (1912: 44–5). The word might occur in two English Plainfields, one in Cambridgeshire (*Flaynefelde* 1335, Reaney 1943: 272) and one in Northumberland (*Fleynefeld* 1272, Mawer 1920), and in Flanchford, Surrey (*Fleynesford(e)* 1279, Gover *et al.* 1934: 305, who suggest an explanation for the unlikely incidence of a Scandinavian name in Surrey).

3) And once again it is worth considering an OE possibility: *flān* m. or f. ‘arrow’, cognate with ON *fleinn*, probably in a topographical sense.⁸ The *Domesday Book* spellings of 1086 might favour that, and the shortened [flam] in the modern form is if anything more suggestive of origins in *flān* than *fleinn* (though Smith 1937: 105 records the pronunciation [flēm-]). An OE *Flān-* could have been Scandinavianised to *Flein-* just as names in OE *stān* ‘stone’ appear as *Stain-*, e.g. Stainburn, N. Yorkshire (*Stanburne* [972x92] C11th, *Sta(i)nburne* 1086). Further, an OE specific would sit well with the OE generic *burh* indicated by the spellings and assumed by most scholars. The element *flān* is rare at best (there is no entry in Smith 1956), but there is a possible example in Flanesford, Herefordshire (*Flanesford* 1346), which lies

⁶ Gordon’s case (1925: 321–2) is also slightly overstated in that it claims incorrectly that Robert’s information on Scarborough came from a ‘Mayster Edmond’ as well as Thomas of Kendal.

⁷ National Grid Reference TA 2270.

⁸ There is no evidence of a pers. n. **Flān*, e.g. in Searle 1897 or in *PASE*.

below the arrow-shaped spur of Leys Hill.⁹ If the specific in Flamborough is topographical *flān* there is an obvious feature for it to refer to: the dramatic chalk arrow-point of Flamborough Head. It is all but cut off by Danes' Dyke, whose name belies its prehistoric origins, and which is doubtless the *burh* here.

In order to weigh up the relative likelihood of OE or ON (even Icelandic) naming, it remains to review, briefly, the broader contextual factors, and one of these is the wider onomastic picture in the Scarborough area. Linguistically Scandinavian elements are quite plentiful in the major and minor place-names. Fellows-Jensen's maps show a few *-by* names nearby (1972: 176) and a few hybrids of Scandinavian specific and OE *tūn* 'farmstead, village' (184, 185), though no names in *þorp* (178) and no Scandinavian-style sculpture (221). Similarly, the minor names in Binns 2001 show the currency of ON elements such as *kelda* 'spring', *holmr* 'island of drier ground' and *gata* 'street', though they are greatly outweighed by English ones. Thus a Scandinavian name for Scarborough is perfectly likely; but so too is an English one, to match nearby Cloughton and Burniston, or the names of other major harbours on the same stretch of coast: Filey, Bridlington, and *Streoneshalh*, if that was the earlier name of Whitby.

Turning to the historical contexts, it will have been noted that the first known spellings for Scarborough are twelfth century. There is no documentary record of the place from the Anglian or Viking periods, and it does not appear in *Domesday Book*. This would be compatible with the view that it was not a major Anglo-Saxon settlement but was a minor fortification erected by Nordic warriors. However, Yorkshire in pre-Conquest times is poorly represented anyway, and Scarborough's absence from *Domesday Book* may be due either to the repeated batterings it received in the two decades before 1086, or to the fact that it belonged to the manor of nearby Falsgrave at the time. As to the Icelandic hypothesis, however diverse and elusive the contexts which produced Scandinavian toponyms in England,¹⁰ the giving of a place-name by Icelanders and by casual raiders would be an altogether extraordinary scenario,¹¹ and the timing would be unusual at best. The dividing up of lands in Northumbria and Mercia by the great Danish army is placed by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in the 870s, and the period of Norwegian kingship in York (forty miles west of Scarborough) belongs to the early tenth century, ending with the fall of Eiríkr blóðøx ('Bloodaxe') in or around 954; Yorkshire was an English earldom by the 960s (as Gordon concedes, 1925: 321).

It is hard, moreover, to imagine that there was no significant settlement at Scarborough during Anglo-Saxon times. It had one of the two best anchorages in the long cliff-fringed sweep of coast between the rivers Tees and Humber, and as already noted the high promontory between the two bays is an outstanding defensive site. The archaeological evidence from the headland for both Anglian and Viking periods is disappointingly scant but finds include an eighth or ninth century jet cross and ninth-century strap end, which could support an early Anglo-Saxon dating for the chapel, even a monastic site as early as the seventh century, a parallel to Whitby and Hartlepool (Bell 1998: 310–11; Pearson 2005: 5). This introduces the intriguing possibility that the word *burh* refers here not solely or even mainly to a defensive site but to a monastic one (see Parsons *et al.* 2000: 77, 78; Draper 2008: 242–3 for other possible examples).

To conclude, *Kormáks saga* does not explicitly say that Skarðaborg was named from Skarði or that Skarði is Þorgils, the brother of Kormákr, but it is reasonable to think that the author intended these links to be made, and he definitely says that the brothers were the first to build defences at Scarborough – erroneously, and indeed practically all the evidence is

⁹ I am extremely grateful to Dr John Freeman for drawing my attention to this.

¹⁰ See Abrams & Parsons 2004 for a useful recent appraisal.

¹¹ Binns (2000: 8) makes a noble attempt to envisage one.

against the Icelandic hypothesis. Þorgils was not famous in Iceland outside the saga, and even if the saga author did not invent him, he seemingly put together the Skarði addressed in *Kormákr's* stanzas with the English place he knew as Skarðaborg and on that basis gave the brothers a quick and productive trip to Yorkshire. Similarly, the tale reported by Robert Mannyng is an etymological fiction extrapolated from the place-names Scarborough and Flamborough. It is still possible that men called *Skarði* and *Fleinn* gave their names to Scarborough and Flamborough, but they were not the ones presented in medieval saga and romance, and that being so the two place-names should be uncoupled. But in each case there are other solutions for the place-name, including English ones which are attractive not least because known cases of ON *-borg* are extremely rare even in Scandinavianised parts of England, while a combination of OE *burh* and with an OE specific is entirely likely. Flamborough is probably 'the fortification by the arrow-like headland', and if the specific is OE *flān* it helps to establish a rare topographical use of this word. There must have been an Anglian settlement of some sort at Scarborough, on the headland, in the harbour area or both, and it may have been named *scearde-burh* 'the fortification (or conceivably monastic site) by or with the gap' (if *scearde* is the noun with epenthetic vowel), or *sēo scearde burh* 'the notched fortification' (if *scearde* is a weak adj., perhaps the safer assumption). Since the main candidate for a topographical cleft, the modest valley of Ramsdale/Burtondale, is unconvincing and quite far from the main defensive site, I would suggest that it is the fortification itself that is characterised by a cleft, as the signal station may well have been in post-Roman times. Thus the *Kormáks saga* account remains as a picturesque tale, but an unlikely one, and setting it aside opens up more interesting onomastic and historical possibilities.

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The Development of Skaldic Language

Tarrin Wills, Centre for Scandinavian Studies, University of Aberdeen, Scotland

The skaldic editing project, published as the series *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, has recently completed the second of its two-part volumes, covering the poetry of the later kings' sagas (Gade 2009), adding to the volume of poetry on Christian subjects published in 2007 (Clunies Ross 2007). Thus a large proportion of the corpus, some 2000 stanzas and fragments, have been entered into the project database and published. In addition, another 600-odd stanzas have been entered from other parts of the corpus. These are not ready for publication, but still provide a sufficiently representative sample to perform some types of quantitative analysis.

The material in the database at the time of writing represents around 45% of the corpus to be edited by the project. It includes poetry in a range of metres, composed across six centuries, from the beginning of the ninth century to the end of the fourteenth. The database includes a range of quantifiable features of the language of the poetry. The purpose of this paper is to present some initial findings on the use of two of these features. These are provisional data and any conclusions will need refinement as the remainder of the corpus is edited and entered into the database. Despite this caveat, the material in the database can be considered representative of the unedited portion of the corpus, with some exceptions, particularly poetry of the 9th and 10th centuries and poetry composed in Iceland.

The database is based on the contributions of editors, who supply edited text, a prose word order and translation, plus a full textual and critical apparatus. The editions are entered by assistants and are fully checked by the coordinating editors. The printed volumes are extracted directly from the database. A number of features, such as kennings and *heiti* are marked up by editors and become machine-readable in the database. In addition, I and Irene García Losquiño have added dates of composition for the poetry, based on the contributing editors' introductory material. Datings are based on largely internal criteria for the Christian poetry and narrative context for the poetry in kings' sagas. We have also entered the locations of composition or first recitation of the verses, usually in kings' sagas, where known, based on the prose sources.

This paper uses these data to study complexity in skaldic poetry. There are two principal types of feature that combine to create skaldic complexity: intricacy of the metrical form; and complexity of the poetic language, particularly diction and reordering of words. One observes readily that rather than metrical intricacy demanding correspondingly simple language, the reverse seems to be true: linguistic complexity appears to increase with metrical intricacy. This observation will be tested against the quantitative information in the database.

Skaldic complexity appears to change over the six centuries that the skaldic project engages with. Scholars have observed such changes as the increase in the strictness of metrical rules after the earliest period (e.g. Turville-Petre 1976:xix), and the decreasing innovation in use of kennings over time (Kuhn 1983:229–30). The data do not provide adequate quantifiable features to test these phenomena individually, but we can test related phenomena.

Defining Skaldic Complexity: Linguistic Features

Speaking from my own early experiences, when approaching skaldic poetry for the first time the student tends to notice first the complex language rather than the metrical intricacy, particularly the kennings and *heiti*, the complicated ordering of words and phrases, and specialised vocabulary. These features can be measured quantitatively in the database.

Kennings are marked up by contributing editors, including component parts (sub-kennings) and referents. They are indexed automatically when the editions are entered into the database. Kennings can be measured as: the number of kennings (including *tvíkent* and *rekit* kennings); the total number of referents, that is, the total number of kennings and sub-kennings; and the complexity or length of kennings, that is, the number of kennings and sub-kennings divided by the number of main kennings. The most useful variable here is the total number of kennings: it combines both the length and number of kennings into a single measure. Kennings, as with the other features described here, are weighted according to the length of the verse (both the number and length of lines) in which they are found. In the data presented below, all features are normalised to the standard of the eight-line *dróttkvætt* stanza: a four-line fragment, for example, with three kennings would therefore be counted as six in order to compare with other stanzas.

Although the order of sentence elements within a *helmingr* is by no means random, generally more complex syntax is used in skaldic metres than in Eddic ones (Gade 1995:214). The database does not directly mark up sentences or other syntactic structures, but the ordering of words can be measured in by comparing the verse word order with a putative prose word order created by contributors. The printed edition includes a prose word order (as in Finnur Jónsson 1912–15 B), which is linked in the database directly to the verse word order. Two numbers represent the order of each word in the verse and prose versions respectively. The database can produce a measure of reordering by identifying whether the next word in the verse text is the same as the next word in the prose word order. An index is produced by dividing the number of reordered words by the total number of words or metrical positions in the stanza. This measure does not show much variation, largely because all poetic language involves some level of reordering of words and other elements. Skaldic poetry is characterised particularly by reordering within the full extent of a four-line *helmingr*. To produce a more accurate measure, the database identifies for each word whether the next word in the prose order is separated by more than one line in the verse. The number of these greatly reordered words in each stanza can then be used to compare this feature in other stanzas. This variable is here referred to as ‘line-skip’. This measure of word reordering is not entirely objective, as it is based on the partially subjective prose word order created by the editor of the verse. However, it does prove to correlate well with an intuitive sense of reordering in different examples of poetry and metres.

Generally, it appears that verses with a high number of kennings have correspondingly few line-skips; and verses with a high number of line-skips have few kennings. For example, Sigvatr Þórðarson’s *Nesjavísur* 11 (Finnur Jónsson 1912–15 BI:219) is heavily reordered, with twelve line-skips, but only one kenning; Þjóðólfr Arnórsson’s *Sexstefja* 29 (Gade 2009:104), on the other hand, packs six kennings into four lines with only one line-skip. However, the overwhelming majority of verses, those with fewer than around eight of either feature show a correspondence between the two features: as the number of kennings increase, so does the number of line-skips. This apparent relationship is most likely due to the need to adjust the word-order in order to accommodate kennings.

However, there is a high level of variation possible for each feature: skalds could compose verses with a high density of kennings and very few adjustments to the order of stanzas; and skalds could include a great deal of reordering of words without necessarily including kennings. The two variables, although related, can be treated as independent markers of skaldic complexity.

Defining Skaldic Complexity: Metrical Features

There are a number of metrical forms represented in the skaldic database. The different forms provide a useful means to study the relationship between metrical intricacy and other features. Skaldic metres include a number of required metrical features in addition to those found in the common Germanic verse form on which they are based. It is not the purpose of this paper to describe in detail the various metrical forms, but I will give a short description of the features that contribute to skaldic complexity. Most, but not all, skaldic metres require the alliterating stave in an even line (known as the *höfuðstafr* ‘head-stave’) to alliterate with two words in the preceding line (the *stuðlar* ‘props’), whereas the common Germanic form only requires one alliterating word in each. This additional requirement contributes to the intricacy of the metre. In addition, most skaldic metres involve some sort of rhyme or assonance. In *dróttkvætt* and most forms based on it, odd lines have half-rhyme (*skothending*) and even lines have full rhyme (*aðalhending*). In such metres there is therefore a requirement to select two words in each line which conform to this requirement. End-rhyme is used in some metres (*runhent*), creating a restriction on word choice of one word per line. Skaldic metres are generally restrictive in the number of syllables that can occupy the unstressed positions, such that normally only one such syllable is allowed. Skalds have other resources at their disposal to comply with this restriction such as eschewal of pronouns and the cliticisation of certain particles, pronouns and verbs. Nevertheless, syllabic restriction contributes to metrical intricacy.

In order to compare different metrical forms, the intricacy of each metre must be given a comparable value. I use here a figure which represents the density of metrical features, that is the concentration of rhyme, alliteration and syllable-counting in each line, as measured in metrical positions. Table 1 outlines a measure of intricacy of different skaldic metres found in the skaldic database. For details of the different metrical forms, see Turville-Petre 1976:xviii–xl and Gade 2009:xcviii–cii.

Table 1. Metrical types in database by complexity

Group	Metre	Lines in data- base	Syllabic?	Positions per line	Alliteration per long line	Rhymes per line	Intricacy index
High	<i>Tøglag</i>	126	Yes	4	2–3	2	1.25
	<i>Haðarlag</i>	160	Yes	5	3	2	1.20
	<i>Hálfhnept</i>	264	Yes	5/6	3	2	1.10
Standard	<i>Dróttkvætt</i>	9626	Yes	6	3	2	1.00
Low	<i>Kviðuhátt</i>	1270	Yes	3/4	2	0	0.86
	<i>Runhent</i>	188	No	4	2	1	0.75
	<i>Hrynhent</i>	3315	Yes	8	3	2	0.75
Eddic	<i>Fornyrðislag</i>	947	No	4	2	0	0.50
	<i>Ljóðahátt</i>	1487	No	4/4/5–6	2	0	0.42
	<i>Málahátt</i>	187	No	5	2	0	0.40

The intricacy index is calculated in this way: the average minimum alliterative staves per pair of lines, plus the minimum rhymes per line, plus one for the further restriction of syllable-counting, divided by the average number of positions per line into which the features must fit. Note: *tøglag* does not strictly use two alliterating words in the odd lines, although this is usually observed in the third line of a *helmingr*. The form of *runhent* given is the type based on *fornyrðislag* only. The metrical rules applying to *málahátt* and *ljóðahátt* are difficult to define. Here the description of *ljóðahátt* given by Turville-Petre (1976:xv–xvi) is used; *málahátt* is based on the descriptions by Gade (2009:ci) and Gordon (1957:317). Other metres are based largely on the descriptions in Gade 2009:xcviii–cii.

The index does not take into consideration other restrictions created by the metres. The rules of some metres, such as *haðarlag* or even *dróttkvætt*, result in restrictions on the use of line types as defined by Sievers (1893). Such restrictions represent a further level of intricacy.

The distribution of stressed and unstressed syllables in different metres may also be significant.

A further limitation of the system used here is that verses are labelled in the database with a metre regardless of the level of adherence to the rules of the metre. It has been observed that the use of *hendingar* in the earliest poetry is less strict than in later poetry (cf. e.g. Turville-Petre 1976:xix). The intricacy index given above does not, however, reflect that development.

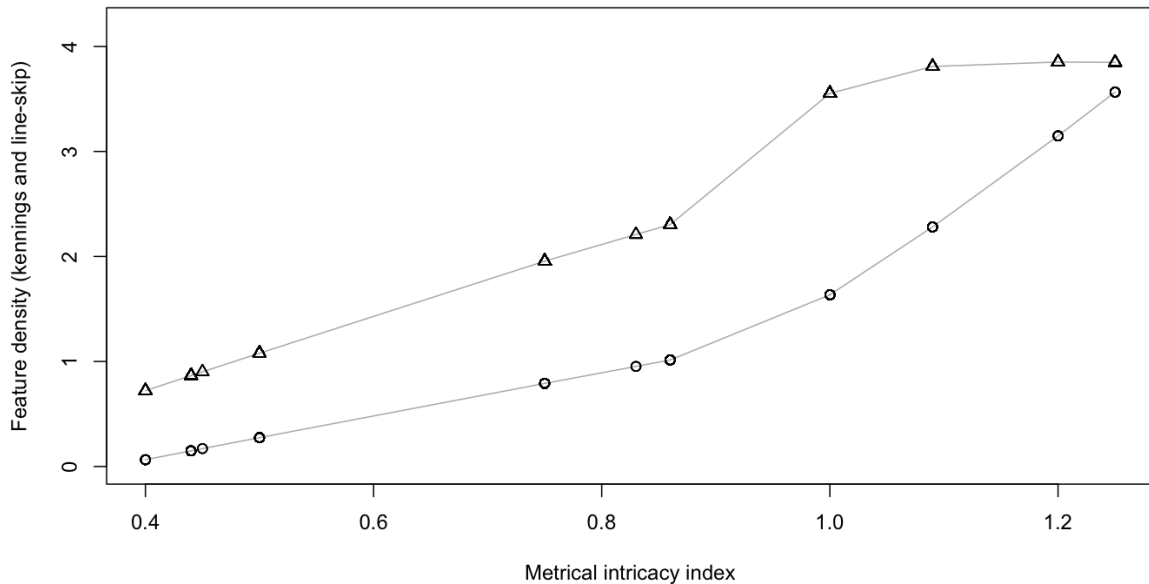


Figure 1: Density of kennings (circles) and line-skip (triangles) according to metrical intricacy.

Despite these limitations, the index above can be used to compare metres roughly according to their intricacy. Figure 1 plots the two features of kennings (the number of kennings per 48 metrical positions, that is, relative to a *dróttkvætt* stanza) and line-skip (the number of points at which the prose word order jumps more than one line in the verse text, again relative to a *dróttkvætt* stanza).

It is clear from the graph that the use of kennings and word reordering is in proportion to metrical intricacy as measured here – the more intricate the metre, the more kennings and line-skips are used. (Two additional minor metrical forms are represented in the graph, *draught* and *dróttkvætt*-based *runhent*, calculated in the same way as the other metres.)

The reason for this correspondence between metrical intricacy and the two linguistic features, kennings and line-skip, needs to be established. The most likely explanation is a dependency, that is, intricate metres require complex language in order to satisfy the metrical requirements. It is unlikely that the reverse would be true: that a skald would compose in an intricate metre in order to accommodate kennings or word-orders that s/he had already devised. However, there is so much variation within each metre (not shown) that a strict dependency is unlikely: we have seen that poets could use a large amount of one feature without resorting to the other.

The Use of Linguistic Complexity

While the use of kennings and word reordering (as measured by line-skip) is generally related to the intricacy of the metre, there is considerable variation within a particular metre which is

unlikely to be random. We have two independent variables, date and place of composition, which can be used to test whether they produce the observed variation.

The majority of edited material in the database can be dated by internal or external means, as outlined in the critical apparatus to the skaldic edition. The database now contains (partially unpublished) poetry covering the six centuries of skaldic composition. The dating of the poetry can be used to study the use of skaldic language over time. In order to compare complexity features accurately, the data in the following section will be restricted to poetry composed in the *dróttkvætt* metre only.

Figure 2 shows the development of the two features of kennings and line-skip according to date of composition. The kenning density of stanzas (kennings per eight lines) is represented by a circle for each stanza, and the line with dots represents the overall tendency. Line-skips per eight lines are represented by triangles, with the general tendency shown by the line with triangles.

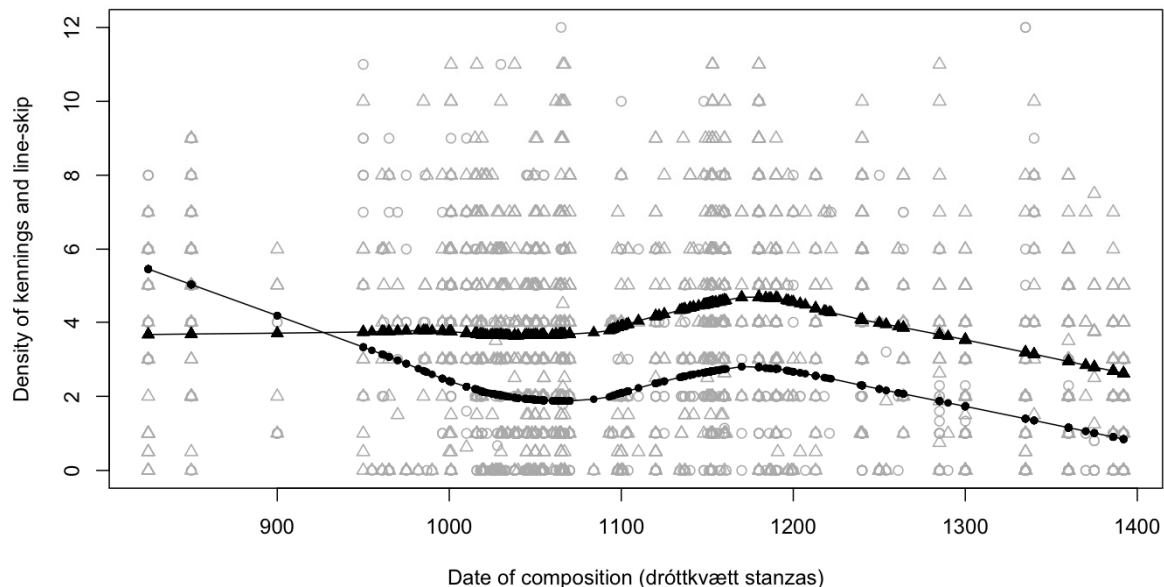


Figure 2: Kenning and line-skip density according to date of composition.

There is only a limited amount of poetry composed before c. 950 in the database, and the data for that period could be unreliable. As with the other examples of incidence of kennings and line-skip, there is an enormous amount of variation in the number used, with a great many stanzas at each period either using a great many kennings or line-skips or none at all. These measures cannot on their own be used to date poetry.

What is clear from the graph is that the use of the two features on average follows the same trajectory at all points after c. 1000. There is a clear decline in both features in the middle of the eleventh century, with a secondary peak towards the end of the twelfth, and then decreasing gradually towards the end of the fourteenth century. Overall, the complexity of the language of *dróttkvætt* decreases over time.

The reason for the observed drop in the 11th century could be due to the Christianisation of Scandinavia. Kennings are frequently reliant on references to the pagan mythological system which may have become unpalatable to early Christians. The decline in the use of kennings

would likely have led to a decline in the reordering of words. However, although the data is scarce for the period before c. 950, it appears that the decline in the use of kennings began from the earliest point of skaldic composition.

It is possible that the influence of particular missionary kings affected the use of kennings in skaldic poetry: for example, Turville-Petre observes that Óláfr Haraldsson shows antipathy towards traditional skaldic composition, probably due to the pagan references (1976:lviii–lix). However, Óláfr is unlikely to be responsible for the decline in the use of kennings: firstly, the decline, at least the decline in kenning density, begins well before his reign and martyrdom; secondly, he uses himself 19 kennings in the six *dróttkvætt* stanzas reliably attributed to him, a rate (over 3 per stanza) considerably higher than the overall tendency during his reign or later; thirdly, the average number of kennings per stanza in praise of him is also above the general tendency for that period (2.6 kennings per stanza), and is higher than his successors such as Magnús inn góði (r. 1035–47, with 1.72 kennings per verse in his praise), Haraldr harðráði (r. 1046–66, with 1.5 kennings per stanza) and Óláfr kyrri (r. 1066–93, with 1.48).

The related observation that Hallfreðr composed few kennings, and the suggestion that this is due to his patron being the Christian missionary king, Óláfr Tryggvason (Turville-Petre 1976:lviii), conflicts with the data on both counts. Hallfreðr composed some 129 kennings in the 28 *dróttkvætt* stanzas attributed to him in the database, at 3.69 per eight lines, and there are some 99 kennings in the 28 *dróttkvætt* stanzas in praise of Óláfr Tryggvason in the database, at a rate of 3.88 per eight lines. Thus both Hallfreðr’s poetry and other poetry patronised by Óláfr Tryggvason include an above-average rate of kennings for the period. The decline in use of kennings cannot be attributed to the influence of individual kings alone.

The reason for the 9th–11th century decline in the use of kennings may have little to do with Christianisation. It is possible that as *dróttkvætt* encomium developed, the ability to conform to the metrical rules without resorting to complex kennings and word-order may have been prized.

Although there are limited data for the period 800–950, some observations can be made. I have shown that there is a general relationship between metrical intricacy and linguistic complexity. This relationship does not seem to apply to kennings in early poetry, if we assume that that poetry is less strict in its use of internal rhyme and is therefore less intricate by the measure given above. Instead, for the first two centuries of *dróttkvætt*, the increasing strictness of metrical rules corresponds to a decline in linguistic complexity.

Geographical Distribution of Features

The use of kennings and line-skip in verses is related not only to the intricacy of the metre used, but also to the period of composition of the verse. This relationship does not, however, fully account for the variation observed in the use of these features at all periods and in all metres. What produces such variation is difficult to identify, but in this section I will look at the geographical distribution of these features in order to identify possible regional variation in the use of kennings and line-skip.

The database includes the place of composition and/or first recitation of verses where the place can be identified in the prose sources. Most of this material belongs to the second volume, that is, poetry relating to kings after Óláfr Haraldsson. This geographical information can be used as an indicator of the taste – here, for complexity – of a particular regional audience or patron. An interactive map of the rate of kenning and line-skip according to the place of composition is available on the project database at:

<http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au/db.php?table=php_reports&id=137>.

There is no great regional variation in the overall use of the two complexity features (kennings and line-skip), but there is a general decrease in complexity away from the centres of

power in Norway, Jylland and Orkney: Dublin, the Hebrides, southern and eastern Denmark, Sweden and North Trøndelag have lower concentrations of these two features. This indicates that skaldic complexity increases with Norwegian influence. Western Norway shows a slightly lower amount of skaldic complexity than other areas of Norwegian control.

We see a similar geographical pattern in the use of kennings compared with line-skips. Very few kennings are composed for audiences in Denmark, even where word-order complexity is high, and none in southern and eastern Denmark. Other outlying regions also lack kennings: the Hebrides, Ireland, North Trøndelag and Sweden, although many use relatively complex word-order. Western Norway, particularly Hordaland, shows an unusual preference for line-skip over kennings when measuring skaldic complexity; other areas of Norwegian influence tend to show a higher use of kennings as compared to line-skip.

This distribution can be seen in the works of individual skalds. The map includes four *lausavísur* (1, 5, 6 and 7 in Gade 2009) by Þjóðólfr Arnórsson composed in or around Niðaróss (Trondheim): these have 16 kennings in 24 lines: over five per 8 lines. His *lausavísur* composed at York (numbers 10 and 11 in Gade 2009) include only one kenning in sixteen lines. One *lausavísa* composed in Denmark, and other stanzas associated with Denmark (those concerning Magnús Ólafsson in Danaveldi) have fewer than one kenning per stanza. Rögnvaldr jarl Kali Kolsson's *lausavísur* composed in Shetland and Orkney have over four kennings per stanza; those composed abroad (including western Norway) have fewer than two kennings per stanza.

Conclusions

Some of the observations here accord with a more impressionistic observation of the language of skaldic poetry: the complexity of language increases with the intricacy of the metre, but over time the use of complexity features (kennings and word-order) generally declines, even within a particular metre. Data from the forthcoming volumes of the poetry from *Snorra Edda* and on the earlier kings may affect the findings regarding the earliest poetry, but these interim findings show a decline in the use of kennings between the ninth and eleventh centuries, followed by a secondary peak in towards the end of the twelfth century. This decline is associated with Conversion, but Christianisation is probably not the primary cause.

The use of kennings and complex word-order are largely related, and the two features show a remarkable similarity in the level of use in the four centuries after c. 1000. Nevertheless, there are distinct regional variations in the use of the two features. These differences may account for some of the large variation in kennings and line-skip observed in different metres at different periods.

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Parody and genre in sagas of Icelanders

Kendra Willson, Scandinavian Section, UCLA

Introduction

The question of parody in sagas of Icelanders has been debated especially since Helga Kress (1987). It has been proposed that certain sagas are parodies of others, or parodies of the genre as a whole, or satires of the world-view represented by the sagas.

Much of this discussion seems to assume relationships among texts according to the model of modern literary intertextuality, and seems linked to the legacy of the “book prose” school. Claims about parody in sagas should take into account the nature of textual creation in a medieval, semi-oral context.

The sagas which have been called parodic are generally among the “post-classical” (Arnold 2003) or late sagas. Late sagas as a subgenre are thought to show greater “novelistic sensibility” (cf. Halldór Guðmundsson 1990) than other sagas; they are arguably more literary, more self-consciously polyphonic, and more reflective on the social milieu they portray and on their own genre (cf. e.g. Vésteinn Ólason 1998: 224). However, the relative dating of sagas has proven unstable in the history of scholarship.

Debate over *Fóstbræðra saga* focuses on whether it is intended to satirize the heroic ethos of the sagas or represents “undirected” humor which exploits readers’ generic sensibilities through stylistic incongruities, hence making the target of humorous commentary the saga genre rather than the heroic ethos. If parody targets form, satire content, the question is whether the saga is parody and/or satire. Scholars also disagree as to the extent to which the stylistic shifts represent “an author in total control of his material” (Vésteinn Ólason 1998: 225) versus a struggle between the author and the tradition.

Króka-Refs saga has been viewed as a parodic pastiche of distorted motifs from other sagas (rather like the parodic “multiple merged legend,” cf. Goldstein 1999: 18). It can, however, also be viewed as a narrative which presents traditional elements in a comic vein, with only a few of its episodes dependent on knowledge of other texts or “generic sensibility” (Goldstein 1999: 18) for their humor.

The problem of parody in medieval and traditional literature

The difficulty of identifying irony and parody in older texts has often been noted (e.g. Bakhtin 1981: 68–69). It is also a commonplace that medieval notions of text, authorship, originality and use of written and oral sources differ from prevailing understandings in modern times. Bakhtin (1981: 69) says that in the Middle Ages, “The boundary lines between someone else’s speech and one’s own speech were flexible, ambiguous, often deliberately distorted and confused.” Bakhtin (1981: 50–51) claims that the irony which results when words from one source are used by another writer who has a different attitude is one root of “novelistic discourse.”

As sagas prefigure the novel in many ways, there is a tendency to read them as novels. Furthermore, a modern audience raised on modernist texts, in which “the problem of intertextuality (intertextual dialogue) appears as such” (Kristeva 1986: 42), may tend to see similar pre-occupations in older texts, where they may be interestingly present in modern readers’ response but not in the authorial intention which studies of medieval texts often aim to reconstruct.

The study of parody in traditional literature is difficult because of the fluid nature of the object. According to Goldstein (1999: 19), “parody finds its humour in its reflection of tradi-

tion bearers' generic sensibility" by both acknowledging and defying expectations. Both specific stories (e.g. Goldilocks) and traditional genres (such as the wonder tale generally) can be parodied.

Terminology

Definitions of parody and satire vary. The Icelandic term *skopstæling* covers both parody and travesty (Jakob Benediktsson 1983: 252). Parody (*parodía*) is "eftirlíking á alvarlegu skáldverki eða bókmenntagrein, gerð til þess að gera fyrirmyndina hlægilega eða í gagnrýnisskyni" ("an imitation of a serious literary work or genre, done in order to make the model ridiculous or for purpose of critique," Jakob Benediktsson 1983: 252). Parody can either be "meinlaust grín" ("harmless fun") or "hvöss ádeila" ("sharp satire") (Jakob Benediktsson 1983: 252). Lehmann (1922: 11–13) points out that *parody* originally referred to a work which borrowed the form of another work, independent of the tone. Parody focuses on form (a text, author or genre) and satire on content (social critique). However, the distinction between form and content is not absolute. "Höfundurinn er 'stofnun'" ("the author is an 'institution,'" Ástráður Eysteinnsson 1990: 174), and authors, texts or genres which are perceived as having canonical status may become targets of satire.

Contributions to the literature on parody in sagas have failed to distinguish clearly among: parody of a specific text or part of a text; parody (spoof) of a genre; parody of a motif from traditional stock; satire (social critique through humor) and comedy using traditional motifs. They have been too quick to regard as parodies of specific texts what I would prefer to view as use of traditional motifs in a comic vein.

Steblyn-Kamenskij (1978–1979) claims it is anachronistic to attribute "satire" of social institutions to sagas, as he believes that satire requires individual authorship. However, not all scholars accept Steblyn-Kamenskij's evolutionary model.

Parody and inconsistency

Internal inconsistency is one of the main clues to identifying parody from text-internal evidence. If a "parody" creates a consistent world, then there are few indications that it began as a parody.

To take modern examples, a spoof like *Bored of the Rings* (Beard and Douglas 1969) makes sense only in relation to J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954–55). The consistent textual world to which *Bored of the Rings* refers is the other text and its tactic for undermining the loftiness of the original and creating humor is to shatter the consistency.

Goldstein (1999: 18–19) points out that the "multiple merged legend" (18), incongruously combining motifs from several other legends, is most often a parody. She gives an example:

Craig Shergold is a ten year old boy dying of cancer. Before he dies, he would like to set the world record for receiving the most Neiman Marcus Cookie Recipes. You can help Craig by sending an irate fax to Lexis-Nexis demanding that they remove all traces of your mother's maiden name from their executive washroom wall. They will respond by sending an e-mail labelled "Good Times" to the computer controlling Craig's life support system. When Felipe Ling, the technician operating the computer opens this mail, his hard drive will be overwritten with thousands of credit card invoices for \$250, erasing the last bit of evidence that Hillary was seen on the grassy knoll when JFK was shot, thus allowing world domination by Bill Gates and his trilateral commission cronies who are eating fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches in the back elevator with Elvis. (Goldstein 1999: 21–22)

The motivation for this bizarre juxtaposition of motifs is specifically the allusion to other legends, hence external to this text but within the tradition of contemporary legend. A receiver encountering this story who was unfamiliar with the allusions would doubtless be puzzled but would probably perceive that it was intended as humor.

By contrast, parodies which create a consistent internal world may not signal their parodic status and may outlast their models. The song “Charlie on the MTA” (lyrics by Jacqueline Steiner and Bess Lomax-Hawes) originated as a parody of 19th c. songs “The ship that never returned” and “The wreck of old #97” (<http://www.mit.edu/~jdreed/t/charlie.html>), but “Charlie” presents a consistent universe. Most people who hear the song today probably do not know the 19th c. songs, and perceive “Charlie” as a humorous satire of convoluted public transit systems, but not as a parody of another text.

A text may also echo or reverse aspects of another text without being a parody in the modern sense. For instance, the plot of the late *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* is a distorted mirror, which might be called a parody, of the earlier *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*. Both difficult, moody heroes are precociously brutal in childhood and grow up to perform deeds of strength and poetry and to feud with Scandinavian monarchs. However, while Egill, living in the pagan period shortly after the settlement of Iceland, is successful in his ventures, Grettir, born into a peaceful agrarian Iceland at the time of the conversion, is a misfit, a Viking hero in a post-Viking age (like the antiheroes of *Fóstbræðra saga*). Both sagas contain a great deal of humor and satire of the heroic ethos. Overall, Grettir evokes more pathos than Egill and his story is more of a tragedy.

While there is clearly a relationship between the plots of these sagas, no reference to *Egla* is necessary to understand *Grettla*. A traditional plot structure available to saga authors is used in different ways in *Egla* and *Grettla*, but although there is an intertextual relationship between these two tragicomic sagas I would not call one a parody of the other.

Fóstbræðra saga as parody and/or satire

Helga Kress (1987) views the late (14th c.) *Fóstbræðra saga* as a parody of earlier sagas of Icelanders and a satire of the heroic image presented in them. A distinctive characteristic of *Fóstbræðra saga* are so-called “klausur” (“digressions”) in “learned style,” many of which present details from medieval medicine and which inject comedy into scenes of high drama. Meulengracht Sørensen (1993: 395) gives an example from the *Flateyjarbók* version of the saga:

Egill varð stórhæddr, er hann sá mennina hlaupa eptir sér herklædda. Ok er hann varð handtekinn gerr, þá skalf í honum leggr ok liðr fyrir hræzlu sakir. Öll bein hans skulfu, þau sem í váru hans líkama, en þat váru cc beina ok xiiii bein; tennr hans nötruðu, þær váru xxx. Allar æðar í hans hörundi pípruðu fyrir hræzlu sakir, þær váru cccc ok xv. En er þeir kenndu manninn hverr var, þá þóttusk þeir vita, at hann mundi eigi drepit hafa Þorgrím, því at Egill var engi maðr. Rann þá hræzla af honum sem hita af jární. [Meulengracht Sørensen’s translation: Egill was terribly frightened when he saw the men dressed for battle running after him. And when he was seized, he trembled for fear in legs and limbs. All the bones in his body shook – 214 bones that was; his teeth chattered – there were 30 of them. Every vein in his flesh quivered with fear – 415 in all. But when they saw who the man was, then they felt sure that he would not have killed Þorgrím, for Egill was not a man at all. Fear then left him as heat leaves iron. (Meulengracht Sørensen 1993: 395)]

In *Flateyjarbók* this passage is followed by a verse which describes Egill’s trembling body parts (“tennr, bein ok æðar” “teeth, bones and veins”) but does not count them. This verse is generally regarded as a late interpolation. The standard *Fornrit* edition of the saga (which

mainly follows *Möðruvallabók*) relegates the verse (and the anatomical tally) to footnotes (233–234n) and it is not included in the recent translation (1997: II, 378).

These digressions were long regarded as a blemish to the saga. Many have tried to show that they are not original to the saga but are later interpolations, but philological evidence seems to suggest that they are original and the saga itself late (Jónas Kristjánsson 1972, cf. however Andersson 2000: 7, von See 1981: 443–460 and Meulengracht Sørensen 1999: 160–162). Helga Kress claims that the “klausur” are a deliberate stylistic device in the saga and serve the function of shedding satirical light on the heroes and their heroic deeds (“vísvitandi stílbragð í sögunni og gegni því hlutverki að varpa skoplegu ljósi á hetjurnar og hetjudáðir þeirra,” Helga Kress 1987: 275)

Helga Kress (1987) seems to be claiming that *Fóstbræðra saga* is at once a parody of the genre and a satire of the heroic ethos. Similarly, Schach (1960) argues that the Icelandic romance *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar* parodies the Norwegian *Tristrams saga* and Arthurian romance in general; it “draws the ultimate and often ludicrous consequences of the behavioral tenets propounded in courtly romance” (Kalinke 1985: 348). These behavioral codes are intrinsic to the genre, so the distinction between textual parody and social satire is undermined. Like *riddarasögur*, *Íslendingasögur* also portray heroic behaviors which would have seemed anachronistic or antisocial to the 13th c. audience.

Helga’s article has provoked much discussion. Ástráður Eysteinnsson (1990: 178) feels it is one of the greatest innovations in saga studies in recent years (“heyri til hvað mestra tíðinda í rannsóknum Íslendingasagna síðustu árin”). However, some scholars think Helga’s interpretation anachronistic. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1993), Peter Hallberg (1991) and Vésteinn Ólason (2003) all suggest that Halldór Laxness’ (1952) novel *Gerpla*, a parody of *Fóstbræðra saga*, has influenced Helga and others to view the saga itself as parody or satire. Meulengracht Sørensen (1993: 396) says that “since the appearance of *Gerpla* it has been difficult *not* to see parody in *Fóstbræðra saga*.” Ástráður Eysteinnsson goes so far as to title his piece “Er Halldór Laxness höfundur Fóstbræðrasögu?” (“Is Halldór Laxness the author of *Fóstbræðra saga*?” Ástráður Eysteinnsson 1990).

Meulengracht Sørensen (1993), however, feels that the humor of the “digressions” is “un-directed” in Steblin-Kamenskij’s (1978–79) sense. “If *Fóstbræðra saga* is to be read as a parody, it would have to be counted a satire on the heroic ideal which the foster-brothers represent. But we cannot accept this as a plausible interpretation, for there can be no doubt at all that central episodes of the saga were earnestly intended to display heroism at its height.” (Meulengracht Sørensen 1993: 402) For instance, when Þorgeirr kills fourteen attackers and slays his own killer while impaled on the latter’s spear, “a modern reader may of course find such a scene grotesque, but it would be utterly anachronistic to credit a medieval audience with the same response” (403). Meulengracht Sørensen sees the disjuncture in values as occurring, not between the world described in the saga and that in which it was written, but between the former two and that of the modern reader.

Vésteinn Ólason (2003: 199–200) concludes that in spite of everything, *Gerpla* is a novel and *Fóstbræðra saga* is a saga; in general “*Íslendingasögur* appear to offer no textual evidence to suggest that authorial attitudes to this material have been consistently ironical, as if we were talking of novels” (1998: 224). However, Vésteinn also points out (2003: 201n) that it is easier to distinguish the author from the narrator in *Gerpla* than in *Fóstbræðra saga* because we can compare statements in *Gerpla* with those which the writer makes, for instance, in essays and letters where he is presumed to express himself without irony (though with Halldór Laxness this may not be a safe assumption). In the case of an anonymous 14th c. Icelandic, irony must be identified through inconsistencies within the text.

Both opposing positions on the *Fóstbræðra* author’s sophistication may be overstated.

Despite the skeptical voices, Helga has expanded her theory to claim that the “carnival” which is so obvious in *Fóstbræðra saga* characterizes the entire genre of sagas of Icelanders and is one of its primary identifying features (“karnivalið sem er svo augljóst í Fóstbræðra sögu einkennir alla bókmenntategundina Íslendingasögur ok er eitt helsta kennimark hennar,” Helga Kress 1996: 8). The implications of this claim for the analysis of *Fóstbræðra saga* have not been fully explored.

Króka-Refs saga as pastiche

Króka-Refs saga, a 14th c. saga which is comic in tone and probably has little historical core, has been seen as a parodic pastiche of motifs from other sagas. I prefer to read it as making comic use of traditional motifs. In many cases, the more familiar tragic sagas which *Króka-Refs saga* is said to parody may represent a more innovative use of the tradition.

Frederic Amory (1988) views *Króka-Refs saga* as an “imitation” rather than a “bona fide saga” (1988: 16) and postulates that it has been constructed out of pieces also found in other sagas, including *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, and *Auðunar þáttur vestfirzka* (19). Although Amory discusses these points as if he were speaking of borrowings from specific sagas, he acknowledges that “*Króka-Refs saga* builds on certain scenes in the saga literature which were to hand in the traditional repertoire of the family saga” (1988: 19).

Martin Arnold (2003), who calls *Króka-Refs saga* “the parodic saga” (2003: 182), sees additional humor in ways in which the saga takes motifs which are developed to high drama in other sagas and presents them in a less dignified mode.

Arnold points out similarities between the first killing in *Króka-Refs saga* and the slaying of Einarr in *Hrafnkels saga*. While the shepherd Einarr Þorbjarnarson is killed by his master Hrafnkell for riding a horse that was dedicated to Freyr in order to hunt for Hrafnkell’s lost sheep, Barði is slain by his boss Þorgerðr’s neighbor Þorbjörn for keeping Þorbjörn’s sheep off Þorgerðr’s land. Arnold also notes verbal correspondences between these episodes:

Besides ... the killing of an unarmed shepherd and the prominence of a figure named Þorbjörn, the narrations of the two killings also share certain lexical and descriptive features. Thus, in *Hrafnkels saga*: ‘... þá hljóp hann af baki til hans ok hjó hann banahögg. Eptir þat riðr hann heim við svá búit á Aðalból ok segir þessi tíðendi.’ (p. 105) (... then he leapt from horseback towards him and dealt him his deathblow. After that he rides home directly to Aðalból and tells of this event.); and in *Króka-Refs saga*: ‘Þorbjörn högg þá Barða banahögg ok dregr hann síðan inn í skálann ok riðr síðan heim ok sagði, hvat í hafði gertz’ (p. 123) (Then Þorbjörn dealt Barði a deathblow and afterwards drags him into the shed and rides home and told what had taken place.) These echoes of the earlier saga are, in isolation, scarcely audible but in total they are unmistakable. (Arnold 2003: 203–204)

I grant that there is a relationship between the texts, either through written transmission or traditional formulae. The slaying in *Króka-Refs saga* does not have the same pathos as in *Hrafnkels saga*, since the victim in *Króka-Refs saga* is an undeveloped character while Einarr in *Hrafnkels saga* is trapped by fate and has the reader’s sympathy. The episode in *Króka-Refs saga* is entertaining, but not necessarily “funny,” and it need not be seen as a response to *Hrafnkels saga* specifically – rather, the slaying of a shepherd is a motif available to begin saga plots.

Arnold also discusses a parallel between *Króka-Refs saga* and *Víga-Glúms saga*. Both reluctant *kolbitr* heroes are provoked to their first killings by the trespass of a neighbor’s livestock; they are goaded by their mothers; and they use spears inherited from dead or absent

family patriarchs. Arnold sees the differences in tone between the sagas as marking *Króka-Refs saga* as parody:

As is the case with the *Fóstbræðra saga* doubling, the younger saga's borrowing from *Víga-Glúms saga* is distorted and exaggerated. Refr's mother insults and denigrates her slovenly son while Glúmr's mother simply expresses her despair; Glúmr travels stylishly in Óðinic blue on horseback to confront the family oppressor while Refr proceeds on foot, appearing more as a child at play and attracting the mockery of those who see him. (Arnold 2003: 204–205):

Again, I see here a traditional motif which is presented in a lighter tone in *Króka-Refs saga*, with less psychological depth, but it is not clear that *Króka-Refs saga* is “parodying” *Víga-Glúms saga*.

Arnold views the bed-closet slaying in *Króka-Refs saga* as a parody of that in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. Refr goes to challenge the old man Þorbjörn in his bed and ends up killing Þorbjörn when no compensation is forthcoming. The bed-closet killing in *Gísla saga*, by contrast, is a highly developed incident in which nocturnal killer Gísli pierces his sister's husband with a spear after first arousing them by placing his hand on his sister's breast.

the bed-closet killing in *Gísla saga* [...] is one of the most resonant and memorable in saga literature and the effectiveness and intensity of the scene rests partly on the chilling contrast between the murderous nocturnal intruder and the somnolent vulnerability of the victim. In *Króka-Refs saga* this contrast is deliberately narrowed and weakened in order to produce the parodic allusion to the event. When Refr visits his victim, Þorbjörn, he approaches not under cover of night nor with any effort at concealment. Instead, the drama of the invisible avenger is entirely caught up in the perception of Refr as a harmless idiot. Neither is Refr's victim cosseted in sleep, as is Þorgrímr in *Gísla saga*, rather we are presented with an old man (although far from infirm, as he claims) taking his daytime nap. In place of the sleepy sexual stirrings of Þorgrímr, inadvertently excited by Gísli's fumbings, there is the farcical picture of an aged villain frantically trying to dress, larding blandishments as he does so, and intent on dispatching the intruder. Finally, where Gísli escapes as a thief in the night, having secured the building against pursuit, Refr simply shuts the bedcloset door and leaps ingloriously into a woodpile to avoid detection. (Arnold 2003: 205–206)

Killing in a bed-closet is also found, for instance, in *Vatnsdæla saga* (also as a comic digression). The natural interpretation here is that it is *Gísla saga* which is innovative, developing the traditional motif of an inglorious encounter to an intensely evocative tragicomic scene rife with incestuous and homoerotic tension (cf. Meulengracht Sørensen 1986).

Arnold says the parodic nature of *Króka-Refs saga* can be seen in the fact that the episodes in question are unmotivated and do not contribute inevitably to an integrated plot in the way that their putative “models” in other sagas do (2003: 204, 206). As with Goldstein's (1999) “multiple merged legend,” the motivation for an episode is found in the other text to which it refers. However, many sagas are episodic in whole or in part and the episodic structure fits the “picaresque” tone of *Króka-Refs saga* (cf. Arnold 2003: 208).

There are certainly elements in *Króka-Refs saga* which are humorous parodies of saga commonplaces. An obvious example is Refr's garbled confession of the killing of Grani, which echoes the ambiguous oath of *Víga-Glúms saga* and the skaldic confession of *Gísla saga* and spoofs skaldic diction and medieval etymology.

Vit Sverðhúss-Grani urðum saupsáttir í dag, er hann vildi fjallskerða konu mína. Ek stórkeraldaða hann í gegnum strábeygisauga. Þá langhúsaða ek, herra. Þá langhúsaði hann, herra. Þá hreiðballaða ek hann, herra, en hann skipskeggjaði þá við. Þá lyngknappaða ek hann, herra, un-dir einn skíðgarð skammt í braut, ok váðvirkta ek yfir hann at lyktum. (*Króka-Refs saga* 1959:

153) [George Clark's translation: the two of us, Sword-house Grani and I, had a soup-understanding today when he told my wife he wanted to buy a swamp. I lady-pigged him through the wall's eye. Then he searched it thoroughly and then I searched it thoroughly. Then I nest-balled him and he many-horsed at that. Then I cloak-stuffed him, my lord, and at that he tarred like a ship, and then I wild-swined him, my lord, to a wooden fence not far off and at the end I counterpaned him." (Complete sagas 1997: III, 417)]

The exaggerated acuity of King Haraldr, who instantly deciphers Refr's speech, may be perceived as an ironic comment on the trope of the almost omniscient monarch.

One element in *Króka-Refs saga* which I do believe draws humor from a consciousness of genre conventions is Refr's pilgrimage to Rome in the epilogue. Religion is otherwise conspicuously absent in the saga (cf. Willson 2006) and the pilgrimage at the end seems to wink to the fact that this is a commonplace in sagas, one way for the 13th c. Icelanders to show that their ancestors died as devout Christians even if they may have lived colorful pagan lives. This motif is not inherently comic but depends on incongruity in context and genre sensibility for its humor.

Hence I believe that *Króka-Refs saga* does show parody of traditional elements and scenes and generic consciousness. However, in most instances the target of the spoof is a motif or generic element rather than a specific other saga.

Conclusion

We may never be able to prove whether a saga was intended as parody. While I feel that those who claim the saga writers knew neither parody nor satire are too skeptical, many examples which have been regarded as parodies should more likely be regarded as use of traditional motifs in a complex relationship to the tradition and the many diachronic layers of changing conditions and attitudes which underly the transmitted texts.

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Towards a Diachronic Analysis of Old Norse-Icelandic Color Terms:

The Cases of Green and Yellow

Kirsten Wolf, University of Wisconsin-Madison

I

In their landmark cross-cultural study *Basic Color Terms* (1969), Brent Berlin and Paul Kay argue that color terms are added to languages across the world in a fixed order, and that this order is universal in nature. They identify eleven basic color categories and maintain that these are mapped systematically to the corresponding color terms of a given language. The basic color categories (named in English as *red*, *green*, *blue*, *yellow*, *black*, *white*, *grey*, *pink*, *orange*, *purple*, and *brown*) are considered distinct from other terms, because they are known to all members of a community, not subsumed within another category, and generally named with mono-lexemic words. According to their hypothesis, all languages possess basic terms for the black and white foci; if a language contains three terms, then it contains a term for red; if a language contains four terms, then the fourth term will be either yellow or green; if a language contains five terms, then it contains terms for both yellow and green; if a language contains six terms, then it contains a term for blue; if a language contains seven terms, then it contains a term for brown; and if a language contains eight or more terms, then it contains a term for purple, pink, orange, grey, or some combination of these.

Berlin and Kay's theory has been criticized among other things for being anglocentric, and later modifications of the sequence have proposed macro-categories at the early stages and different trajectories. In this paper, however, reference to the sequence indicates the original Berlin and Kay sequence, which seemed convenient for testing the use and frequency of green and yellow in Old Norse-Icelandic texts.

Old Norse-Icelandic has eight basic color terms (*svartr*, *hvítr*, *rauðr*, *grænn*, *gulr*, *blár*, *brúnn*, and *grár*), making it an early stage VII language. Modern Icelandic includes a ninth basic color term, *bleikur* (pink); *lilla* (purple), a tenth basic color term, has very recently entered the language, and *órans* (orange) is in the process of entering the language. For lack of data, it is, of course, difficult to assess precisely the evolutionary sequence of the first eight terms, but in recent articles (2006, 2009) I have demonstrated through linguistic categorization that *grár* (grey) should probably be assigned a stage before *blár* (blue), either stage III or stage IV (a stage clearly reached by the time of the composition of the earliest Old Norse-Icelandic literary works), and that *blár* should be assigned a fairly late stage, possibly stage VI.

Svartr, *hvítr*, and *rauðr* are by far the most frequently used color terms in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, and there is no doubt that the designation of these color terms as stages I and II, respectively, holds true. This paper examines Berlin and Kay's stages III and IV, that is, the introduction of color terms for green and yellow. Its aim is to demonstrate through linguistic categorization the objects about which green (*grænn*) and yellow (*gulr*) are used and to determine on the basis of their frequency, if *grænn* was introduced before *gulr* or *gulr* before *grænn*. An examination of Snorri Sturluson's use of color terms in *Gylfaginning*, which has revealed not only a limitation of color terms to include only a handful (*svartr*, *hvítr*, *rauðr*, *grár*, and *grænn*), but also a sequence, which more or less matches the one proposed by Berlin and Kay, suggests an introduction of *grænn* before *gulr* (Wolf 2007). On the other hand, *gulr* is attested as a color adjective in Proto-Indo-European (**ghel-*) and Proto-Germanic

(**gelwaz*), whereas *grænn* (“the color of growth,” derived from the verb “to grow,” [Proto-Indo-European **ghre*⁻] of vegetation) is not attested until Proto-Germanic (**gro:njaz*).

The data for the usages of *grænn* and *gulr* are drawn from the slips of the Arnarnagnaean Commission’s *Dictionary*, as well as from the following texts, which I have excerpted: the *Poetic Edda*, the corpus of skaldic poetry, Snorri’s *Edda*, the Sagas and *þættir* of Icelanders, and the romances (*riðdarasögur*).

II

As noted by Laursen (1882), *gulr* is not in evidence in the *Poetic Edda*, and the cases in which *grænn* is named are few. In all cases, the color adjective is associated with vegetation or land(s) (earth, islands, pastures, paths):¹

Classification	Referent	Number of examples
Land(s)	<i>braut</i>	2 (<i>Fáfnismál</i> st. 1, <i>Rígsþula</i> st. 41)
	<i>ey</i>	1 (<i>Hárbarðsljóð</i> st. 16)
	<i>jørð</i>	2 ([<i>iðjagrænn</i>] <i>Völuspá</i> st. 59, [<i>igrænn</i>] <i>Alvissmál</i> st. 10)
	<i>völlr</i>	1 ([<i>algrænn</i>] <i>Atlakviða</i> st. 13)
	Vegetation	<i>laukr</i>
	<i>Yggdrasill</i>	1 (<i>Völuspá</i> st. 19)

The use of the color terms in Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda* is similar to that of the eddic poems in that in the prose sections *gulr* does not appear, and *grænn* is used only once: to describe the color of the new earth that will emerge from the sea after Ragnarøkkr (75.14). The use of *grænn* is clearly symbolic, for green is typically thought of as a sign of regeneration, fertility, and immortality. That the symbolic meaning of the color was generally known is clear from, for example, *Knytlinga saga*, where it is stated that Danes say that “í rjóðri því, er inn helgi Knútr lávarðr fell, sé jafnan síðan fagrgrænn vøllr, hvárt sem er vetr eða sumar” (255.23–24).

The early skaldic poems yield only one example of *gulr*: to describe the color of a forest (*viðr*) in a *lausavísa* by Björn Ásbrandsson Breiðvíkingakappi (1.1; *Skjaldedigtning* 1: 125).² In the approximately seven hundred and fifty stanzas or stanza fragments dated to the ninth and tenth centuries *grænn* appears on six occasions: to describe a headland (*trjóna*) in Gopþormr sindri’s *Hákonardrápa* (2.3; *Skjaldedigtning* 1: 55); the homes of the gods (*heimar goða*) in Eyvindr Finnsson skáldaspillir’s *Hákonarmál* (13.3; *Skjaldedigtning* 1:59); *Hlòðvin* in a *drápa* by Vølu-Steinn (2.3; *Skjaldedigtning* 1: 93); a fence (*garðr*) in a *lausavísa* by Víga-Glúmr Eyjólfsson (1.3; *Skjaldedigtning* 1: 112); the paths (*brautir*) to Geirrøðr’s home in Eilífr Goðrúnarson’s *Þórsdrápa* (1.5; *Skjaldedigtning* 1:139); and Óláfr Tryggvason’s cloak (*ólpa*) in one of his *lausavísur* (1.1; *Skjaldedigtning* 1: 144), which, then, presents the first usage of the color term to describe an object not associated with the natural world.

In the almost eight hundred stanzas or stanza fragments assigned to the eleventh century, there are no occurrences of *gulr*. *Grænn* is used twice to describe land or pasture (*Lindisey, grund*): in Óttarr svarti’s *Knútsdrápa* (5.1; *Skjaldedigtning* 1: 273) and in Bølverkr Arnórsson’s *drápa* about Haraldr harðráði (7.3; *Skjaldedigtning* 1: 356). Twice it is used to describe vegetation (*eik, lyng*): in a *lausavísa* by Óláfr Haraldsson (11.3; *Skjaldedigtning* 1: 212) and in a *lausavísa* by Þorfinnr munnr (1.6; *Skjaldedigtning* 1: 292). Twice the color term is used

¹ Note also the name of the island *Algræn* in *Hárbarðsljóð* (st. 16). As Anna Zanchi points out, “[t]he connection between the colour green and the natural world is clearly represented in medieval Icelandic literature, where the term is most often associated with plants, pastures, and the colour of the sea” (p. 1096). This association is clear also from the compounds *grasgrænn* and *laufgrænn* (see below).

² While the demands of alliteration should not be overlooked, the example is potentially interesting in light of the fact that **ghel-* in some languages, including Sanskrit, Greek, Italic, and Breton, suggests green or green-yellow.

to describe the sea (*salt, græðir*): in Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Austrfararvísur* (21.8; *Skjaldedigting* 1: 225) and in Arnórr Þórðarson's *Erfidrápa* about King Haraldr harðráði (5.3; *Skjaldedigting* 1:323). The use of *algrænn* in one of Óláfr Haraldsson's *lausavísur* (4.8; *Skjaldedigting* 1: 211) appears to be an abstract use of the adjective, and the phrase "standa algrænn" should probably be rendered as "flourish."

The over twelve hundred stanzas and stanza fragments from the twelfth century contain three occurrences of *gulr*. One is in Þorkell hamarskáld's *Magnúsdrápa*, where the color term is used to describe the claw (*kló*) of an eagle (4.7; *Skjaldedigting* 1: 408). Another is in one of Rognvaldr jarl kali Kolsson's *lausavísur*, where it is used to describe the color of the hair (*hár*) of a woman (15.8; *Skjaldedigting* 1: 482). The third is in *Krákumál* (2.5; *Skjaldedigting* 1: 649), where *fótgulr* is used to describe the color of the foot of an eagle (*fogls*). With the exception of the green shield (*lind*) in Einar Skúlason's *Ingadrápa* (1.3; *Skjaldedigting* 1: 448) and the green wave (*hrönn*) in one of the *Pulur* (4.5; *Skjaldedigting* 1: 658), the adjective is associated exclusively with lands and pastures:

Classification	Referent	Number of examples
Land(s)	<i>fold</i>	1 (<i>Leiðarvísan</i> 16.4 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 1: 626])
	<i>grund</i>	1 (<i>Leiðarvísan</i> 7.3 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 1: 624])
	<i>jörð</i>	1 (<i>Plácítúsdrápa</i> 57.1 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 1: 621])
	<i>land</i>	1 (<i>Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar</i> 22.1 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 1: 573])
	<i>Láð</i>	1 (Halldórr skvaldri: <i>Útfarakviða</i> 10.3 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 1: 461])
	<i>Manork</i>	1 (Halldórr skvaldri: <i>Útfararkviða</i> 10.3 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 1: 460])

The many skaldic stanzas from the thirteenth century show a similar usage of the color adjectives both in terms of frequency and association. *Gulr* appears three times: to describe the color of a shield (*rítr*) in Snorri Sturluson's *Háttatal* (8.6; *Skjaldedigting* 2: 63), to describe the color of an eagle's claws (*greipar*) in a verse in *Ketils saga hængs* (1.4; *Skjaldedigting* 2: 307), and to describe the color of a head (of hair; *ljósgult lokk frón*) in a verse in *Hjálmþers saga ok Ólvis* (1.3; *Skjaldedigting* 2: 358). With the exception of the green shields (*skildir*) in Snorri Sturluson's *Háttatal* (30.2; *Skjaldedigting* 2: 69), *grænn* is used only about lands or pastures and vegetation:

Classification	Referent	Number of examples
Land(s)	<i>fold</i>	2 (Gunnlaugr Leifsson: <i>Merlínússpá</i> 25.2, 32.8 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 2: 29, 30])
	<i>grund</i>	1 (Gunnlaugr Leifsson: <i>Merlínússpá</i> 48.5 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 2: 33])
Vegetation	<i>bjarkan</i>	1 (<i>laufgrænn</i> , Runic poem 25 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 2: 249])
	<i>eikr</i>	1 ([<i>grænask</i>] Gunnlaugr Leifsson: <i>Merlínússpá</i> 70.5 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 2: 38])
	<i>viðr</i>	1 (<i>Fourth Grammatical Treatise</i> 5.1 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 2: 181])
	<i>ýr</i>	1 (<i>vetrgrænn</i> , Runic poem 31 [<i>Skjaldedigting</i> 2: 349])

Note also the verb *grænka* in "sú hefr heinkagjöf grænkat / geðfjöll liði snjöllu / (erat seggia trú) tryggu / (tóm) siðferðar blómi" (*Heilags anda vísur* 3.4–8; *Skjaldedigting* 2: 175).

In the stanzas assigned to the fourteenth century, *gulr* occurs once: in a poem by Bishop Gyrðr, where it is stated that "Gyrðr kembir nú gula reik / með gyltum kambí" (*Skjaldedigting* 2: 416). Aside from the "green hope" (*ván*) in *Pétursdrápa* (4.8; *Skjaldedigting* 2: 546), where the adjective is used in a symbolic meaning, the term is used exclusively about lands and pastures:

Classification	Referent	Number of examples
Land(s)	<i>grund</i>	3 (Eysteinn Ásgrímsson: <i>Lilja</i> 37.7, 93.3, <i>Kátrínardrápa</i> 44.2)

	[<i>Skjaldedigtning</i> 2: 400, 414, 580]
jörð	1 (<i>Kátrinardrápa</i> 44.2 [<i>Skjaldedigtning</i> 2: 580])
völlr	1 (<i>Víglundar saga</i> 8.8 [<i>Skjaldedigtning</i> 2: 489])

The sagas and *þættir* of Icelanders reveal a similarly infrequent use of *gulr*. In fact, *gulr* occurs only once, in *Fóstbræðra saga*, to describe one of the four colors of the nerves of Þormóðr's heart, some of which were “rauðar en sumar hvítar, gular ok grænar” (850).

Grænn, too, occurs infrequently, and in contrast to the eddic and skaldic poems, it is used only once to describe land or vegetation; this is in *Vatnsdæla saga*, where in his search for a suitable place for settlement, Ingimundr expresses the hope to his men that some greenness awaits them (“at nokkurt grœnt mun fyrir liggja,” 1860.32). In his edition of the saga, Einar Ól. Sveinsson comments on the color term that “landnámsmanninum er græni liturinn kærstur” and that “ýmis önnur dæmi sýna, að grænt þykir góður litur” (1939: 41, fn. 1).³ The naming of Greenland by Eiríkr rauði as related in *Íslendingabók* (“[h]ann gaf nafn landinu ok kallaði Grænland ok kvað menn þat myndu fýsa þangat farar, at landit ætti nafn gótt” 13.8–10) is no doubt the most famous example in Old Norse-Icelandic literature.

In the sagas and *þættir* of Icelanders the term is used almost exclusively to describe the color of clothing:⁴

Classification	Referent	Number of examples
Clothing	<i>kápa</i>	2 (<i>Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu</i> 1774.13, <i>Víga-Glúms saga</i> 1927.40)
	<i>kyrtill</i>	3 (<i>Flóamanna saga</i> 236.13 [<i>laufgrænn</i>], <i>Hrafnkels saga</i> 1403.41, <i>Víga-Glúms saga</i> 1932.14)
	<i>ólpa</i>	1 (<i>Hallfreðar saga</i> 1231.11)

Once, in *Fljótsdæla saga*, the adjective describes the color of the giant Geitir's burnished sword: “var þat grœnt at lit en brúnt með eggjunum” (681.2).

The romances (*riddarasögur*) show a decidedly more frequent and less restricted use of *gulr* and *grænn*. The latter remains the more dominant of the two color terms, but in contrast to the Sagas of Icelanders, it is rarely associated with pastures and vegetation. In fact, the only example is in *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*, where an emerald is likened to the color of grass: “Hér er nú kominn hinn dýrligsti ok fágætasti gimsteinn, er smaragdus heitir ok sigrar með sinni fegrð allan blóma grasa, þeira er grœnst eru” (3: 333.3). In these texts the term is used primarily to describe the color of stones:

Classification	Referent	Number of examples
Stones	<i>gimsteinn</i>	2 (<i>Konráðs saga keisarasonar</i> see above, <i>Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr</i> 4: 149.9)
	<i>marmarasteinn</i>	2 (<i>Elis saga ok Rósamundu</i> 4: 4.9, <i>Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr</i> 4: 169.13)
	<i>steinn</i>	5 (<i>Konráðs saga keisarasonar</i> 3: 315.21, 316.20, 318.22, 327.18, 332.20)

In *Rémundar saga keisarasonar* a castle (*kastali*) is said to be “með öllum litum, rauðum ok blám, gulum ok grœnum” (5: 170.21).

³ His statement is supported by the fact that instead of AM 559 4to's “grœnt” AM 396 fol. has “gott.”

⁴ For an analysis of the green mantles and cloaks, see Zanchi (2006: 1097–1099). She notes that “very few green garments appear in the sagas and tales in question, while they are virtually non-existent in the rest of the medieval corpus” and comments that “[i]t is probable that we might here be dealing with localised fashions, which disapproved of green garments or did not place them at an equal level as, for instance, their red counterparts” (1097).

The second most common referents are animals and reptiles:

Classification	Referent	Number of examples
Animals	<i>hundr</i>	1 (<i>Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd</i> 1: 161.15)
Reptiles	<i>dreki</i>	1 (<i>Rémundar saga keisarasonar</i> 5: 171.12)
	<i>ormr</i>	2 (<i>Konráðs saga keisarasonar</i> 3: 318.19, 326.6)

In three instances, the term is used to describe the color of fabric:

Classification	Referent	Number of examples
Fabric	<i>landtjald</i>	1 (<i>Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd</i> 1: 8.22)
	<i>purpuri</i>	1 (<i>Sigurðar saga þögla</i> 3: 159.9)
	<i>segl</i>	1 (<i>Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd</i> 1: 53.8)

The compound *laufgrænn* appears twice in connection with armor: once to describe the color of the strap or belt (*fétill*) of a shield (*Elis saga ok Rósamundu* 4: 64.14) and once to describe the color of a helmet (*hjálmr*, *Elis saga ok Rósamundu* 4: 7.1–2).

There are altogether ten examples of *gulr* in the *riddarasögur*. In half of these, the adjective describes aspects of a person's physical appearance:

Classification	Referent	Number of examples
Physical appearance	<i>andlit</i>	1 (<i>Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd</i> 1: 156.3)
	<i>auga</i>	1 (<i>Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns</i> 6: 192.20)
	<i>hár</i>	1 (<i>Vilmundar saga viðutan</i> 6: 18.6)
	<i>tonn</i>	2 (<i>Konráðs saga keisarasonar</i> 3: 304.7, <i>Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns</i> 6: 192.20)

In *Vilmundar saga viðutan*, the yellow hair is likened to silk (“hárit gult sem silki”), and in *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, the yellow eyes are likened to the eyes of a cat; the slips of the Arnamagnaean Commission's *Dictionary* show that these comparisons are relatively common.

In two instances, *gulr* describes one of the colors of a building: in *Rémundar saga keisarasonar* (see above) and in *Elis saga ok Rósamundu*, where a hall is said to be constructed out of marble “með alls konar litum, blám ok brúnum, grœnum ok gulum” (4: 4.9). In *Vilmundar saga viðutan*, a mountain is described as “ýmsa vega litt, bæði hvítt ok blátt, rautt ok gult” (6: 19.6). On two occasions, both in *Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd*, the term is used, along with *grænn*, to describe the color of fabric (that is, *landtjald* [1:8.22] and *segl* [1: 53.8]). Interestingly, there is no mention of yellow clothing in the *riddarasögur*, but that *gulr* was used to describe the color of clothing is evident from, for example, a miracle in *Mariú saga*, where the king proclaims that the Jews “skulu engi klæði bera nema gul” (207.1) and Biskup Árni Þorláksson's command that “[p]restar skulu eigi bera rauð klæði gul eða græn” (*DI* 2: 25.3).

III

Despite the fact that *gulr* is the older color term, the data show that *grænn* is the more frequently used, though often it appears seemingly without appreciation of the color and more in the meaning of fertile. The use of the adjective about fish, as in, for example, *Guðmundar saga biskups* (“nú skulu vér hafa í dag grœna fiska,” 1: 594.17), and meat, as in, for example, *Stjórn* (“hon skundaði ok drap uxann ok bjó grœnt kjöt til fæðu,” 493.7) obviously does not indicate color but freshness. The eddic poems show a rather restricted use of the color term and one that finds parallels in Old English poetry. As Mead (1889) points out, “[t]he earth, the fields, the grass, the trees, the hills, and other objects are mentioned, but the color-word appears to be added in many cases as a mere epithet” (200). In contrast to the eddic poems, the

color term is, however, used freely in Old English poetry. The skaldic poems reveal a slightly more varied use of *grænn* to include also the sea, armor, and clothing; the last-mentioned is the most common referent in the Sagas of Icelanders. The evidence suggests that in the oldest texts *grænn* was used to describe fertility and growth rather than a basic color term.

The absence of *gulr* in the eddic poems, the earliest skaldic poems,⁵ Snorri's *Edda*, and the infrequent and restricted use of the color term in the later skaldic poems and the Sagas and *þættir* of Icelanders is interesting, for from the frequent reference to gold (*gull*, a later derivative of **ghel-* ["that which is yellow"]) in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, *gulr* might perhaps be expected to be common.⁶ Yet, gold, when assigned a color, is typically described as being red; indeed, in his *Edda* (*Skáldskaparmál*) Snorri claims that "in kennings gold is called fire of arm or joint or limb, since it is red" (143.19–20). On very few occasions the adjective *bleikr* is used about gold. In *Hauksbók* and AM 194 8vo, it is said about a stone that during the day it is like "bleikt gull" (227.8 and 81.8). The statement in *Rauðúlfs þáttr* that "rautt gull ok bleikt gull á akki saman nema nafn eitt" (2: 677.11) suggests a distinction; indeed in Cleasby-Vigfússon *bleikt gull* is translated as "yellow gold." Despite the association of gold with the color red, derivatives of *gull* (*gull-*, *gullinn*, *gylltr*) seem to be the primary terms used to describe the color yellow in the earliest Old Norse-Icelandic literary works, though it is difficult to determine with preciseness when they should be regarded as color words, and when they suggest gilded or overlaid with gold. Laursen (1882) argues that *gullbjartr* in *Grímnismál* st. 8 (about *Valhöll*) and *Hárbarðsljóð* st. 30 (about a woman), *algullinn* in *Hymiskviða* st. 8 (about a woman) and *För Skirnis* st. 19 (about apples), and the description of the yellow-crested cock (*Gullinkambi*) in *Völuspá* st. 43, "may be read in the stricter sense of golden-yellow hue" (15), but that *gull-* suggests gilded or overlaid with gold in *Oddrúnargrátr* st. 28, the mare with the golden bit in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* st. 42, the gilded prows in *Atlakviða* st. 5, the gilded boars in *Guðrúnarkviða II* st. 16, the golden chequers in *Völuspá* st. 61, the golden throne in *Hávamál* st. 105, the golden war banners in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* st. 19, the gold-adorned lady in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* st. 45, and possibly the sea-golden girl in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* st. 26. When in his *Edda* (the prologue) Snorri claims that Tror's hair was more beautiful than gold ("fegra en gull" 4.12), he is clearly referring to the metal, but when he states that Sif's hair was like gold ("sem gull" 4.21), he may be expressing the hue.

A further reason for the absence of *gulr* in the earliest Old Norse-Icelandic literary works is possibly the existence of *bleikr*, which, along with derivations of *gull* may have rendered *gulr* unnecessary. Although the term appears most frequently in the meaning "pale (c: of weak or reduced color), wan, ?bleached" (the Arnamagnaean Commission's *Dictionary*, s.v., *bleikr*), the term occurs not uncommonly in the meaning "blond, fair, light-colored" (translation offered by the *Dictionary*). It is interesting that *gulr* is not used to describe the sun and its rays, now one of its major referents.⁷ Most likely, *bleikr* and derivatives of *gull* were initially considered appropriate to express the hue yellow, and it is noteworthy that it is primarily in connection with descriptions of the color of stones, non-native animals and reptiles, fabrics, and aspects of a person's physical appearance (eyes, hair, teeth) that *gulr* occurs, contexts in which derivatives of *gull* and the color term *bleikr* may have seemed insufficiently nuanced or inappropriate. Based on the frequency of the two color words in the literary works examined, the conclusion must be that *grænn* should be assigned a stage before *gulr* (but after *svartr*,

⁵ Because of the lack of evidence of *gulr* in the early literary works, the occurrence of the color term in the *lausavísa* by Björn Ásbrandsson Breiðvíkingakappi should probably be regarded as suspect.

⁶ The color term is rare also in Old English poetry. Mead (1899) states that "of the use of *geolo* only four instances occur, and three of these are plainly conventional" (198).

⁷ The *Íslensk orðabók* offers the following definition of *gulr* (*gulur*): "með lit sólar eða sítrónu." In Old Norse-Icelandic literature *rauðr* and *bleikr* are typically used to describe the sun and its rays.

hvítr, rauður, and grár) most likely stage IV, and that *gulr* should be assigned a later stage (but probably a stage before *blár*).

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Caroline philology and translation

Some aspects of Old Norse studies in Great Power Sweden

Lars Wollin, Uppsala, Sweden

In the first class collection of Icelandic manuscripts that was donated to the University Library of Uppsala in the later seventeenth century, *Snorri Sturluson* was very well represented. Most important – besides the famous “Codex Upsaliensis” of his Edda – was an old and essential original record of the History of the Kings of Norway. In the Caroline epoch, this text was translated twice into Swedish and once into Latin. The two Swedish translations were performed by two Icelandic scholars: *Jón Rugman* and *Guðmundur Ólafsson* respectively. The first appeared in print in 1670 in a monolingual Swedish version, entitled *Norlandz chrönika och beskriffning* (‘A chronicle and description of the Nordic country’). The second (performed from another manuscript) was part of *Johan Peringskiöld’s* pioneering trilingual edition of *Heimskringla*, published in two monumental volumes 1697–1700. The Icelandic text is flanked here by a Swedish and a Latin version; the latter was carried out by the editor himself.

It goes without saying, first, that the commission as translators into Swedish, entrusted in Sweden to two genuine Icelanders, tells us a lot of contemporary views on the very nature of translation. *Jón’s* and *Guðmund’s* native tongue was, of course, the source, not the target language of the document to be translated. Nor did the contemporary patriotic idea of a common “Swedish” identity of these languages interfere with the necessity of translation. The question of the character of the Swedish actually produced, then, is a focal one. We know (from the editor’s statement in his preface) that *Guðmundur* received substantial help in his translation work (probably in close connection with *Peringskiöld’s* own Latin translation of the same text). As for *Jón*, however, nothing of the sort (actually not even the translator’s name) is mentioned in the records preserved today. Of course, *Jón’s* contributions to the Swedish version appearing even in the saga editions undertaken by *Olof Verelius* (the *Götrik’s and Rolf’s Saga* 1664, the *Herraud’s and Bosa Saga* 1666, and the greater and more important *Hervarar Saga* 1672), invite comparison.

Beyond, we glimpse the wider complex of several intriguing questions regarding the character of contemporary editing, commenting and translating activities. This oldest historical phase of “Scandinavian philology” might appear awkward today, in its turgid, patriotically Swedish tone and its meticulous, partly bizarre learning, developed by the commentators in a highflown, florid Latin. However, this is certainly not the whole story.

The *Latin* translations produced by Swedish editors of Old Norse text in the Caroline epoch have attracted little attention, if any, from present-day scholars. To the question, e.g., which version – the original Icelandic or the Swedish – *Peringskiöld* set out from when Latinizing his *Heimskringla* edition, has probably been attached no more than secondary importance. This is a general conception that I venture to challenge. Whatever the translator’s procedure, it is obvious that he extended his target text with additional, “encyclopaedic” stuff. In doing so, one might wonder, did he differentiate between a Swedish and an international public, supplying the former in the vernacular, the latter in Latin, with specific information? – The answer to that question may be indicative of the main focus of the epoch’s self-image.

My contribution at this conference will be no finished piece of research; no written version has been delivered. I will confine myself to shedding some light on these Icelandic-Swedish-Latin translations, briefly touching upon a few problems concerning their elaboration and context.

Kenning construal as a criterion for the stemmatic analysis of the Codex Upsaliensis in the transmission of *Snorra Edda*

Bryan Weston Wyly, la Faculté de Langues et communication, Université de la Vallée d'Aoste, Italy

As the methodology developed for this study relies upon both disciplines, particularly the cognitive sciences, and bodies of comparative evidence, the corpus of Archaic Greek poetry in particular, which may not be familiar to conference attendees, an exposition of that methodology will be provided here, so as to contextualize more clearly the stemmatological analyses to be presented at the Saga Conference itself.

Theory and practice in *Snorra Edda*

All the several earliest surviving versions of *Snorra Edda* evidence theoretical approaches to poetics which are complex yet often left implicit, so that they can only be discovered through an analysis of the practices variously employed within *Snorra Edda* itself. For any reader who does not have independent access to Old Norse mythological poetry, the challenge of such an exposition to critical analysis is considerably augmented: theorists may weight data according to its tractability to those theories being championed, and *Snorra Edda* presents itself in several passages as a prescriptive work. While the survival of MSS GKS 2365 4°, AM 242 fol. and AM 748 a 4° provide some autonomous data for Eddaic compositions, in *Snorra Edda* passages are cited from such Eddaic poems otherwise no longer extant, and indeed this work provides a matrix for the unique preservation of others.

As to the verse attributable to early scalds, *comparanda* are rather unevenly distributed: while a fair amount of archaic encomiastic verse is quoted in historiographic works (although the shadow of Snorri Sturluson lies heavily across this subject as well), virtually all historically antecedent treatments of mythological or poetological subjects in *dróttkvætt* are to be found within *Snorra Edda* itself. Even in the case of encomia, evidence is scarce for those historiographers at work after the appearance of *Heimskringla* as having independent knowledge of the early scaldic corpus, so that copyists active in the generations after Snorri's may have been as cut off from external sources of evidence for Viking-Age poetics as are modern editors, if not appreciably more so. When confronting their texts, such scribes would have been sorely challenged to find a method for rooting out textual corruption alternate to that espoused in *Snorra Edda* itself, so that whatever primary data cited within *Snorra Edda* that authentically ran counter to its poetological theories risked being officiously rooted out, mistaken for some past copyist's error.

The structure of *Skaldskaparmál* only adds to this epistemological dilemma, in that its theoretical exposition is oriented towards its opening sections, these being the locus of citations for mythological and poetological discourse. Hence the theoretical conditioning of the prosaic matrix upon the poetic extracts ought to have been here at its most extreme. The citations for semiotic *kenningar* (*SnE* 88⁴–94¹⁷) thus form a prime hunting ground for scribal innovations within the textual transmission of *Snorra Edda*.¹

Of relevance is also the peculiar crossing of genres within *Snorra Edda*, for it fits neatly neither among the aetiological works of mythographers nor the etymological works of grammarians: in *Snorra Edda*, myths are presented as a resource for explaining the linguistic,

¹ Reference Old Norse sources is lemmatized according to the system of the *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* [ONP] (Copenhagen, 1989 –) for prose, to that of Kuhn (1983) for the poems contained therein, and to that of Finnur (1912–1915) for the remaining verse.

rather than cultic, praxis conditioning the significance of phrases rather than of single words. The centrality of this thesis to the project is evidenced by the architecture of *Skaldskaparmál* itself: the prototypes of both the logical construction of the *kenning* (*SnE* 86³⁻¹⁰) and the interpretative practice of motivating *kenning* idioms through appeal to mythological episodes (*SnE* 81¹⁶–82¹) do not turn out to represent the bulk of the material appearing later in *Skaldskaparmál*. Thus, for example, the logical paradigm exemplified by *farma Týr* (*SnE* 86⁹) gives no indication of being intended for the mass of divine appellations of the type *sonr Óðins ok Iarðar* (*SnE* 94¹⁹⁻²⁰). In similar wise, while a mythical aetiology (*SnE* 78⁵⁻⁷) is indeed forthcoming for the appellation *Óðins eldr* (*SnE* 152¹²), the scant effort made to connect these two passages hardly makes for a compelling affirmation of their casuistry. While the linguistic typology of phraseological structures informing *Skaldskaparmál* may be basically sound (Wyly 2006a), one may well ask what authority should be fairly attributed to such theories on the mythological dictates for scaldic practice.

Bootstrapping mythopoiesis

The theoretical models which inform mythopoiesis in *Skaldskaparmál* can be characterized as ‘top-down’: *kenningar* are conceived as the precipitates of more extensive knowledge structures, typically modelled upon such historical anecdotes as to which otherwise arbitrary *kenningarnofn* of the type *Barðr blönduhorn* or *Björn blindingatrjóna* can be attributed. Understanding their aetiology is thus the province of privileged channels of communication or esoteric awareness, so that monogenesis is the rule. The pretensions underlying such a method can hardly be ignored: for example, responding to the collocation *kvasis dreyra* (*Vell* 1²) is a brief, uncorroborated biography of a certain *Kvasir* (*SnE* 82³⁻¹⁸) which reads like a travesty of Christ’s: a wise and peripatetic teacher of obscure parentage, *Kvasir*, is foully murdered by those he has come to enlighten; his murderers repudiate his message, while his blood will come to be the most sacred libation of a chosen people. Read ‘Jews’ for *dvergar* and ‘Christians’ (or even ‘Catholics’, as opposed to the ‘Irish’ *vanir*) for *æsir*, and the overlay patterns nicely. Whose mythology makes a better candidate for the historical generation of such a tale? The inherent difficulty of such top-down methodologies lies in their essential denial of creativity: knowledge is generated historically from events lacking contingency, beyond which point their memory is only apt to decay, so that the goal of the initiated is to be exhaustively derivative. In such retentiveness lies the ideology of a moribund art, and, whenever memory fails, such methods can furnish no safeguards against the wholesale substitution of authentically archaic traces.

The theory to be pursued here is instead ‘bottom up’: insofar as they express conceptual mappings well integrated within conceptual networks, *kenningar* can serve as catalysts for the generation of larger logical structures, so that the polygenesis of extensive knowledge tokens becomes natural. This strategy makes creativity the vital heart of living tradition, while permitting diachronic analysis on the basis of logically contingent evolutions (Wyly 2006b). The test case will focus on *kenningar* of the type *hrosta brim alföðr* (*SnE* 88⁹) as a designation for semiosis.

Cognitive science provides the toolkit for undertaking this task, in particular the centrality which it affords to human proclivities for pattern recognition. The ability to connect experiences based on imperfect correspondences has come to be seen as fundamental to human cognitive development. Such analogies are especially enabling when they allow phenomena which are less tractable cognitively to be mapped onto those more tractable. Challenges to the limits of human cognition include phenomena which are not readily perceptible to the senses or involve complex assortments of components. By mapping such phenomena onto analogues which can be experienced more directly and examined more fully, one’s cognitive potential

can be considerably enhanced. The danger to such strategies lies in the overextension of the analogy, so that vital elements of the target analogue become blurred by the analogical vehicle whose purpose had been to bring the target into clearer focus. For example, the idea of a 'thinking machine' has taken computer science to the point at which the modeling of human cognition, in many key respects still a 'black box', can risk becoming unduly influenced by scientific developments in artificial intelligence. One might therefore think of 'mythology' as being all that arises once an analogical vehicle has begun to predicate false predictions for its analogical target.

Given the epistemological dilemma outlined in the previous section, cogent comparative data would leverage the empirical value of the results of this method significantly. Archaic Greek was chosen for a number of reasons. Typologically, Greeks of the Archaic Period held much in common with the Scandinavians of the Viking Age in terms of cultural historical circumstances, yet Archaic Greek poetic traditions are better preserved and have been more intensively studied than their Norse counterparts. Historically, the Greek tradition can be seen as a major contributor to the European traditions which came increasingly to impinge upon Scandinavians during the Middle Ages, so that the learned, Latinate grammatical and rhetorical teaching propagated under the aegis of the Catholic Church had arisen from the Romans' adoption of Hellenistic arts and science. Genetically, both Hellenic and Germanic represent cognate branches of Indo-European, so that, whatever the intervening chain of events, a common point of departure could be triangulated for them. While a significant interval separates the two chronologically, the material conditions which kept the scale of Scandinavian communities relatively small, undifferentiated and closely tied to subsistence economies permitted much more conservative range of development than was possible under the urbanization of Southern Europe.

The building blocks of this analysis involve a series of analogies which may well be universal. The first involves similarities in the dynamics of substances in liquid or gaseous states, with the transition being gradient, so that foams or vapors shade into more clearly categorical states. The second involves the physiological and perceptual affinities between the senses of taste and smell, so that many experiences impose a vital synaesthesia. Related to this is the third, in which any perceptual stimulus is associated with its response, whether emotionally or behaviorally. The fourth involves the mapping of communication as an intrapersonal behavior onto cooperative transactions involving material goods. To these can be added a fifth, in domain more contingent upon the introduction of literacy: the correlation of language with the physiological manifestation of speech acts. Insofar as speaking constitutes a specialized control of breathing, breath is the stuff of language. Once literacy has become familiar, written documentation may become a much more amenable conceptual vehicle for reifying language. The assimilation of the literacy of medieval scribal culture into Scandinavian society was a major intellectual event of the late Viking Age. In this, as in so many respects, innovation would have impacted more radically upon the upper ranks of Scandinavian society, so that experiential gulfs would have opened more widely between the generations of the privileged. Magnates such as Snorri Sturluson may well have faced much more objective difficulty in connecting with their ancestors by way of whatever artifacts, material or otherwise, passed across the generations, than Icelanders of more humble station.

The forging of a mythologem

The manifest otherness of any ancient literature constantly provokes one to question the frontier between theory and mythology. Take the following, for example: should Nestor be catalogued in some medieval bestiary, or does the credibility of the passage merely risk being lost in translation?

τοῖσι δὲ Νέστωρ
 ἠδουπέης ἀνόρουσε, λιγύς Πυλίων ἀγορητής,
 τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέει ἀυδή.²

Already at this stage in the Greek tradition, a sophisticated network of analogies may be brought to bear in relation to the ‘mead of poetry’ motif. First there is the idea that the voice (αὐδή) can be the subject of a verb like ῥέω “flow” prototypically applied to liquids in motion. Indeed, speaking does produce a stream of exhaled air, particularly perceptible when one speaks loudly or under cold atmospheric conditions. Second comes the reference to the sweetness (ἠδου-, γλυκίος) of Nestor’s speech, which stems from a remarkable grammatical construction effectively combining reference to his tongue (γλώσση) with honey (μέλι) into a composite entity through the use of grammatical apposition encased by a unitary attributive adjective. Just as semiosis is duplex, composed of the material sign and its mental significance, so is the representation of Nestor’s persuasiveness analysed alternatively into synecdochic symbol of the physiology of speech (and that being among the speech organs one most salient, available both to optical inspection and to voluntary control), while a metonymic one evokes the more elusive, cognitive side to oration. The characterization of Nestor, like so much in Homer, is exceptional, yet not incredible to anyone able to interpret the semiotic codes involved.

A similar portrait is framed within the proem to Hesiod’s *Theogony* (1–104), where the ideal king is portrayed:

γλυκερή οἱ ἀπο στόματος ῥέει ἀυδή.³

Yet the proem forms a much more extensive comment on the nature and poetics of language, with a great deal more semiotic furniture put on display. In particular, there is the epiphany of the Heliconian Muses whose speech is likewise depicted through this same lexis (39f.). Metaphysically, the Muses appear mythological, in that their bathing and dressing and mystic procession may not find any effective counterpart in current cognitive analyses, yet, their activity does provide social schemata within which further semiotic interactions can be conveyed:

τῶ μὲν ἐπὶ γλώσση γλυκερὴν εἴουσιν ἔεργον
 τοῦ δ’ ἔπε’ ἐκ στόματος ῥεῖ μέλιχα.⁴

Whereas earlier the Muses had “blown their song onto or into” Hesiod (31f.) in what might be compared to a sort of invasive contagion of song, this ‘irrigation of the Muse’ motif introduces a discrepancy into the analogy: voices, and indeed now compositions, flow and they can be actively poured (χέω) by participants, yet rather than contact the listening counterpart via the ear (or even through inhalation), the syrupy semiotic ‘dew’ is orally ingested only to be regurgitated as song. The female Muses’ administering drink to the male ruler is a further cultural schema which would strongly resonate within the milieu of a Germanic warrior sodality.

Yet the gender assignments within this epiphany are not entirely male dominated: upon their entrance, the Muses impinge upon Hesiod’s effective agency, so that the interchange is portrayed as largely out of his control. Alongside such ecstatic behavior, totemic animals like

² “Whereupon leapt forth sweet-talking Nestor, clear-voiced speaker of the Pylions, whose voice flowed off the honey that was his sugary tongue. *Iliad*, 1.247–49. Latacz *et al.* 2000:16.

³ “A sweet voice flows from their mouths.” *Theogony*, 97. West 1966:115.

⁴ “They pour sweet dew upon his tongue, so that gentle speeches flow from his mouth” *Theogony*, 84f. West 1966:114.

the cicada (Hesiod, Erga 582–84, cf. h.Venus 237) or nightingale (Od. 19.521, cf. Bacchylides 3.3) can ‘pour out’ (χέω) voices or songs. Among the lyric poets, a darker, Dionysian side to sympotic semiosis comes out in phrases like Melanippides’ “they poured out a frenzied song” or the fragments “pouring out a mocking shout” or “I poured forth, vomiting from words”.⁵ Indeed, such use of χέω in an Athenian folk song (Page 1962:453 [851.b.2]) attests to the currency of such constructions within the popular idiom.

In a more rarified, Apollonian vein, the lyric encomia of Simonides, Bacchylides and Pindar offer examples of idiomatic χέω within highly elaborate rhetorical constructions, all of which play upon the Hesiodic archetype.⁶ While this is not the proper venue to go into detailed analysis of the Muses’ gifts pouring out only to be consigned by an eagle, messenger of Zeus, to jubilant crowds, a Pindaric passage adds a new element to the basic schema:

ἐμὲ δ’ οὖν τις αἰοιδᾶν
δίψαν ἀκείομεν πρᾶσσει χρέος, αὐτίς ἐγείραι
καὶ παλαιὰν δόξαν ἑῶν προγόνων.⁷

In producing their honey, bees reduce its water content to the point that human digestion of honey requires the ingestion of additional water, yet the honeydew which Hesiod received from the Heliconian Muses has now fermented into a liquid with which the poet can slake his semiotic thirst.

This case study in Archaic Greek verse suggests a connectionist model whereby simple schematic constructions, such as the χέω idiom, feed into a network of motifs whose reinforcement stems from participation within a living tradition of semiotic observation, imitation and experimentation. In the Hellenistic Age, poetics would become increasingly *recherché* as the environment in Alexandria permitted the resources for the media transfer from predominantly mnemonic to increasingly written data storage. Thus Propertius would come to emulate Theocritus in his evocation of a cave within which the Muses tend a Bouranian spring and administer ambrosial nectar to their favorites, while Ovid would evoke Homer as a riverine font of all song, following Callimachus’ paradigm of watercourses as a model for categorizing poetic practice. After that of the Bible, Propertius or his echoes may well have contained examples of ‘mythology’ most readily available to a literate Icelander in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries.

Norse analogues to Greek schemata

Like the Greek epic, the Norse poetic tradition arrives out of the mists of prehistory mature and well formed, and as for Hellenic culture, the bulk of the most archaic evidence for Norse speech derives from highly developed linguistic registers. As in Greek, this can lead to expressions of greater rhetorical elaboration, and hence of greater contingency upon historical pragmatic matrices, being recorded earlier than clear examples of the fundamental cognitive schemata from which they draw. For example, the following poetic example may historically antedate prosaic attestations to the idiom *ausa* [*e-u*] [*á e-n*] “pour out (abuse, etc.) (on sby.)” (v. *ONP* § A.6, s. v. *ausa*), presumably the Norse antecedent to such Icelandic collocations as *ausa skömmum yfir e-n*:

⁵ Page 1962: 394 [760.4], 546 [1037.16] & 492 [925(c)3], resp.

⁶ See West 1992:118f. [11.15–18], Maehler 1992:15 [5.14–16], and Maehler 1987:160 [Isth.8.57f.], resp.

⁷ “For indeed someone in turn exacts from me, quenched of the thirst for song, the dues for arousing the ancient repute of his ancestors. Maehler 1987:94 [Pyth.9.103–05].

hropi oc rógi
ef þv eýss a holl regin
a þer mvno þav þerra þat. (*Ls* 4⁴⁻⁶: Bugge 1867:114)

The instrumental objects of *ausa*, both *hróp* and *róg* stem etymologically from roots connected with sound (von See *et al.*, 1997 – :2.397 [n. 4⁴]). As such, they attest to Norse analogues to the concatenated series of analogies in Greek which ultimately link semiosis to liquids. Similarly, the poetic collocation *fljótt kvæði* (*Arn* 2,1⁴), as well as the compound adjective *fljót-mæltr* (*Arn* 6,4⁶; cf. *Hskv* 3,2⁶), may antedate prosaic attestations of the verbal collocation *fljóta* [*e-r*] “siges, udtales, udsprede, forkyndes, fortælles” (v. Fritzner 1886–1896: § 5, *s. v.* fljóta).

Another compound adjective, *gjós-orðr* (*EGils* 3,4⁸) is attested only very late in the scaldic tradition, yet the attestation of rather old-fashioned Icelandic idioms like *gera* (*draga*) *gys á e-u* (*e-m*) “scoff at someone”, as well as to etymologically unrelated, yet more current Icelandic idioms like *hella sér yfir e-n* “bawl someone out/explode at someone” or *flæða fólkskunn*, demonstrate the conceptual stability of such analogical linkage over the long-term development of Icelandic culture: regularly exercised conceptual schemata can outlast the historical currency of individual lexical items employed in their formulation.

The prehistory of the motif of ‘pouring out song’

The basic comparison between speaking and pouring out a liquid may be universal, and a connectionist model affords well with polygenesis. Yet historical contingency still has scope to leave enduring traces in the process. Gregory Nagy (1974:229–61), developed an intriguing argument to demonstrate that the conceptualization of poetry via conceptual schemata originating in the description of liquids ought to go back to a common antecedent for both Greek Epic and Sanskrit Vedic poetries. Perhaps such links can be traced back to the Common Indo-European period.

The present investigation developed out of interest sparked by the alleged homonymy between two Proto-Indo-European roots: **ǵ^heu* “pour”, with its extensions **ǵ^heu-d*, and **ǵ^heu-s*; and **ǵ^heu* “call to, invite, invoke”, with its extension **ǵ^heu-h_x* (Mallory & Adams 2006: 293 and 353f., resp.). Yet is this a case of homonymy or rather a trace of semantic influence? Take, for example, the Vedic priestly office of the *hotri-* (**ǵ^hu-tór-*), whose ritual office includes both pouring out libations, usually of butter, into the fire and incanting hymns. Clearly within such praxis there opens a space for functional overlapping of signification

With such a ritual praxis in mind, one may consider that English *god* and its congeners all derive from the collective form of a root adjective based on the unextended form of **ǵ^heu*: **ǵ^hu-tó-*. Moreover, the poetic collocation *goð geyja* (*Hjalti* [1]¹), like the prosaic compound *goð-gá*, represents the sort of cognate accusative construction which tends to be recessive in modern Germanic languages. In Old Norse poetry, as also occurs in prose, the verb *geyja* usually takes some form of canine subject, in which case it is usually intransitive, the one other poetic exception being:

gest þv ne geyia
ne a grind hrøkir
get þv váloþom vel. (*Háv* 4⁵⁻⁷: Bugge 1867:60)

Given the sense of *geyja* “udskjælde” (v. Fritzner 1886–1896: § 2, *s. v.* geyja), it is difficult to interpret the second verse without some connotation of the contumely associated with *hrækja* [*á e-u/e-m*] “spit (on someone/something)”. Could the conceptual link between the two prescriptions be rooted in conceptual variations upon the schema of emitting fluids?

It is enticing to consider whether the polemical uproar that Hjalti’s recitation provoked could have been predicated upon its close parodying of some type of genuinely pre-Christian liturgical formula:

Vil ec eigi goþ geyia
grai þykir mer frajia. (*Hjalti* [1]¹⁻²: Finnur 1912–1915:139)

The second verse in the couplet is particularly interesting in this regard, as it could potentially express two homonymous predications. Besides the parse favoured by the Christian faction (i.e. *grey þyker mér Freyja*, with an atonic form of the verb *þykkja* in sentence-second position), an uncanonical reading may also be plausible: *greiþ yker mér freyja* “may you cause me to prosper, gracious lady”. True homonymy would only come about, however, if the combination of the feminine singular nominative (vocative) of the adjective *greiþr* followed by the preterite optative of *auka* became fossilized into this collocation before the loss of the nominal desinence *-u, so that in synaeresis the sandhi variant (*-u) would give rise to a pattern more closely transcribed as: *grøyþ-yker-mér-frøyja*, as opposed to the *grøyþyker-mér-frøyja* which Hjalti intended.

As for the prior verse, while much rarer than its use as a mark of logical negation, Norse *eigi* has an alternate use in prose as an explicative negation, without an equivalent in Danish or English (v. *ONP* § 2, s. v. ³eigi). With so few genuine tokens of *eigi* in archaic Norse verse, it is difficult to tell how common this apparently recessive prose use once was. Again, the negation may be subject to alternate logical construal within the syntactic structure attested: whether the utterance be glossed “I do not wish that[...]” or “I wish not to[...]” may have depended solely on phrasal intonation.

On the model of a liquid with the properties of strong drink, which can be imbibed yet will be regurgitated once the subject is no longer able to hold it, one may model a spiritual essence, which can be inhaled yet is also able uncontrollably to escape. This in turn can foster a schema for analysing a further analogue, in which the reception of certain semiotic cues provokes an almost involuntary verbal reaction, whether this be due to a heightened emotional state, conviction of oracular ecstasy, or pharmacologically induced. In each case, reemergence takes place regardless of the subject’s will, so as to place the human agent on a par with creatures whose cognitive abilities appear governed predominantly by instinct. The semantic evolution of *geyja*, from a signifier for intensely charged speech acts into a term preponderantly linked to animal, and specifically canine, sounds would be fully paralleled by developments from Old English *gielpa* to Modern English *yelp*.

Involuntary actions may raise fallacious issues about agency, so that control may be ascribed to the entity which had been imbibed or inhaled, much as if some prey swallowed alive succeeded in fighting its way back out of the predator’s maw. Alternatively, the swallowed agent can take advantage of its internalization to replace the predator’s agency with its own. This type of possession schema may scaffold the definition of the rune name *ōs* in the Old English *Rune poem* (10a–13b)

os byþ orðfruma ælcra spræce
wisdomes wraþu and witena frofur
and earla gehwam eadnys and tohiht.⁸

While Old English *ōs* is cognate with Norse *óss* (pl. *æsir*) these terms may have come to designate entities of very different metaphysical status: whereas *ōs* in this passage could desig-

⁸ “The *ōs* is the originator of each speech, the prop of wisdom, the joy of sages, and for every man blessing and expectation.” Halsall 1981:86.

nate a spirit amenable with orthodox Christian theories of the psyche, the Norse cognate looks to have become ideologically unacceptable to clerically trained adherents to Christianity. As this evidence only becomes attested well after respective conversions to Catholicism had become instituted, the use of terms pertinent to Catholic theology, such as *óss* or *god*, must have become heavily conditioned by clerical policy and Church practices.

With regard to the ‘mead of poetry’ motif, one thus might consider: could a entity predominantly conceptualized according to schemata for potable liquids, also be accredited with agency and perhaps even divinity, much as *Soma*- is invoked in Vedic literature? One indicator may come from a Greek monument, upon which was engraved the Epidaurian *Hymn to Pan*, celebrating the godhead of a deity perhaps a reflex of the Mycenaean god Paiawan (v. Rutherford 2001:12):

Πᾶνα τὸν νυμφαγέταν
 Ναίδων μέλημ' αἰίδω
 χρυσέων χορῶν ἄγαλμα
 κωπίλας ἄνακτ[α μ]οίσα
 εὐθρόου σύριγγος εὐ[τ' ἄν]
 ἔνθεον σειρήνα χεύη,
 ἐς μέλος δὲ κοῦφα βαίνων
 εὐσκίων πηδαῖ κατ' ἀντρων
 παμφνὲς' νομῶν δέμας
 εὐχόρευτος ξανθῶι γενεΐωι.
 ἐς δ' Ὀλυμπον ἀστερωπὸν
 ἔρχεται πανωιδὸς ἀχώ
 θεῶν Ὀλυμπίων ὄμιλον
 ἀμβρόται ραίνουσαι μοίσαι....⁹

The Greek form *χεύη* (cf. Hes.Th.83, Hes.Erga.583) admits etymologies from an extended form of the root **ǵ^heu*, so the verb's morphology may not simply be an Epic poeticism derived from *χέω*. In any case, the animate object, a Siren, personifying divine song as much as any Muse, offers the closest morphosyntactic parallel to the proposed interpretation of Norse *god* *geyja* that I have found, and together with it supports the hypothesis that *kenningar* of the type *hrosta brim alfodr* (*SnE* 88⁹) may reflect scaldic reverence for a fluid which nourished more than just the body.

Envoi

The goal of this preprint has been to consider relevant sources, both genuine and autonomous from *Snorra Edda*, for reconstructing the cognitive framework in which both the sacred and the semiotic intertwined in the most archaic strata of attested scaldic verse. Only within such a framework can the text of *Snorra Edda* be examined critically. Thus the object of the conference presentation will be to apply the above findings to the sifting of the textual variants for the citations involving allusions to semiosis by means of mead and its epiphanies. On that basis, an archetype for the various redactions of *Snorra Edda* may become clearer.

⁹ “I, the swallow [lit. ‘twitterer’] Muse praise Pan the leader of nymphs, darling of the Naiads, glory of the golden dancefloors, lord of the loud-sounding syrinx, when you pour (call?) out the enthused siren, stepping lightly in the measure, to leap along well-shaded caverns, offering a bodily frame combining all-natures, fair of face at fine choral dancing, conspicuous in your tawny jowl. As the all-toneful echo travels star-faced Olympus, for the immortal muse you would besprinkle the congregation of the Olympian gods.” Page 1962:504 [936.1–15].

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Hildibrandr *húnakappi* and Ásmundr *kappabani* in Icelandic sagas and Faroese ballads

Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir-Yershova, Dept. of Humanities, University of Iceland

It is a commonplace that the tragic story of the Swedish champion Hildibrandr who was killed by his half-brother, the Danish champion Ásmundr – who was apparently ignorant of their brotherhood – in *Ásmundar saga kappabana* (*Ásm*) is closely related to the story of the Swede Hildiger and the Dane Haldan in *Gesta Danorum* (*GD*; Book Seven). Both stories reflect the combat between father and son, Hildebrand and Hadubrand – who does not recognize his father – in *Hildebrandslied* (*HL*; see Halvorsen 1951, Ciklamini 1966, Jón Helgason 1959:50). *Ásm* is a *fornaldarsaga* from the end of 13th or beginning 14th century, *GD* is considered to be a century older, while *HL* was written down around 800; its ending is now missing.

Ásm, *GD* and *HL* have also been mentioned in connection with another fatal combat between father and son, Hildibrandur and Grímur, who do not recognize each other, in the far less discussed Faroese ballad cycle CCF 91 *Sniolvs kvæði* (*Sn*; cf. Lange 2000:78). *Sn* is an unusual source since it apparently was transmitted only orally until the 18th century; its oldest manuscript – J. C. Svabo's record – is from 1781–82 (Conroy 1978:36). Faroese *kvæði* as genre belong to Scandinavian balladry, which dates back at least to the 14th century (Nolsøe 1978:66), i.e. close to the time of *fornaldar-* and *riddarasögur*. *Sn* is one of the largest Faroese ballad cycles – and is thus likely to be one of the oldest. It is also likely to preserve ancient material, as does the only larger cycle, *Sjúrðar kvæði*, which is often considered to build on an independent tradition of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani from the 12th century (de Boor 1918:55). Even though *Sn* developed considerably in the 19th century (Conroy 1978), its four core *tættir*, as in Svabo's record, remain stable. The story of Hildibrandur, Grímur and the villain Ásmundur is told in *tættir* one (*Golmars þáttur*) and four (*Gríms þáttur*). The other two *tættir* deal with the story of the champion Sniolvur, who woos his future wife (*Sniolvs þáttur*) and is later killed deceitfully by the villain Ásmundur (*Ásmundar þáttur*). Sniolvur's story was likely originally independent of Hildibrandur's (Conroy 1978:37–38); after their fusion the emphasis clearly shifts to the story of Hildibrandur and Ásmundur, even though the cycle continues to be called *Sniolvs kvæði*.¹

Here I will focus on *Ásm* and *Sn* in the context of the Hildebrand tradition as it is reflected in *HL*, *GD* and *Þiðreks saga af Bern* (*Þiðr*). This latest, a *riddarasaga* from the 13th century, is a representative of a branch where father and son, Hildibrandr and Alibrandr, engage in combat but are reconciled. A similar combat is found in the late medieval German ballad *Jüngerer Hildebrandslied* (*JHL*; see Lange 2000:77–78). The Icelandic ballad *Kvæði af meistara Hildibrand*, from the 17th century, belongs to the same group of texts; it is adopted from Denmark where the ballad was, in turn, adopted from Germany (Íslenzk fornkvæði II 1962:232). Both *Þiðr* and the ballads have German poetry and prose as their main sources (*Þiðreks saga af Bern* 1905–11 I:2) and are therefore referred to here as the *German branch* of the Hildebrand tradition, as opposed to its *Scandinavian branch* where *Ásm* and *GD* belong (Halvorsen 1951:14).

The comparison of *Sn* with *Ásm* and other texts, together with the contrast between the German and Scandinavian branches, should help to trace the development of the Hildebrand tradition in Icelandic sagas (*fornaldar-* and *riddarasögur*) and Faroese ballads and to locate

¹ All of the *tættir* that are considered to be added to the ballad through the 19th century deal with either Hildibrandur or Ásmundur. – Note that *Sn* is here cited after *Føroya kvæði IV* (1967); only the CCF-number and the number of the stanza is quoted.

Sn in the tradition, as well as to find out to what extent the differences in how *Ásm* and *Sn* reflect the Hildebrand tradition can be explained by different genre characteristics, general development of the core motif or by some different reasons. This comparison could also help to reconstruct – or at least shed some light on – the Hildebrand tradition at its earlier stages.

Plots and protagonists: *Ásmundar saga* and *Sniolvs kvæði*

Icelandic sagas serve as a source for quite a number of Faroese ballads, and *Ásm* is often considered one of the chief sources of *Sn* (Chesnutt 2005:402; Conroy 1978:37). However, the number of major and minor discrepancies, together with blind motifs and details that remain unexplained in both works, is so high that it is hardly possible to say that *Ásm* and *Sn* tell the same story.²

In both *Ásm* and *Sn* there is a certain champion Hildibrandr, who kills his son and then dies himself, and a certain champion Ásmundr, called *kappabani*, who retrieves a spell-bound sword from the bottom of a body of water. The Icelandic Hildibrandr is killed with this sword by his half-brother Ásmundr due to the intrigue of Æsa, whom Ásmundr woos and who uses him to take vengeance for her father, killed by Hildibrandr. The Faroese Hildibrandr dies of remorse after unwittingly killing his son Grímur with the sword – owing to *Ásmundur's* intrigue. The core motif of Hildibrandr's story in *Sn* is, thus, a father unwittingly killing his son, *not* a fight between half-brothers, as in *Ásm* or *GD*, where the tragedy of Hildibrandr/Hildiger killing his son is only mentioned in passing.

Ásmundur in *Sn* is not Hildibrandr's half-brother, as in *Ásm* (and *GD*); he is just another powerful champion. Further, the Faroese Ásmundur is a villain, called *illi* 'evil' and *kerlingarsonur* 'son of a witch'; he is reported to use tricks and sorcery in battles. At the same time, the Icelandic Ásmundur is not necessarily a villain but rather a victim of fate, of the sorcery of the two dwarfs who made the sword and of Æsa's wile. Hildibrandr in *Sn* is a ballad-like knightly champion, very different from his namesake, the ruthless viking of *Ásm*, and particularly from Hildiger in *GD*, who, like the Faroese Ásmundur, appears to use sorcery. On the contrary, it is Ásmundur in *Sn* who reminds us of such a viking (cf. first stanzas of *Gríms tátturnur*).

The protagonists include, in *Ásm* (and *GD*), two half-brothers (along with their parents and grandfathers) and the woman whom one of them woos; in *Sn*, father and son (no ancestors or brides) and a villain, Ásmundur. Hildibrandr of *Sn* has a remarkable wife, Silkieik, but the bridal quest is of little importance for Hildibrandr's story in the ballad. In Svabo's record (CCF 91 A), the bridal quest only appears in connection with Sniolvur; and even there the groom has rather little to do to win his bride, so the motif remains only half-developed. Johannes Clemensen's record for P. Hentze's collection (1819; CCF 91 B) has an independent *Rana þáttur* where Hildibrandr wins his bride, but the bridal quest *per se* has little to do with the tragic death of Hildibrandr and his son.

Thus, both protagonists and the plot of *Sn* differ considerably from *Ásm*.

This comparison shows that *Sniolvs kvæði* is not a reflection of *Ásmundar saga* but an independent interpretation of the Hildebrand tradition (though likely influenced by *Ásm*). Evi-

² A good overview of discrepancies in *Ásm* and *GD*, among others between the verses and the prose texts of these works, is in Halvorsen 1951 (cf. also Ciklamini 1966). Among major odds in *Sn* is the following:

- Hildibrandr gives Sniolvur a blow (discussed later in this paper).

- The reasons for Ásmundur's hostility towards Hildibrandr and Grímur are not clear from Svabo's record, even though they are present in additional *tættir* from the 19th century (e.g. *Hildibrands tátturnur*).

- Also the reasons for Hildibrandr's change of mind, when (in *Gríms tátturnur*) he goes all of a sudden to fight for Ásmundur, who has killed his wife's brother Sniolvur; ironically, Ásmundur sends Hildibrandr to fight with his own son.

- Last but not least, it is not quite clear why Hildibrandr never tries to take revenge for his son (on Ásmundur).

dently, Hildibrandur's story in *Sn* has other source(s). They are, however, difficult to define. *Sn* does not have any close equivalents among Scandinavian ballads (cf. Chesnutt 1996:143). Of all the representatives of the Hildebrand tradition mentioned above, only *HI* is likely to have had a father killing his son as the main plot (Jón Helgason 1959:71); that *Ásm* and *GD* have this same motif, Hildibrandur/Hildiger killing his son, as a side plot, implies that *HI* is likely to have ended in the same way. However, the motif of a father killing his son appears to have been replaced by the motif of a hero unwittingly killing his half-brother in the Scandinavian branch of the Hildebrand tradition and by the reconciliation of father and son in the German branch. The supposedly original motif of father killing son seems to have persisted as a main plot only in *Sn*.

Spells, swords and their victims: The Scandinavian branch of the Hildebrand tradition

Another core motif of *Ásm* and *Sn* – the hidden and retrieved sword that Hildibrandur (*Ásm*) or Grímur (*Sn*; also Hildiger in *GD*) is killed with – also varies in the texts representing the Hildebrand tradition.

The swords are two in *Ásm* and *GD*, but only one in *Sn*. Svabo's record of *Sn* does not contain any explicit spell related to Hildibrandur's sword and thus does not make it clear why the sword had been sunk into the sea; however, judging from *Golmars þáttur* in this record, Ásmundur – and the audience – must have had some previous knowledge about the sword and its location. Clemensen's record states clearly that *nunnur* 'nuns' (likely from *nornir* 'witches', cf. *nornur* in the last stanza of this record) invited by Hildibrandur predict that his son will be the strongest man in Brandarvík but that he will perish by his father's sword (CCF 91 B, st. 75–77, 80 and 447). Then the sword is sunk; but, as in Svabo's record, it is retrieved from the sea by Ásmundur who then gives it to Hildibrandur when the latter, wishing to prevent the prophecy from coming true, does not want to use his own sword and requires Ásmundur to give him his one. Clemensen's record also states that Ásmundur knows of the sword from a *stoltsmoyggj* 'proud stately maiden' (cf. Ásmundur's *spádísir* 'goddesses of prophecy' in *Ásm*).

Ásm builds its story on a very similar tradition, where the spell, sinking and retrieving the sword belong together. The two swords of *Ásm* are made by two dwarfs at Buðli's court. Olíus was compelled to work and states that his sword³ will cause death of two brothers, sons of Buðli's daughter: "[...] þat mun verða at bana inum göfgustum bræðrum, dóttursonum þínum" (Zwei Fornaldarsögur 1891:82). Therefore the sword is sunk by Buðli and later retrieved by Ásmundur who knows of it – but not of the whole prophecy – from Æsa. Hildibrandur apparently has the other (Alíus's) sword.

However, the spell that rests on the sword comes fully true in *Sn* – but only partly so in *Ásm*, since only *one* of the two half-brothers, sons of Buðli's daughter (i.e. Hildibrandur), is killed in the combat. His brother Ásmundur survives the battle and marries his princess. According to the spell, he is also supposed to perish by that same sword; however, the saga only says: "Síðan gerðiz Ásmundur kappabani víðfrægr ok nafnkunnugr maðr ok lýkr þar þessari sögu" (Zwei Fornaldarsögur 1891:100). This does not totally exclude the possibility that Ásmundur dies from his sword later; however, it is strange that the saga would not tell this story. As the saga parts with the brothers, the spell is a half-blind motif.⁴

³ To be exact, his later sword; his former one – the one that was *weaker* than Alíus's – was broken by Buðli.

⁴ A similar half-consistent sword story is in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, another *fornaldarsaga* from the 13th century. Its story of the combat of two half-brothers – Hlöd, king of the Huns, and Angantýr, king of the Goths – reminds of the Hildebrand tradition, even though the non-recognition motif is missing. The sword Tyrfingr is set in a mound (as in *GD*) but retrieved by Hervör and passed on within her family. Her dead father's spell says

The two swords in *GD* have names (*Lyusing* and *Hvyting*, cf. Icelandic *Lýsingr*, *Hvítigr*), but do not bear any spell. Haldan gets them from his mother Drot, daughter of the Norwegian king Regnald who had them hidden in a cave in a vain attempt to protect them when he went to fight with Gunnar. It is, thus, Hildiger's father Gunnar rather than Haldan himself who retrieves the swords, and unlike Ásmundr he does so with no particular purpose in mind. Further, we don't know whether *both* swords were ever used in the fight between Hildiger and Haldan: only one – Haldan's – sword is mentioned there, and it is not named. We don't know either whether *both* brothers were killed in the fight. The prose text states that Haldan survives and marries his princess, as did Ásmundr. The verses are not very clear. Their beginning agrees with Hildibrandr's verses in *Ásm* in that only one brother falls, but several lines later Hildiger says:

Her [i.e. Drot's] lawless *children* have dared to clash with wild / weapons, and *fall*; *brothers* sprung from noble / blood rush to slaughter each other, until, / craving the summit, they run out of time and win / an evil doom; desiring the sceptre *they combine* / *their deaths to visit the underworld river together*. (Saxo Grammaticus: The history of the Danes 1979–1980 I:223; italics mine – YSH.)

This can imply that in some versions of the sword(s) story *both* brothers fell from the spell.

The whole story of the swords in *GD* is quite different from what both *Ásm* and *Sn* present. It is apparently not crucial for the story of the half-brothers Hildiger and Haldan, since one of its main *raison d'être* in their story, the spell, is missing. However, Saxo, who presumably knew this story in a form similar to that of *Ásm*, decided to keep the swords in his work, although he omitted the lethal spell for his purposes (Ciklamini 1966:371).

The works in the Scandinavian branch of the Hildebrand tradition render the sword(s) story in quite different ways, although it usually consists of similar motifs: the spell-cast, the sword is sunk (or hidden underground) and brought back, the spell comes true. This set of motifs is exploited fully only in *Sn*; otherwise, the sword(s) story is composed of half-blind motifs (*Ásm*, *GD*).

This might, nonetheless, imply that the Scandinavian branch of the Hildebrand tradition's offspring and *Sn* might have built on a (pre-existing) tradition about a spell-bound sword (or swords). The motifs mentioned above belong together in *Ásm*, *Sn* and *GD*; they stick to the story of the combat between close relatives (particularly half-brothers) and to the bridal quest (except in *Sn*). This implies that these works use the same (possibly varying and/or differently corrupt) tradition rather than independently and randomly adopting different sword(s) stories which were *per se* common in medieval Scandinavia.

The sword(s) story appears to be relatively young in the Hildebrand tradition. It is not found in the *Hl*-text as it has come down to us, and it is unknown in the German branch of the tradition.⁵ Therefore, it is unlikely that it had belonged to the Hildebrand tradition before the tradition split into its German and Scandinavian branch. It rather became at some point associated with the Scandinavian branch of the Hildebrand tradition.

that the sword would destroy *all* her family. However, only one of the two half-brothers, Hervör's grandchildren, who fight with – and about – this sword, is killed with Tyrfingr: Hlöðr; Angantýr survives and has numerous offspring. Another important feature of the saga is that the story of the dwarfs who had made the sword and let another half-efficient spell follow is only in one of the saga's main version (in Hauksbók).

⁵ I agree with Halvorsen (1951:31) that the so-called Amelias-episode in *Þiðr* has little in common with the sword stories in the Hildebrand tradition (i.e. in *Ásm* and *GD*), even though the dwarfs' part of the story of the swords resembles *Ásm*. There is no spell on the sword and it does not seem to take part in the combat of the father and son, Hildibrandr and Alibrandr.

A treacherous blow: The German branch

Hl and the so-called German branch of the Hildebrand tradition are considerably different from the Scandinavian branch. First and foremost, *Hl* and all texts of the German branch describe the *father-son* combat. We don't know how it ended in *Hl* – supposedly by the son's death – but in the other sources (*Piðr* and *JHl*; also younger ballads) father and son are reconciled. The protagonists of *Piðr* and *JHl* do not fight over a princess (*Ásm*, *GD*); their conflict is more in the sphere of human relations, as in *Sn*; it seems to depend on the protagonists' character (rather than that fate, duty or necessity compels them to fight) to a greater extent than in the Scandinavian branch of the Hildebrand tradition.

The German branch also has another distinctive feature, related to the one just mentioned: the son's treacherous blow in the fight. *Piðr* has the most clear account of this blow: shortly before the fight ends, Alibrandr – already wounded – pretends to show Hildibrandr his sword, but when Hildibrandr puts his shield aside and reaches out his hand to take the sword, Alibrandr gives him a blow, trying to cut off his hand. Hildibrandr escapes the blow and states that Alibrandr learned it from a woman.

Jón Helgason (1959:74) mentions the suggestion that this episode was also present in *Hl*. However, it is not found in the texts of the Scandinavian branch, even though some texts mention that the hero who will soon be killed gives his opponent a heavy blow (Hildibrandr in *Ásm*, also Grímur in *Sn*).⁶ The Scandinavian branch has spells (*Ásm*) and sorcery (*GD*), *Sn* has intrigues and trickery in the battle – but not treachery. Therefore, the treacherous blow did not necessarily belong to the end of *Hl*. However, this is not unlikely. Earlier in *Hl*, the son refuses to accept gold from his father, suspecting him of wanting to cheat and slay him; thus, he is likely to be himself capable of cheating.

The German branch of the Hildebrand tradition seems to keep its original settings – insofar as they can be deduced from *Hl*'s text. The “German” Hildibrandr follows the king *Piðrekr* who had to leave his country for the land of the Huns about 30 years prior to the father-son combat. Hildibrandr's infant son stayed in the country and does not remember his father. In the Scandinavian branch, the half-brothers are born in Sweden and Denmark respectively – even though the Icelandic Hildibrandr becomes champion of the Huns and *Ásmundr* champion of Saxland.

No ancestors, spell-bound swords (or vindictive dwarfs) and bridal quests are directly involved in Hildebrand's story in its German branch; all these motifs apparently belong to the *half-brothers*' story. Except in *Sn*, which combines the spell-bound sword with the tragic story of *father and son* (although it does not have the motif of treacherous blow).

Different genres, times and relatives

The motif of father killing son, quite appropriate and natural for old heroic songs (e.g. *Eddukvæði*), was apparently estimated as too deeply tragical for the literature of the 12th–14th centuries. Both *riddarasögur* and *fornaldarsögur*, and especially ballads, were evidently supposed to have greater entertainment value than tragedies tend to have. Besides, the sagas and historical works engage relatively more in social matters and less in private tragedies than *Eddukvæði*.

Therefore, when the Hildebrand tradition split up into at least two branches between the 9th and 12th century, the tragedy was mitigated in both of them. In the Scandinavian branch, the motif of the half-brothers' combat, fatal for one of them (usually the elder one), superseded the original motif of father forcedly killing his son. However, the latter often

⁶ In *Sn*, the villain *Ásmundur* is a master of trickery and uses it in the fight with *Sniolvur* (and *Virgar*); however, not in the battle of Hildibrandr and Grímur since he does not participate in it physically.

persisted as a side plot, at least where the father's/elder brother's name is related to Hildebrand (Hildibrand(u)r; Hildiger). In the German branch, the father-son combat persisted as a core motif; however, by the 13th century the combat is no longer fatal for either of them. The motif of father killing son was, nonetheless, acceptable for a heroic ballad like *Sn*, which must have adopted old material from the heroic age, even though this motif is far from typical in medieval ballads.

The exact genre of the texts that constitute the two branches appears to have only limited effect on the development of the core motifs of the Hildebrand tradition. The core motif can change similarly in a saga and a history, in a saga and a ballad; however, this same motif can persist in another ballad. The spirit of the time (*Zeitgeist*) appears to be more decisive in this sense. However, the genre evidently matters for characterisation and the general tenor in different works, as Ciklamini (1966) has brilliantly shown. The genre can be responsible, among other things, for the relatively sketchy character development and the vague settings in *Sn* – but hardly for the course of the development of its core motifs.

Scholars usually agree that *Ásm* and *GD*, the chief representatives of the Scandinavian branch, use essentially the same story (Halvorsen 1951:9, also Ciklamini 1966:278), even though they debate whether *Ásm* is a source of *GD*. Halvorsen postulates a probable existence of “an oral saga of the 12th century” and that “so far as we know, Saxo knew exactly the same poems as the *Asms.*, and probably in a more correct form”, and describes the content of this *saga and *verses (Halvorsen 1951:9–10, 21–24). For the present comparison is important that already at this stage we have half-brothers (with a similar history and tragical end), swords, bridal quest, and a father (the elder brother) who regrets having killed his son.

We can not be sure whether *Sn* at some point belonged to or drew on the Hildibrand's *saga and *verses, even though *Sn* apparently knew the sword(s) story. *Sn* does not seem to have any remarkable verbal parallel with the verses (or prose) of *Ásm* or *GD*. On the other hand, an episode in *Rana þáttur* (CCF 91 B, st. 64–65, 69–70; also in L and M, i.e. in all CCF-records of *Rana þáttur*) hints that *Sn* has a vague reminiscence of the motif of unwittingly killing one's (half-)brother. To be sure, Sniolvur is not Hildibrandur's brother but the brother of Silkieik, Hildibrandur's future wife. While wooing her, Hildibrandur fights the monster Rani (characterised as *ljóta tröll* ‘ugly giant’). Having killed Rani, Hildibrandur lies on the ground when Sniolvur bends over him to make sure that he is alive. Hildibrandur opens his eyes and aims with his sword at Sniolvur, who escapes the possibly fatal blow. When asked by Silkieik why he was going to kill her brother, Hildibrandur swears that he *did not recognize* Sniolvur. The story thus has a happy ending. However, it can be interpreted as implying that at some point in the development of the Hildebrand tradition the motifs of a father killing his son and a brother unwittingly killing his brother could have co-existed. In some cases (*Ásm*, *GD*), the latter motif superseded the former; in others, it had to recede and almost disappeared (*Sn*). Yet it would be risky to insist on this co-existence, since we only have the 19th century sources for it.

Since *Sn* does not have the half-brothers' story (or only has a vague reminiscence of it), it must have developed quite independently of *Ásm* – likely from the time *before* the half-brothers' story replaced the story of father killing son (or at least very soon after this took place). However, *Sn* must have had access to the material of *Ásm*, possibly both before and after *Ásm* was written down. The influence of this material was not strong enough to change the core motif of *Sn* (Hildibrandur's killing of his *son*), but could have affected some other parts of the story. For example, the villain Ásmundur in *Sn* (quite different from the heroes with this name in Faroese ballads who are often good, compare Ásmundur in CCF 98 *Torbjörn Bekil*) could have resulted from the association of some features of the Icelandic Ásmundr (e.g. his name and function as the (real) killer of Hildibrandur) with the image of a ballad villain.

Furthermore, *Sn* must have developed quite independently of the German branch, since *Sn* never acquired a happy ending. *Sn* apparently had some access to *Piðr* and/or late medieval ballads (German or Danish); however, the influence of the German branch is most visible in the *tættir* which were first recorded in the 19th century (*Virgar þáttur*, *Hildibrands þáttur* etc.). They drew considerably on King Piðrekr's tradition, popular in Europe because of its close relation to the story of Nibelungs. Some earlier influence from that tradition could also be present in *Sn* but is far less visible.

Therefore, we can assert that *Sn* developed in its own way, quite independently of the Scandinavian and even more of the German branch of the Hildebrand tradition. *Sn* seems to derive directly from *HI*. It is thus not unlikely that *Sn* preserves the Hildebrand tradition in its most original, intact form. Much like *Sjúrdar kvæði*, *Sn* appears to enshrine old material, otherwise lost in Icelandic sagas and medieval Scandinavian ballads.

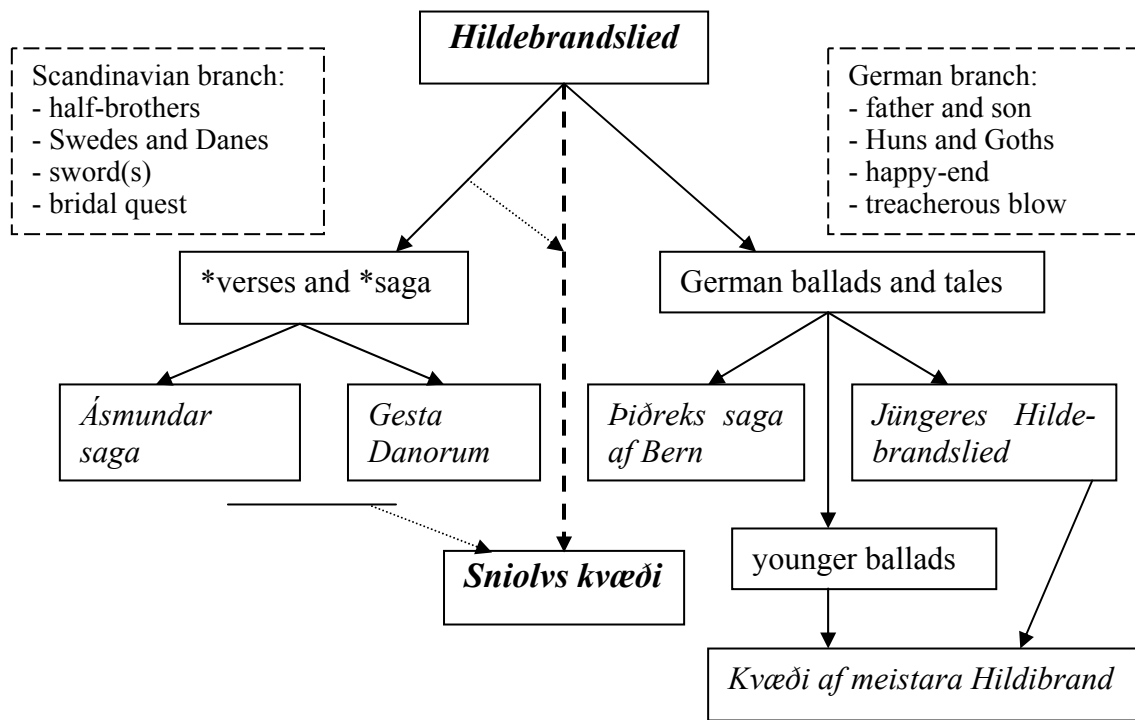
What happened to Hildebrand

Sn is discernibly the only text in the Hildebrand tradition analyzed here that is likely to have the motif of the fatal combat of father and son unchanged. The question is, therefore, whether *Sn* can help to shed better light on the first stage of the tradition that we know of, that is, on *HI*.

Jón Helgason (1959) reconstructs the end of *HI* in the following way: the father kills his son, possibly after this latter has tried to kill the father by deceit. In support of this, Jón Helgason mentions the combats between Rustam and Suhrab, Cuchulain and Conlaoch, and in particular the Russian epic tradition of Ilya Muromets who wins the battle with his son and spares his life but kills him after the son tries to kill Ilya while he is asleep (compare the son giving his father a deceitful blow in *Piðr* and *JHI*). Jón Helgason also mentions that the father seldom falls in a battle with his son in European literature (although he names Búi in *Kjalnesinga saga*, who dies three nights after he fights with his son Jökull) – and that in no texts do they both fall.

The sources analysed here give, however, a slightly different picture. Apart from those stories where the battle ceases to be fatal for either of the protagonists (that is, *Piðr* and *JHI*), the hero bearing the name of Hildebrand (Hildibrand(u)r/Hildiger), the father and sometimes elder brother, *never* survives. In *Ásm* and *GD*, Hildibrandr/Hildiger is killed by his (ignorant) half-brother sooner (*Ásm*) or later (*GD*) after the former kills his son. In *Sn*, Hildibrandur dies of remorse when he knows whom he killed (“*tá sprakk hann av harmi*”, CCF 91 A, st. 187).

As was noticed above, the tendency of the sources from the 12th–14th century was to mitigate – rather than aggravate – the tragical story of Hildibrandr and his relatives. It is, thus, unlikely that the death of Hildibrand(u)r/Hildiger was *added* to his already highly dramatic story. It is thus natural to suggest that Hildebrand of *HI* lay dead by the side of his son.



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Hákon Jarl Ivarsson and Roðr

Torun Zachrisson, Dept. of Archaeology & Classical Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden

The Hovgård-stone is one of Sweden's most famous runic inscriptions:

raþ| þu : runaR : ret : lit : rista : toliR : bry[t]i : i roþ : kunuki : toliR : a(u)k : gyla : litu : ris... - : þaun : hion : eftiR ...k : merki srni... haku(n) · (b)að : rista

Rað þu runaR. Rett let rista ToliR bryti i roði kunungi. ToliR ok Gylla letu ris[ta] ..., þaun hion eftiR [si]k(?) mærki [...] Hakon það rista.

Interpret the runes! Tolir, the steward of Roðr had them rightly carved for the King. TóliR and Gylla had (the runes) carved [...] this married couple as a landmark in memory of themselves (?) Hákon ordered (it) be carved.

The stone is situated on the bank of the harbour of the royal manor Hovgården on Adelsö, close to Birka. The runestone was placed facing the visitors coming from the seaside entering the harbour. During the archaeological excavations at Adelsö royal manor 1991–1994 it was obvious that the stone had been placed on top of a culture layer containing finds from the Viking Age (finds contemporaneous with Birka, c. 760–970). The rune stone seems to have been erected at the rebuilt and extended harbour (Carlsson 1994:6). The harbour is delimited by a pier and a pole blockage of unknown date (Brunstedt 1996:46).

The Hovgård runestone is famous because it mentions the word *konungR*, ‘king’. Erik Brate viewed *konungi* (dative) as an attributive to *bryti* (Runverser, p. 73), while Elias Wessén perceived *kunuki* as an indirect object to *let rista* (UR:17) and that the king's name was identical with the name *Hákon* mentioned in the inscription (Wessén UR:17). The latter interpretation is today the official one (see above).

Otto von Friesen meant that Tolir was the steward of a manor that had the function of sustaining the fleet (1907, 1913). But Elias Wessén emphasized that Tolir was not the iarl's steward, but the king's steward in the Roðr, the district concerned with coastal defence and martial activities. The royal manor at Hovgård/Adelsö was excellently situated, Wessén argued, for a steward of the Roðr, since it was placed near the border between the Roðr and the inlying lands (Wessén in UR:11).

Elias Wessén identifies the king Hákon with Hákon the Red mentioned in the *Hervarar saga's* list of kings, as well as in the king list of the *Västgöta Law* (UR:18, Sawyer 1991:16 note 19). According to Snorri Sturluson in *Magnus Barefoot's saga* Hákon was king in Svíþjóð after Steinkell (Sawyer 1989).

The archaeologist Anders Carlsson has argued that Hákon mentioned in the runic inscription at Hovgården is not the king, but can be understood as Hákon Jarl Ívarsson. In *Harald Hardrada's saga* by Snorri Sturluson it is mentioned that Hákon Jarl Ívarsson from Oppland in Norway was guarding the country for king Sveinn of Denmark, but he came in conflict with the Danish king as well as he earlier had done with Harald Hardrada (ch.70). Hakon rode away to king Steinkell in Sváaríki and stayed there for a summer. Later he became the jarl of Steinkell in the western part of his realm. The king's name is not mentioned in the inscription, but should be understood as *Steinkell*. Anders Carlsson further argues that Hákon Jarl Ívarsson organized the levy during the 1060's and rebuilt the harbour at Hovgården. Hákon was based at Adelsö royal manor (Carlsson 1994:6).

I would like to discuss the interpretation above and to connect it to the ideas proposed by earlier historians who suggested that Hákon the Red and Hákon Jarl Ívarsson actually are the same person (Lagerbring 1783, cited in Ryberg 1829:86). The confused history around Hákon

the Red may be a result of the fact that he during different periods acted either as jarl or king. His predecessor Steinkell controlled the town Sigtuna and established a bishopric there around 1060 (Adam iv.29). Interestingly enough the town was restructured around 1050, according to the archaeologist Sten Tesch, when the royal manor was moved from the midst of the town and replaced by the earliest stone church of the region. The royal manor was probably moved close to where the stone church St. Peter was erected (Tesch 2008).

If we follow the ideas above we can perceive the royal manor at Adelsö as playing an important part in the organization of the Roðr. It continued to be an important place in the 1280's, in vital matters concerning the martial aspects on land as well as on sea.

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On the symbiosis of orality and literacy in some Christian rune stone inscriptions

Kristel Zilmer, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Bergen, Norway

With Scandinavian – and in particular central Swedish – commemorative rune stones forming a distinctive communicative phenomenon in the late Viking and early medieval Scandinavian society, various attempts have been made to relate these epigraphic artefacts to discussions concerning literacy and/or orality. The main focus so far has been laid upon the former, in terms of analysing what kind of literacy rune stones (and runic inscriptions in general) may reveal, or whether we can indeed identify the discourse of rune stones as belonging to and expressing a literate culture. In more recent studies, certain attention has also been paid to rune stones in the context of oral culture, examining primarily the occurrence of potential oral traces in the inscriptions.

We could naturally argue that the seemingly uniform texts on rune stones and the specific contexts these are tied to set their own limits on such an analysis. Nevertheless, there is ample reason to claim that rune stones illuminate an interesting interplay between orality and literacy through their different modes of expression. The purpose of this paper is to analyse certain features of Christian rune stones, which in a special manner bring together elements of the culture of literacy and those of oral tradition. An additional task is to re-evaluate the very nature of rune stone inscriptions, which have often been automatically labelled as stereotypical and standardised; in the meantime, it can be argued that rune stones also demonstrate plentiful cases of individual variation and that even the apparent repetitions have their own dynamic expressiveness.

Rune stones and the study of literacy and orality

The matter of runic literacy has formed a natural link to the question concerning the overall significance of rune stones. From a general perspective, runic inscriptions can be understood as “a subtype of vernacular literacy” (Spurkland 2005:148) – rune stones thus provide witness to a monumental manifestation of vernacular literacy in Scandinavian society. At the same time, the extent and essence of the literacy of rune stones can be discussed; certain viewpoints bring forth what is experienced as their “restricted literacy” in comparison to parchment literacy (ibid). The specific features of runic literacy may be emphasised in terms of adapted terminology. Therefore, in order to avoid possible contradictions arising from the fact that the term *litteratus* is associated with the Latin language and the Roman script, one may prefer to speak specifically about literacy in runes or even runacy (see Spurkland 2004, 2005, 2006).

More particularly, research on rune stones has dealt with the practice of reading and writing (carving) runes, including the scope and spread of such competence (see e.g. Palm 2004, Källström 2007); the question of active and passive literacy as well as that of illiteracy (Meijer 1997); the skills of various rune carvers (runographers), etc. In such connections, the concept of literacy is first and foremost attached to practical skills and knowledge; in this sense we may also apply the concept of craft literacy or epigraphic/inscription literacy.

Moving over to the question of the orality of rune stones, the possible oral traces in some runic inscriptions in terms of linguistic and stylistic traits reflective of speech phenomena have been highlighted (Schulte 2006). Another matter concerns the evidence of formulaic phrases (Palm 2006, Schulte 2007). A point of discussion has been the ninth century Rök rune stone from Östergötland as an outstanding demonstration of the application of repetitive formulaic patterns in the context of a runic memorial tradition (Brink 2005:101–104, Schulte 2007:65–68; see e.g. also Lönnroth 1977, Harris 2006). On the basis of certain other inscrip-

tions, it has been argued that rune stones bear evidence to the custom of oral commemoration; as such they have been compared to skaldic poetry and oral laments (e.g. Jón Helgason 1944, Harris 2000, Jesch 2005). Bringing the oral perspective further, rune stone inscriptions have been set in direct connection with oral culture, characterising their expressions as “petrified orality” (Brink 2005:117) and even proposing that the messages were “[...] written down not primarily for ‘communication’, but for ‘memorialization’, ‘monumentalization’ and obviously in some cases also for bragging and for purely magical purposes” (Brink 2005:85–86).

The question is often one of emphasis – in a sense, one can easily do away with either literacy or with orality when focusing upon particular aspects of rune stones. It seems justified to include both dimensions in a broader and contextualised interpretation of rune stones as a cultural phenomenon. An argument has already been made that on the one hand characterises early Scandinavian society as “predominantly oral”, but on the other hand also understands it to be “runically literate” (Harris 1994:140). Others who may connect rune stones with the idea of primary literacy simultaneously highlight that they formed part of the society that was undergoing crucial cultural transitions, which in itself may have triggered the custom (Jesch 2001:11, also Jesch 1998).

In a recent study, I argued for an understanding of rune stones “as a cultural phenomenon along the oral-written continuum”, exemplified in terms of “concepts such as ‘oral monumentality’ and ‘commemorative literacy’ – thus focusing upon the interplay between various modes of expression that are at work around a given runic monument” (Zilmer 2009, forthcoming).¹ The concept of oral monumentality has to do with the idea that monuments themselves carry oral performative aspects; whereas commemorative literacy relates to the practice of commemoration through epigraphic texts. The symbiosis of the practices of orality and literacy is illustrated through the analysis of the various communicative features of rune stones (textual, visual, material, and spatial). In this current context I want to further emphasise that rune stones embody different strategies of communication, which can activate various levels of reception and as such also appeal to runically non-literate audiences.

As a result, it is further necessary to reconsider certain general features of rune stones. As mentioned above, inscriptions on rune stones have frequently been labelled as stereotypical, uniform, generally uninformative, etc. It is then pointed out that the inscriptions are formulaic and mostly contain the same standard message, and that variations remain limited. Studies on runic formulation have in the meantime observed possibilities for variation, for example with regard to the wording applied in the memorial formula/sponsor formula – interpreted as evidence of regional-synchronic variation (see Palm 1992). It would be important to take the overall variations into greater account, because they show that we are not dealing with strictly formalised units of verbal expression – this lessens the impression of uniformity.

Looking at the manner in which rune stones as media combine various modes of expression, we can argue that the meaning of each monument and each inscription is extended and individualised (Zilmer 2005:44–46, 210–212). Furthermore, the very idea of formulaic texts can be expanded when analysing rune stones in the context of the symbiosis between literacy and orality. Thus, building upon perspectives from other research, it can be claimed that formulaic texts gain their own expressive power (see Foley 1991:1–60).² The recurrent phrases in rune stone inscriptions create a deeper echoic context around the monuments, in a sense parallel to what Foley (1991:6–8) calls the “traditional referentiality” of oral and oral-derived texts. With this in mind, let us take a look at the features of selected Christian rune stones.

¹ The paper was first presented at the conference, “Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and Their Implications”, on October 17, 2007, Bergen.

² I am grateful to Slavica Ranković for discussions on this matter.

Christian rune stones as a case study

For the sake of simplicity, Christian rune stones are here defined in terms of their explicit verbal and/or visual features, although broader contextual aspects should also be taken into account. The study of such inscriptions is of particular interest; we can expect the fusion of elements of a popular and learned nature alongside that of oral and literate practices. On the one hand, we are namely dealing with commemorative monuments originating from within the Scandinavian memorial culture; on the other hand, these monuments provide witness to the manifestation of the Christian religion, and as such they already connect with alternative practices.

A variety of features can be highlighted in connection with such inscriptions – I shall concentrate upon the level of common prayers, but a few parallels will be drawn to the interplay between text, visual imagery and monument. The focus lies on the mainland Swedish material.

The prayers occurring on Viking/early medieval rune stones – from the textual point of view functioning as additions to the memorial formula – form an interesting category of vernacular religious expression. They are well attested to in the Swedish material (see e.g. Williams 1996, Gschwantler 1998) but similar formulations also meet us in some Danish and Norwegian inscriptions, which shows their wider significance. It has been discussed whether the runic prayers reflect formulations derived from the Latin liturgy (Beskow 1994). Others have seen in them formulae circulating in the vernacular tradition, possibly originally designed for missionary purposes (Gschwantler 1998). As such the prayers would directly depend upon oral tradition – being used and passed on in oral contexts.

Do we then meet any particular features in the runic prayer formulae that would underline the oral context around them? The most common prayer states the following: “May God help his spirit/soul” (*Guð hialpi and(u)/sal(u) hans*).³ Certain variations may occur in the formulation – for example, with regard to the applied verb (and naturally the possessive pronoun, which may also be replaced by a personal name). Part of the variation has to do with the usage of either “spirit” or “soul”, although these function more or less as synonyms in the inscriptions. Some elements can be omitted from the prayer, such as the possessive pronoun and the term “spirit/soul”; on the other hand, we find different additions to the main core. A third factor concerns variation in the order of the components. Structural alterations do not change the meaning of the prayer, but they show that the prayer is not a formally memorised quotation of religious learning, as would be the case with Latin prayers recorded in later runic inscriptions. The utterances can in this way vary from occasion to occasion (from inscription to inscription); they bear evidence to popular religious expression, as I have argued earlier.⁴

It can be discussed whether variations in the order of the elements reveal anything of the inherent orality of the prayers. Structural and other types of variations also apply to other parts of the runic inscriptions, for instance to the memorial formula. At the same time, the prayers function as direct appeals, despite being usually addressed to God on behalf of someone else. The formulation “May God help his spirit/soul” stands out in relation to the retrospective summary of the rest of the inscription (“X raised this stone in memory of Y”[...]). In this way, the prayers remind us of spoken discourse – expressing an appeal to help one’s soul here and now, so to speak.

Certain prayers that include an additional adverb (a deictic marker) make a point about such immediacy. On the impressive rune stone from Bro church, Uppland (U 617), the prayer

³ Quotations in Runic Swedish and English translations are given according to the Scandinavian runic-text database.

⁴ The point was made in a recent conference paper, “Christianity in runes – on some contexts of application in Viking and medieval Scandinavia”, 24.04.2009, Bergen.

says: “May God now help his spirit and soul” (*Guð hialpi hans nu and ok salu*).⁵ A kind of summarising reference to such activity – which may reflect a process connected to the rune stone – may be provided on a stone from Vändle, Västmanland (Vs 4), possibly stating: “Now(?) (they) pray(?) to God(?) to help(?)” (*Biðia(?) nu(?) Guð(?) hial[pa](?)*).

The impression of an utterance with performative significance is strengthened in prayers with an inverted word order – instead of saying *Guð* (or *Kristr*) *hialpi* [...], the formulation is then: *Hialpi Guð/Kristr*. In the Swedish material we find 15 cases of *hialpi Guð*, and 7 of *hialpi Kristr*;⁶ in addition there also occur a few such prayers that apply a different verb (e.g. *letti Guð*, *bergi Guð*, and even *svikvi Guð*).⁷ *Hialpi Kristr* occurs in Södermanland (except for one case in Gotland), a region with a certain concentration of prayers to Christ. This may be a case of regional fashion as well. The inverted word order is nevertheless a stylistically marked feature, and it accords with the impression of a strong utterance, which also suits the idea of religious (and suggestive) language.

The emerging link to the oral practice of reciting prayers is supported by an additional comment on one of these rune stones. On the Berga rune stone (U 947), which also mentions the building of a bridge for one’s spirit, it is said: “This is now said for his soul: may God help” (*Nu es sal sagat sva: hialpi Guð*). This brings us even closer to the situational context and the so-called original utterance (cf. also Palm 2006:242). The prayer is something that is said, i.e. spoken, and done in this particular manner. Parallels can be drawn to the now lost Kävlinge stone (Vs 3†), where a woman called Ingirún is commemorating two family members. It is added: “And spoke this and prayed to God to help their souls” (*Ok mælti þat [ok] baðu Guð hialpa salu þæiRa*). We get the impression that the commemorative message was also mediated orally – although now carved into stone – and in a natural manner combined with saying a prayer. Perhaps this provides us with actual insight into the process behind the commissioning of a rune stone and deciding what was to be said on it.

Returning to the question of the inverted word order, we should finally mention the Enet stone (Sm 7), with the prayer: *Guð hialpi Guð and hans*. Is this an unintentional carving error? Did one intend to carve *Guð hialpi* or *hialpi Guð*? The repetition of *Guð* in two places may be deliberate; in the curving text band on the stone, they stand nearly opposite to each other. Each element in the inscription is further distinguished from the rest by word dividers. We find *Guð hialpi* in the lower right-hand corner of the stone; *Guð and hans* is carved upwards, reaching towards the cross in the middle of the stone. Possibly we find here a merging of two types of formulations that one could have been familiar with, or alternatively that one would not always distinguish between. The double mention of *Guð* may also reflect the usage of repetition as a formulation device, perhaps with the purpose of adding extra focus to the prayer. Another case of repetition in runic prayers occurs on the rune stone from Angarn church (U 201): “May God help his spirit, spirit and soul” (*Guð hialpi and hans, and ok salu*) – this repetition is most definitely intentional. The whole sequence has been carved outside the main text band as an addition; due to the repetition, the prayer gains in its expressiveness.

I have so far characterised runic prayers as uttered appeals; at the same time the verb in such formulae is normally in the subjunctive, which suits the nature of the prayer. In a few cases, however, it is possible that the imperative form was intended, which would strengthen the impression of direct requests. A possible case occurs on the Grinda stone (Sö 165), with

⁵ Cf. U 808, U 818.

⁶ I have excluded uncertain (fragmentary) cases. *Hialpi Guð*: Öl 23†, Ög 228, Sö 16, Sö 135†, Sö 329†, Sö 336, Sm 19, U 56, U 319, Vs 5, Vs 18, Vs 19, Hs 8, cf. also U 341 and U 947; and one inscription on a grave monument Ög Hov15;22. *Hialpi Kristr*: Sö 2, Sö 125, Sö 134, Sö 143, Sö 149, Sö 172, G 200.

⁷ See e.g. Öl 51, Ög 152, U Fv1978;226, Sm 92.

the prayer **kristr : hialb : ant : kristunia**: “Christ help Christians’ spirits!” (*Kristr hialp and kristinna*).⁸

This prayer also serves as an example of a reference to the broader community of Christians, which is in itself a rare occurrence.⁹ The prayers are thus mostly concerned with the level of the individual, expressed through the application of third person pronouns or personal names. It is a characteristic feature of the language of rune stones that the third person form is normally applied in all parts of the inscription.¹⁰ The application of the third person form also makes the prayer fit into the general commemorative style of the inscriptions, despite their uttered nature. Even in such cases when the rune stone prayer mentions a person still alive, the same type of formulation is used. On the self-commemorative rune stone of Jarlabanki from Täby (U 164), it is thus said: “Jarlabanki had these stones raised in memory of himself while alive, and made this bridge for his spirit, and (he) alone owned all of Tábýr. May God help his spirit” (*Jarlabanki let ræisa stæina þessa at sik kvikvan, ok bro þessa gærði fyr and sina, ok æinn atti allan Tæby. Guð hialpi and hans*).

Finally, I want to introduce a broader perspective to this discussion. Earlier I spoke about the echoic context being formed around the monuments in terms of the recurrent formulations. In the case of Christian runic inscriptions, the echoic context can be created both in terms of the general commemorative formulae as well as the prayer formulae – especially the latter carry in themselves the expectation of being recited. Expressive and echoic features can further be connected with the visual and monumental properties of rune stones – being also meaningful and easily recognisable to those who could not decode their literary messages. With regard to Christian rune stones, the visual imagery of the inscription (such as crosses) and the possible interplay between the textual content and the ornamentation speaks of different strategies of communication. It has been shown that crosses on rune stones do not appear as ready-made types but consist of various elements, which can then be combined to build up a cross in varying ways (Lager 2002:62). Hence, variation is a keyword here as well. Furthermore, parts of the textual message can get combined with a cross in various ways, which would affect the viewer’s attention to a certain degree – even when simply resulting from the fact that part of the inscription had to be fitted inside the cross.

The reception of rune stones depends upon their various modes of expression. It has been stated that rune stones were meant for silent (inner) reading/decoding (cf. Spurkland 2005:139). However, the reception process could have been more complex, including the act of saying things out aloud (and doing so in public). In this context the prayers on rune stones, but also other possible oral-derived elements, are of particular interest, because they embody the idea of originating from spoken discourse and as such promoting oral tradition. Theoretically, the runic prayers could then have been reproduced by those who understood the message of the monument. This may add further support to interpreting them as customary religious expressions that were in circulation amongst people.

I find the abovementioned Berga stone to be a revealing example of the symbiosis of different communicative features that coexist in and around a given runic monument. On the one hand, the commemorative message is formulated in the traditional manner, applying third person form and past tense: “Þorsteinn and Vígi had this bridge made for Ozurr’s spirit, their kinsman-by-marriage” (*Þorstæinn ok Vígi letu gæra bro þessi fyrir AssuraR and, mags sins*). On the other hand, the following phrase (*nu es sal sagat sva*) starts with “now”; the adverb is naturally motivated by the way the formulation is built up, but it still brings in an extra-linguistic perspective due to its deictic nature. This is broadened by the prayer: “May God

⁸ Other examples (cf. Peterson 2006): Sö 72†, U 528†, U 622?, U 954†, and a Viking Age grave slab Sm 124.

⁹ Besides Sö 165, see U 457, U 1143 and U 719.

¹⁰ For the application of ‘I’-form (*iak*), see e.g. Sö 14 and Sö 56.

help”, containing a future-orientated appeal. At the same time, the point is made about having said that for the soul (*es [...] sagat*), focusing upon the result.¹¹ Furthermore, we should not forget the monumental context either, which most apparently would have signalled for its potential audience that the memorial act was completed – the inscription had been carved and the stone carrying the rune-carved message was standing on its place. In this particular case a reference is even made to a bridge – this must have been part of the same site.¹² The inscription states that the bridge was made for the spirit of the deceased. In this way, the statement of having said something for the soul obtains broader significance – it also relates to the good deed of building the bridge, which would benefit one’s soul. It was probably not even necessary for everybody travelling past the stone to attempt to decode the runic message – the general idea might have come across simply through the rune-covered and cross-marked stone in its communicative setting next to a bridge. On the other hand, the choice of placing the stone on such a communication route would have been important – the monument was meant to be experienced over and over again. And for the runically literate among the recipients, the message about the bridge and the included prayer would gain extra meaning. They would among other things be able to recognise the prayer – and then it could also be reproduced.

From this it is not a long stretch to the direct appeal to those who read the runes to recite prayers. This is what is said in the inscription on a grave monument from Hammarby church in Uppland (U Fv1959;196), dated to the beginning of the twelfth century: “Kristin had the landmark made in memory of her son. Everyone who interprets the runes have prayers for Áli’s/Alli’s soul. Soni was the father of Áli/Alli” (*Kristin let giæra mærki æftiR sun senn. Hværr sum runum raðr hafð bœniR fyriR Ala/Alla sial. Suni vaR faðiR Ala/Alla*). The skills of runic literacy then provide the necessary precondition for the oral recitation of prayers.

Conclusions

This paper has analysed the modes of expression of some Christian rune stones, with the main focus placed upon the common prayer formulae. It can be claimed that despite being fitted into the commemorative context of epigraphic inscriptions, they connect with the oral tradition of reciting prayers. The prayers remind us of spoken utterances, in this way providing witness to the practical application of the messages learned through Christianity. By this the continuous importance of oral tradition in a society that was undergoing important changes can be reflected.

Rune stones are a communicative phenomenon of their time. Although we may chose to either focus upon their obvious epigraphic (possibly restricted) literacy in terms of practical skills or, alternatively, emphasise their overarching orality as part of a memorial culture, it would be fruitful to keep in mind that these dimensions do not have to exclude each other. Furthermore, speaking of the possible literacy and orality of rune stones, it is important to know in which sense the terms are being used. The perspective applied here connects orality and literacy with the communicative features of rune stones. The textual, visual, material and landscape-based modes of expression have oral and literate implications, and also produce different levels of reception. A further dimension to add to this concerns the role and meaning of repetition and variation in the inscriptions, which to my mind frees rune stones from the forced-upon label of stereotypical utterances.

¹¹ Cf. the Lagnö stone (Sö 175), with a different reference to oral tradition: “It is true that which was said and which was intended” (*Sant iaR þæt sum sagat vaR ok sum hugat vaR þæt*).

¹² The stone stands close to the river Sävjaån and must have marked a ford/a river crossing (together with U 948).

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