

search for Christian sources or allusions, but rather it identifies patterns of representation in which traditional material appears within the context of Christian history and dogma. Clunies Ross then describes the further extensions and refinements of this approach that have been developed by scholars such as Lars Lönnroth, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, Ursula Dronke, Peter Dronke, and herself. As a survey paper, this essay cannot be long enough to review the multiplicity of evidence that supports this approach, so it is unlikely to change the minds of those who may not agree with it, but it is extremely useful to have these insights—which have transformed, and continue to transform, our understanding of Old Norse literature—presented clearly and concisely.

As is to be expected with a *Gedenkschrift*, the scholarly quality of the essays varies. Among those dealing with Old Norse literature, however, the overall quality is remarkably high, whether the interest of the essay lies in the plausibility and importance of its thesis or in the thought-provoking nature of its speculations. Unfortunately, the quality of the editing leaves much to be desired (a problem also with *Mythos und Geschichte*). Typographical errors occur in the table of contents and in the running page headings as well as in the essays themselves and are far too numerous to be listed here. Also regrettable is the fact that the essays in English do not seem to have been edited by a fluent speaker of that language, for it would have been a courtesy to the nonnative speakers writing in English if the language of their contributions could have been as polished as their thinking. Regardless, we must be grateful to Edizioni Parnaso for sponsoring both this and the volume of Weber's collected essays, and especially to the *Gedenkschrift* editors for assembling so many fine contributions to Old Norse scholarship.

Elizabeth Ashman Rowe

Heinrich Beck and Else Ebel, editors. *Studien zur Isländersaga: Festschrift für Rolf Heller*. *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 24. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000. 335 pages.

Justice is not easily done to this substantial collection of nineteen article-length contributions. A comparatively detailed analytical review may provide most assistance to prospective readers, since the book itself is remarkably sparing on this front, offering no summaries or abstracts or introduction with a synthesizing account of the chapters or even brief notes about the contributors.

In what follows I shall group the chapters thematically, and, in recognition of the contributors' own acknowledgement of the honorand's abiding interest in the interpretation of sagas, I shall first discuss the chapters that centre upon saga ethics. In his ". . . und gut ist keines von beiden: Gedanken zur Akzeptanz der Brenna in der *Njáls saga*" (198–207), Harald Müller examines social attitudes towards the practice of "burning in." Müller points out that aside from the famous example of this motif in *Njáls saga* chapter 129, several secondary examples less noticed by commentators also occur in the saga, not to mention the numerous cases recorded in other works. Quite a few of them have the status of genuine historical events. And yet the contemporary law texts proscribed burning if, for instance, implemented against people occupying a house that was in regular inhabitation, and it must have aroused, then as now, an intrinsic repugnance. Müller locates the act on the demarcation point between law and chaos, never fully conscionable and yet unofficially available as a last resort. To enact it might have entailed a potentially dangerous acknowledgement, especially pertinent to the thirteenth-century families that in Müller's opinion were instrumental in the production of *Njáls saga*, that hostilities had crossed that demarcation and reached the level of outright warfare.

Also on the theme of warfare, Edith Marold's "Vom Umgang mit Feinden: Zur

Darstellung der Kämpfe in der *Sverris saga*” (182–97) analyses the attitudes of Sverrir and his opponents, as voiced in *Sverris saga*, concerning what, if any, ethical constraints are operative once hostilities have reached that point in a community. She notes the king’s ostensible discountenancing of *úspekð* (a kind of “ignorant” or barbaric stupidity), torture and intimidation, and violation of sanctuary. Conversely, as she shows, the king voices his affirmation of *grið* and the Christian burial of fallen enemies. While admittedly the saga writer’s skilful selectiveness in recording historical events serves his patron well, Marold makes a case for Sverrir’s policies and practice having been based not simply on a calculated cultivation of a future reputation as a good king but also on a genuine moral sense, possibly reinforced by chivalric ideals.

The late Hermann Pálsson’s “Glæpur og refsing í *Hrafnkels sögu*” (119–34) characteristically emphasizes that the sagas were written in order to comment and provoke reflection on ethical questions, not merely for entertainment. The question is, how far did the rights of chieftains in Icelandic society extend? In Hermann’s answer, the protagonist has erred by exacting punishment in a manner which, while no doubt appropriate to kings in Norway (it is expressly prescribed in *Konungs skuggsjá*), can only rate as singularly inappropriate in an Icelandic magnate. He argues that Einarr’s taking the horse cannot be construed as a theft and *a fortiori* cannot justly be punished by death, despite Hrafnkell’s assertions. The torture and punishment exacted on the protagonist by Sámur are therefore justified, a verdict for which Hermann finds support in *Rómverja saga*. Although Hermann carefully documents his case from the saga text, his explanation of its message comes across as legalistic rather than literary. It would seem better to reckon with some degree of ambivalence, on the not unreasonable assumption that, for better or for worse, overbearing and dominating attitudes in chieftains perhaps commanded a sneaking admiration in the society that produced this saga.

By contrast, Uwe Ebel’s “Archaik oder Europa: Theologisches Argument und Inter-

pretation von Gewalt in der *Fóstbræðra saga*” (25–50), evidently a “taster” from a much larger research program by this author, refuses to accept absolute doctrines. Taking the case of *Fóstbræðra saga*, which we can fairly say continues to attract attention as much because of its problematic ethicality as because of its tangled redactional history and uncertain dating, Ebel stresses the place of this work in a developing ethical and theological debate. Here he sees the language and values of Christianity as open to contestation and even appropriation.

Theodore M. Andersson’s “Character and Caricature in the Family Sagas” (1–10) gives us reason to ponder the complex interplay between sense of ethics and sense of humour. Like Ebel, he finds a reference point in *Fóstbræðra saga*, for which he posits an early dating. Characteristic of this work, and a key influence on later sagas, is a mode of excess and caricature that is ultimately traceable to cultural ambivalence towards Icelandic self-assertiveness, particularly in the political context of Norwegian encroachment. Andersson finds humour in the “emotional minimalism” of the *Njáls saga* account of an assailant’s reaction to what Henry Fielding would have called “the information of Gunnarr’s spear.” Likewise, when a monomaniac Egill Skalla-Grímsson reacts to his son’s death with wild excessiveness, only to be cajoled out of it by the guile of his daughter, humour may arise from the inversion of the parent-child relationship. We might add that when Egill threatens to scatter his money on Þingvellir, humour may be engendered by a glancing similarity to the episode in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, where the hero makes his enemies bend like pigs at Fýrisvellir. But the tone remains tricky to define. Consider the episode where Egill dispatches his antagonist with a bite to the throat: we might suggest (with an eye to Auðunn’s rough handling of Grettir) that this is a stereotypically unmanly tactic and that the literary effect is one of grotesqueness rather than humour.

A further set of chapters examines how the accounts of human relationships in certain sagas have been shaped by pre-existing literary models, and here again the contributors make many references to the

work of the honorand. Dorothee Frölich's "Eddische Heroische Elegie und *Laxdœla saga*: Bemerkungen zu einigen motivischen und formalen Verbindungslinien" (51–71) starts from the familiar idea that *Laxdœla saga* derives not merely its central group of characters but also many of its detailed motifs from eddic poetry. Jealousy, particularly women's jealousy, plays a major role in driving the plot, while the men, for once, are essentially secondary, mere objects of female feeling. At the same time, however, in contrast to the heroic elegies, the saga's mode of narration affords little room for the expression of these intense feelings. For this reason, the account in chap. 76 of the heroine's long hours of praying and weeping in church appears to open up a special space for the feelings that is unusual, if not unparalleled, in saga prose. Although translations frequently import notions of penance and contrition into this episode, the original language in Frölich's opinion focuses on the emotions per se (but contrast Daniel Sävborg, "Kärleken i *Laxdœla saga*—höviskt och sagatypiskt," *Alvíssmál* 11, 95 n. 28). The effect is therefore radically distinct from that, for example, of the final episode in *Grettis saga*, where acts of contrition indisputably supply the central motivation.

It is to this episode that Susanne Kramarz-Bein devotes her attention in "Der *Spesar þáttur* der *Grettis saga*: Tristan-Spuren in der Isländersaga" (152–81). She argues, in a richly documented article, for an understanding of *Spesar þáttur* as an integral part of *Grettis saga*. Additionally, it should be interpreted as a kind of "answer" to *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar*, whose ending contemporaries obviously saw as problematic, and to oral and balladistic handlings of the Tristan material. As Kramarz-Bein demonstrates, invoking terminology from the theory of intertextuality, certain motifs, keywords, and stylistic traits are reiterated as a means of "marking" the existence of a "dialogue" between these texts. Although such cross-referencing with the older *Tristrams saga* is less salient, the *þáttur* nevertheless picks up on the solemn tone of the conclusion to that work, eschewing the levity of the ending in the later *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar* and thereby rejecting hedonism in favour of a

Christian-moralistic life-view. The arrival of Tristram impulses and story-materials in Iceland is pushed back into the twelfth century, echoing the late Bjarni Einarsson, though (as has been characteristic of recent advocacy for his theories) without his precise cataloguing of alleged parallels.

Úlfar Bragason's "*Fóstbræðra saga*: The Flateyjarbók Version" (268–74) closely inspects this redaction in the spirit of New Philology, for its internal logic and for the opportunity it affords us to gain insights into the "production process" in the saga as a whole. Although the Flateyjarbók manuscript exhibits a superficially bewildering series of textual modifications, sometimes amplifications and sometimes abridgements, Úlfar is able to point to a plausible rationale on the part of the redactor, namely to focus on Óláfr helgi's qualities as a leader of men. The sworn brothers are constructed as driven by male chauvinism and homosocial desire. In a mode of interpretation broadly akin to Andersson's, Úlfar relates these modifications to a shifting of social attitudes concomitant with the shifting political dynamic between Norway and Iceland.

Anne Heinrichs's "Gunnhild Qzurardóttir und Egil Skalla-Grímsson im Kampf um Leben und Tod" (72–108) juxtaposes three leading characters from *Egils saga*, namely the hero himself, Ásgerðr, and Gunnhildr. The main part of the article analyses in great detail the mutually destructive dynamic between Egill and the queen's family. Heinrichs promises a psychological analysis but, although the name of Freud is invoked and the author voices general concurrence with Torfi Tulinius in his recent studies, the psychological theory employed is not specified. To match the configuration of characters in this saga with that of *Gísla saga*, interpreting Gunnhildr and Ásgerðr as representing a death/life polarity, strikes me as oversimplified. The key textual support, a new interpretation of the *ofljóst* in the final stanza, is questionable. The strength of Heinrichs's exposition lies in incidental comments on, for instance, conflicts between clan and feudal systems, the place of the major poems in the text, the cultural status of the Norwegian skerries, the relationship between Norwegian law and

*Egils saga*, and the conflicting genealogies found in the various sources. A possible lost opportunity was to consider Gunnhildr as a case of the powerful queen or dowager figure extensively studied by recent historians.

Another set of chapters, while taking account of interpretive issues of the kind already noted in this review, gives special emphasis to the later reception of sagas. In her “Dialogizität in der *Bandamanna saga*” (301–22), Stefanie Würth observes that despite agreement among scholars that the historical focus of the saga would have been meaningful to its thirteenth-century audience, what its appeal to subsequent audiences would have been is less apparent. Drawing upon Bakhtin, the author posits a sustained dialogism that is already intrinsic to the text and is then enacted down the centuries through the production of numerous manuscript versions, which constitute a rich source for reception studies and should be more extensively used. Accordingly, in her analysis she privileges the Möðruvallabók version of the saga over that preserved in Gks 2845, arguing that the former has more resonances and responses in subsequent tradition than the latter. She shows from analysis of Möðruvallabók that the detail of trials and other juridical material could be varied and “updated” considerably in ways that reflect the preoccupations of different audiences at different periods.

Hans Schottmann’s “Die *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar*” (231–54) also emphasizes that saga tellers did not feel obliged to stick to historical traditions. In the case of *Harðar saga* an aura of antiquity could suffice, as when the prominent structural device of incremental threes is employed to conjure up associations with the heroic age. The teller allowed himself considerable discretion in charting the outlaw hero’s career, sometimes blundering into anachronisms that could easily have been put right by consulting other well-known sagas. Arguments that the saga was assembled from pre-existing stories with a basis in genuinely old traditions are therefore scarcely viable. Schottmann seeks to locate the work within the genre of outlaw sagas (and the sagas of Icelanders more generally) by amassing rich documentation from motivic and lexical

comparisons with *Grettis saga*, *Gísla saga*, and *Bárðar saga*, among others. The action of *Harðar saga* emerges as highly stylized, with much invocation of fate, which, however, turns out to have little ideological or psychological content, serving largely to reinforce the structure of the narrative. Equally, the teller is little concerned to tie action to characterization.

Two further chapters look back to the prehistory and evolution of the saga genre. Rudolf Simek’s “Gloria—Memoria—Historia: Zu Berühmtheit und Erinnerung als Kern von Geschichtsdnken und Sagaschreibung” (255–67) postulates that the key motivation behind the amassing of saga materials was the fame of particular persons or exploits. Extrapolating Huizinga’s theme of the pursuit of fame back from the Renaissance to the Middle Ages and invoking Isidore of Seville and medieval historiographers, Simek sees all sagas, except perhaps the *lygisögur*, as having a historical dimension. Kernels of narrative in texts such as *Landnámabók* encapsulate the essential elements: identification of the personage, description of his or her famous deeds. At the same time, Simek admits a degree of hyperbole into the discussion here, and his analysis of the semantic field of the words *frægr/frægð* [what is heard] might be enriched by greater attention to more modest shades of meaning such as “newsworthy” and “noteworthy.” Would one talk about the “fame” of Wulfstan and Ohthere, as known at Alfred’s time, or rather about the “newsworthiness” of their voyages? The narrativization of some episodes later integrated into the sagas might most readily be explained in the same way.

Alois Wolf’s “Die Skaldendichtung—Wegbereiterin der Sagaprosa?” (283–300) makes a case for regarding skaldic verse, that vehicle par excellence for fame, as formative in the evolution of the prose saga. Rather than “skaldic poetry,” “eddic poetry,” and “saga” developing in isolation from one another, in reality there must have been constant interaction, as is demonstrable to some degree from the different texts centring upon Óláfr helgi. Here Wolf might have taken into account the saga of Haraldr harðráði, where it can be inferred from Morkinskinna and *Heimskringla* that

all three genres contributed to the cultivation of the king's memory. Wolf builds his argument by means of a series of comparisons between *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, though without grounding the discussion in a systematic review of research on the relationship between these two texts. Likewise, he gives comparatively scant attention to *Morkinskinna*, a text that is increasingly recognized as a major precursor to Snorri in respect of source criticism as well as the transmission of story-material. Indeed, some skaldic verses themselves reflect on the truth status of different reports in a way that might well have exerted influence on the *konungasögur*.

Another set of chapters can be grouped together as investigating specific philological details. Dirk Huth's "Der Hagbarðr des Tüangelpfostens—eine Anspielung in *Kormáks lausavísa* 4" (135–51) singles out the highly obscure allusion to Hagbarðr in verse 4 of *Kormáks saga* for renewed discussion, pointing out that this hero's melancholy story was no doubt well known in medieval Iceland and could have been depicted in wood carvings. With the ultimate aim of vindicating Bjarni Einarsson's conviction that prose and verse form an integrated whole in the saga, Huth presents a modified interpretation of the stanza, based on Sophus Bugge. The result is to simplify the woman-kenning but to leave not fully resolved the elements "hjarra krapta," two in a jumbled series of genitive case nouns that perhaps form a puzzle deliberately engineered by the skald.

Else Ebel's ". . . at bjóða sætt ok yfirbætr: Zur Bedeutung von *yfirbætr* in den Íslendinga sögur" (11–24), for its part, offers a carefully documented and cautious lexicographical investigation of the semantic development of *yfirbætr* 'satisfaction' in the sagas of Icelanders and other texts. On the basis of the attestations in Old Icelandic and Norwegian, she points to the distinct possibility that this is not an Old West Norse legal term but rather an ecclesiastical term that has spread to secular narrative texts. On the other hand, the occurrence of its cognate in Frisian and medieval Low German laws discourages Ebel from drawing any definite conclusions. Riskily venturing beyond her discussion, one might speculate that

*yfirbætr* was originally a legal term current in Frisia and Saxony that spread into the ecclesiastical language of Hamburg-Bremen. From there, it could well have been brought into Norwegian and Icelandic ecclesiastical usage through missionary activities sponsored by the archbishopric and made sporadic incursions into the secular sagas.

Wilhelm Heizmann's equally carefully documented "Das 'Geisterwort' *brúngras* in der *Finnboga saga*" (109–18) warns of the dangers scholars run in not checking current editions, textual criticism, and lexicography before engaging in interpretation. In *Finnboga saga*, we are told that a man called Gestr is sent out to gather a certain herb. What herb has proved difficult to ascertain. Traditionally the main manuscript variant has been read as "brungras," but in fact that is a transcription error for "litunargras," i.e., a herb used for dyeing. Consequently, "brungras" can be excised from the dictionaries, putting closure on the lexical problem. Unfortunately, the problem as to *realia* is not so neatly solved, since the corrected reading does not particularly suit the situation in the plot, where the herbs are needed for a woman in childbirth. Taking account of this, Heizmann suggests adopting another manuscript variant, "lausnargras."

Richard Perkins's "*Potenti murmure verborum grandia cete maris in littora trahunt*" (223–30) is packed to bursting point with philological data drawn from *Eiríks saga rauða*, the *Gesta* of Adam of Bremen, and skaldic poetry, as well as from ethnographical sources. In an impressive piece of comparative work, Perkins posits an early Scandinavian practice, thought to be presided over by Þórr, where sympathetic magic, characterized by the mumbling or murmuring of words, was used to attract whales ashore.

Finally to mention two less substantive contributions. Ernst Walter's "Zum Problem des Christlichen in den Isländersagas" (275–82) poses some general questions about the problem of Christian elements in the sagas of Icelanders and adumbrates a program for further collaborative research, without, however, citing recent scholarship. In his opinion, insufficient attention has been given to the Latin materials that must have

been imported, studied, and transcribed in Iceland in copious quantities before vernacular texts were produced. As a specific instance of a possibly overlooked influence, he suggests that saga genealogies may have had biblical models. Marina Mundt's "Skiftende syn på *Njáls saga*" (208–22) offers a brief survey of scholarship and opinion concerning *Njáls saga*, beginning with the edition by Olaus Olavius (1772) and terminating with Sigurður Sigurmundsson's renewed speculation about authorship (1989). Complementing other chapters in this volume, she demonstrates the rich variety of approaches to this much-loved saga by singling out various well-known examples of aesthetic, historical, sociological, juridical, and theological criticism.

The volume is introduced with a succinct appreciation of the honorand's career and contributions to the field (particularly on the lexicographical front) and rounded off with a list of his publications. Overall, this is an attractive book with readable fonts, robust binding, and good paper stock. It is a pity that more effort has not gone into bringing about uniformity in format, for example in the bibliographies appended to chapters. Numerous misprints also appear, more than I can take space to itemize here. Special characters and accented letters (such as *y*) have sometimes failed to convert correctly from the source files. In English- and French-language text the form of the apostrophe is often incorrect. Material could have been proof-read and bibliographical references checked more thoroughly. The chapter by Hermann Pálsson is evidently lacking the final few sentences. In Andersson's chapter the word "humor" (final sentence, 9) seems to have been erroneously replaced by the word "honor."

In conclusion, and despite these incidental blemishes, I can confidently say that this presentation truly honours its distinguished recipient by showing, implicitly as much as programmatically, how his forward-looking contributions to the interpretation of the sagas have influenced two generations of scholars and remain a living part of discussions at the present day.

Russell Poole

James E. Knirk (editor-in-chief), Helle Degnbol, Bent Chr. Jacobsen, Eva Rode, Christopher Sanders, and Þorbjörg Helgadóttir. *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog. A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose. Vol. 2, ban-da*. 1241 columns. *ONP 1-2: Nøgle // Key*. 190 pages. København: Den arnamagnæanske kommission, 2000.

The appearance of another volume of the *ONP* is an important event in Old Norse studies, and the most natural reaction of a reviewer should be one of joy and gratitude. Those who are familiar with the history of the *Oxford* (or *New*) *English Dictionary* will remember that reviews of every fascicle of this monumental work contained not criticism but surveys of the material published, surprise at the resurrection of unknown words and senses, and the impatient hope that the next fascicle (volume) would appear in the foreseeable future. The present dictionary, following upon the works of Cleasby-Vigfússon and Fritzner (Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 2d ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957]; Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog*, 4th ed. [Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1972–73]), cannot be so full of revelations, for Old Norse has been studied quite well, but it is significantly more complete and representative than its famous predecessors.

In volume 2, we find numerous heavy-duty words, especially verbs, *beiða*, *beita*, *benda*, *biða*, *biðja*, *bregða*, *brenna*, *bresta*, *brjóta*, *búa*, *byrja*, but also nouns: *barn*, *baugi*, *bók*, *bréf*, *bróðir*, *brún*, *búnaðr*, the adverb *braut*, etc. This dictionary has been conceived as a lexicographical tool rather than an encyclopedia of medieval Scandinavia. As a result, one sometimes learns more and sometimes less from it than from Cleasby-Vigfússon and Fritzner. This becomes clear from the discussion of a "culture word" like *berserkr* in the *ONP*. In Cleasby-Vigfússon, Guðbrandur Vigfússon speaks about the etymology of *berserkr*, rejects the gloss "bare-skin" (he interprets it as "bear-skin"), and refers to some of the