A STYLISTIC STUDY OF
THE SAGAS OF STURLA DÖRBARSON
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO SOME OTHER
THIRTEENTH CENTURY
ICELANDIC HISTORICAL AND LITERARY SAGAS

by

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A Stylistic Study of the Sagas of Sturla Óðarson
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It is the object of this thesis to present the chief stylistic
and structural characteristics of five thirteenth century Norse
sagas selected as representative of Sturla Óðarson's literary
background; to show in what ways and to suggest why he did or did
not follow their examples; and on the basis of this, to offer a new
interpretation of the style and structure of Sturla's Íslendinga
Saga. The five sagas are considered chronologically in the order
they are believed to have been written. Sverris Saga is a
partisan record of an unconventional Norwegian king's reign (1177-1202)
based on the king's personal experience and contemporary witness.
Knytínga Saga (c. 1260), a celebration of Danish Christian princes
(940-1187), has an unadorned style, at times not unlike Sturla's,
but its concentration on the single theme makes it too constricted
for Sturla's complex material. In Heimskringla (c. 1230), a
history of Norwegian kings up to 1177, Snorri Sturluson freely
adapts and selects from his source material to produce a well­
reasoned pattern of events. Sturla's material was too close to
him to be manipulated in this fashion. Njáls Saga, an almost
wholly fictional work, depends for its unity on complex inter­
actions between figures motivated by their inner temperaments.
Sturla also records diverse human emotions, but his narrative
must depend on actual happenings and therefore lacks the contrived
flawlessness of Njáls Saga. Yet Sturla's selection and arrange­
ment of his authentic material - a dense mass of facts - show that
his control is perfect. He writes with awesome sobriety and psychological
insight, and he rejects any artificial structure.

* Sturla's material for Íslendinga Saga was too close to him to be
manipulated in this fashion. He probably learned most from his
own experience of writing Heðrævar Saga in 1263. Although
this was written under the influence of diplomacy, Sturla was
confronted with the task of relating a mass of inherently
contemporary material. Njáls Saga...
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Introduction

Sturla Dórðarson wrote Islendinga Saga at the end of his life. This is the statement critical to an understanding of the shape he gave the work - its content, style, and structure.

A writer brings to bear upon his work his own experience, whether consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly. At the end of his life, Sturla Dórðarson had behind him a very wide experience, not only of life in thirteenth century Iceland, but of its literature, and it was this mature experience that made him the man in Iceland uniquely suited to write the history of the country's civil strife during the thirteenth century.

Sturla's own family, the Sturlungs, instigated or participated in almost every major dispute that wracked the country during his lifetime. Particularly active were his father Dórðr's brothers and nephews: Snorri Sturluson and his son Órækja, Sighvatr Sturluson and his sons Tumi, Sturla, and Dórðr.¹ As a young man, Sturla Dórðarson himself frequently supported his kinsmen and, in his own middle age, became involved in the activities of Gizurr Þorvaldsson,² the chieftain who eventually engineered Iceland's submission to Norwegian sovereignty in 1262.³ Sturla's role in the disputes of

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¹ See below, Chapter Six, pp. 414 ff.
² See below, Chapter Six, Gizurr's career, pp. 396 ff.
³ Sturlunga Saga, volume 2, ed. Jón Jóhannesson (Reykjavík, 1946) p. lx; herein abbreviated as Sturl. 2 in notes; volume 1 as Sturl. 1.
these men rarely appears to have been primary or critical and he
does not emerge in the saga as an aggressive or heroic warrior.
Nevertheless, he was present at many of the major incidents, while
for any conflict in which he himself had no direct part, the eye-
witness accounts were available of his many relatives and in-laws,
often representing both sides. What appears to have been an
equable nature gave Sturla a special perspective from which to
view this wealth of information, sift, sort, and record it with
his remarkable immediacy. He is neither partial nor flattering toward
the figures of his times. He avoids making explicit moral judgments
himself and so allows the reader as much as possible to make his own
judgments on the basis of the evidence provided.

Sturla's diplomacy as author and his cultivation of disinterested-
ness were fostered by the events of his own life. He had, of course,
the difficult and delicate task of deciding which, if any, of his
feuding relations to support. His disinterestedness was also
strengthened by his preoccupation with law. In 1271 he brought
a new code of laws, the Jarnsíða, to Iceland from Norway and became
the country's first royally appointed lögmaður in 1271. His
interest and knowledge of law is evident in his attention in
Íslendinga Saga to the details of events which would be important
if and when the disputes reached the courts: the names and numbers of
men involved in an attack; the number and nature of any wounds

1. See Sturlu Báttr in Sturl. 2, p. 227, where the following contrast is
made between Sturla and his son, Snorri: "Snorri gerðist uppivöðslumaðr
mikill, ok helthann sveit nökkura. Váru þær fæggar mjök óskaplífir." This
accords well with Sturla's unaggressive and non-violent behaviour
in all accounts about him, for instance: in Íslendinga Saga, Sturl. 1,
during his dispute with Órækja: pp. 382-85, 387; at the settlement of
his and Órækja's dispute with Gizurr and Kolbeinn ungi at Hvítarbrú:
pp. 466-72; and, in Þorgils Saga Skarsðá, in his dispute with Hrafn:
chapters 59, 64, 67, 68, 79, 80.

2. Sturlu Báttr, op. cit. p. 235, says: "Var hann þá skipaðr lögmaðr yfir
allt Island." It is not clear whether he held the office alone or with
whom he may have shared it. The last lógsögumaðr was Borleifr hreim,
1271, nephew of Gizurr Porvaldsson.
inflicted; the names of the dead and, where known, their killers; the destruction of property. Such details appear frequently in the narrative and reveal Sturla's legal mind at work, ever watchful and impartial.¹

It was in middle age, however, when he was sent abroad from Iceland as punishment for an attempted raid on Hrafn Oddsson by Sturla's sons,² that Sturla's powers of impartial observation were put to the school of diplomacy. At that time the Sturlungs were among the Norwegian King Hákon's bitterest enemies, not only because of their opposition to his efforts to subdue Iceland to his power, but also because they had given much support in the past to Hákon's father-in-law, Skúli Bárðarson. This man had attempted to usurp Hákon's throne and was removed in 1242. It seemed that Sturla was going from the frying pan into the fire.³

Fortunately for Sturla, Hákon was on an expedition to Scotland and the Orkneys at the time of Sturla's arrival in Norway and in the king's place was his son Magnús. The prince deferred judgment on Sturla's case until the king's expected return. In the meantime, he set the Icelander to work as a crew member aboard his ship in the royal fleet. Here Sturla achieved a popular renown as a storyteller which eventually reached the prince and won his favour. Thus, when news of King Hákon's death reached Norway in 1263, Magnús required Sturla Bárðarson to write a saga about his father's life.

¹. See for instance Chapter Six, the Flugumýrarbrenna, pp. 473 ff.
³. Ibid., pp. 231-232.
This was something of a "höfuðlausn" for Sturla and not an easy task to perform, for he had to satisfy his royal patron by praising the dead king without mocking him with exaggerated flattery. At the same time, Sturla must have been given access to a wealth of information, both written and oral, without having had any personal experience of the events concerned. His selection from this information ranges widely in an attempt to provide posterity with an authoritative biography of a model king, both military leader and statesman. It includes a heavy emphasis on legal and dynastic matters surrounding Hákon's claim to the throne, often tedious in the extreme, with what seems to be the author's own lack of interest reflected in the monotony of his style. Only at certain moments of intense emotion does Sturla become absorbed in dramatisation; at these moments he employs a most effective but very plain style characterised by the controlled use of brief sentences, co-ordinate rather than subordinate clauses, and a preponderantly monosyllabic diction. This is a style used more powerfully and more consistently in Íslendinga Saga where it better suits the more frequent tensions, conflicts, and violence he records.


2. These points have also been made by John Simpson of the University of Edinburgh in an unpublished lecture entitled "Sturla Þórðarson as Politician and Writer."

3. See below, Chapter Four, pp. 322 ff.
The Norwegian sojourn and the experience of writing Håkonar Saga\(^1\) may have given him more than a lesson in diplomacy. For within Håkonar Saga there are many very brief references to events in Iceland, some of them major events, some in which Sturla himself participated. The desire to record these events more fully may have prompted Sturla to write Islendinga Saga, for there these same events receive more detailed attention.\(^2\) But Sturla did not write Islendinga Saga immediately on his return to his own country. He began only after he had lived in retirement for some years, abstaining from all faction. This circumstance gave him some perspective even on his own personal experience of the events he recorded. But this detachment did not diminish his personal interest in and commitment to the subject. Instead, detachment and interest combined with a wide experience of events, the testimony of eye-witnesses, and the freedom and willingness to write. This put him in a specially suitable and capable position to compose Islendinga Saga.

An author does not write well on the basis of life experience alone, even when his personal circumstances are convenient. He must also have an imaginative and artistic experience, perhaps of his own and certainly of other people's writing. He need not model his own work directly on theirs; he may merely select certain characteristics of various works and

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1. Sturla Dörðarson, Håkonar Saga Håkonarsonar, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon (London, 1887); herein abbreviated in notes as Håk.

2. See below, Chapter Four, p. 328.
adapt and combine them into an individual style, or may even adopt an approach in direct opposition to his predecessors, finding their methods unsuitable to his particular task. Probably he will also use certain stylistic devices of his own, though such usage is not necessarily more creative than his adaptation of existing styles. To work all into a whole that may be said to have an organic unity is perhaps the greatest of the saga writer's creative acts.

Sturla did all these things. It is the object of this thesis to demonstrate how; to present the chief characteristics of the varied styles of the thirteenth century sagas, especially the historical sagas, that formed Sturla's literary background; to show in what ways and to suggest why he did or did not follow their examples; and, on the basis of this, to offer a new interpretation of the style and structure of Islendinga Saga.

The other important contemporary Norse history of the thirteenth century, apart from Islendinga Saga itself, was completed very early in the century, probably soon after 1202, having been begun about 1185. This is Sverris Saga, written all or in part by Karl Jónsson, Abbot of Píngeyrar cloister in Iceland from 1169 to 1207. The saga traces Sverrir's career from his humble beginnings in the Faroes, where he received an extensive clerical training, through his early

days in Norway, his slow and steady rise to power by military means, his ultimate usurpation of the throne from Magnús Erlingsson, and his defence of his kingdom against rival upstarts and opponents until his death in 1202. The saga writer is not detached as Sturla was in writing Hákonar Saga. He presents a sympathetically partisan view of Sverrir, but an unconventional one, displaying and demanding from the audience a high level of intelligence and appreciation of irony. The king himself carefully supervised much of the saga and seems to be the source for the early speeches and dreams. All of the passages until chapter 31 are written entirely from his point of view. The style reveals much clerical learning, whether Sverrir's or Karl's, or both, and is marked by extensive but carefully selected detail, anecdote, and subtle humour. There is remarkable sophistication of argument in the speeches, especially the early ones, and much corresponding evidence of sophistication in the narrative portions of the saga.

Sverris Saga was little help to Sturla for a number of reasons. He probably did not have at his fingertips the stylistic resources of the Sverris Saga author, a man trained to be a priest and therefore schooled in rhetoric, with Biblical parallels at hand for ready use in speeches and with a rich clerical vocabulary so familiar that he could use it ironically. In addition, although Sverris Saga presented a model for writing the history of events within living memory, it was little suited to Sturla's intent in writing Íslendinga Saga.

1. See below, Chapter One, pp. 35 ff.
It is true that in his presentation of Gizurr Þorvaldsson's career throughout the saga he presents both negative and positive aspects of Gizurr's nature, just as Abbot Karl presents Sverrir's foibles as well as his conventionally kingly qualities. But Sturla's portrait of Gizurr is not partisan; the negative aspects of Gizurr's nature are terrific rather appealing, while the positive aspects reveal depths of feeling and tenderness in the man which, if present in Sverrir, always remain cloaked in his saga. Sturla makes no attempt to justify the actions of any figure in the saga by his accounts, and the contrivance so clearly discernible in Sverris Saga, even though it is subtly disguised and well-tempered with wit, is entirely absent from Islendinga Saga. Noticeably too, no hero emerges from Sturla's work; instead, he offers the reader a window - quite without rose-coloured glass - on the tangled strife and violence of his lifetime. This he presents with an awesome sobriety contrasting sharply with the delightful wit and intellectual sophistication of Sverris Saga.

Sturla's own Håkonar Saga, though technically a contemporary history, was not written from first-hand experience. It nevertheless gave him an early ground in which to exercise his particular spare style in recording the high emotional points of the saga. In matters of structure, Håkonar Saga was a model impossible to follow, being fundamentally annalistic, and, like Sverris Saga, centred round a single figure, King Hákon. This focus is maintained not
only by the king's participation in most of the events recorded, but also by the use of his reign as the basis of an emphatic chronology. As the narrative progresses, each year is numbered from Hákon's accession to the throne.¹ But when Sturla came to write Islendinga Saga, no figure in his material could provide such an insistent shape to the saga. He does use the figure of Gizurr to provide some continuity to the huge compass of the narrative in respect of figures and events and he also mentions the chronological symmetry of Gizurr's life.² Yet Islendinga Saga is not a Gizurar Saga, a biography, nor does Sturla set the significant years of Gizurr's life throughout the saga as distinct signposts in the way he does for Hákon in Hákonar Saga.

Among non-contemporary histories of Sturla's time was Knytlinga Saga³ (c. 1260). As in Sturla's work, many of its finest passages are written in an unadorned style, but several aspects inherent in style, structure, and the nature of the Knytlinga material, meant that Sturla could not adopt it as a model. Knytlinga is a history of Danish kings from Haraldr Gormsson until 1187, so that the author is much more distant from his material than either Sturla or the author of Sverris Saga. Detail was therefore much more limited for the Knytlinga writer, especially about the earlier kings, so that selection was sometimes scarcely necessary and invention less open to censure.

1. See below, Chapter Four, p. 271.
2. See below, Chapter Six, p. 395.
3. Knytlinga Saga, eds. Carl af Petersens and Emil Olson (Copenhagen, 1919-25); herein abbreviated Knýt. in notes.
There is also an elitism in Knytlinga Saga - the common man, when he appears, is portrayed with condescension, while Islendinga Saga is about the people themselves in a country where there was initially no king and no titled aristocracy. Nor is the theme\(^1\) of Knytlinga Saga, the celebration of Danish Christian princes and their supporters and the denigration of their opponents, an appropriate one for Islendinga Saga. The figures of both clergy and layman could not be presented, on the basis of Sturla's personal experience, in so black and white a fashion as they appear in Knytlinga Saga.\(^2\) They were too close to him and too complexly human; many were still alive. His saga about them could be neither structurally nor thematically simple. He therefore presents the role of the Church more pragmatically, showing how the clergy engaged in political disputes and wielded excommunication as a weapon.\(^3\)

The other collection of kings' sagas of the period is the more famous Heimskringla,\(^4\) written by Sturla's paternal uncle, Snorri Sturluson, and for that reason sometimes compared to Sturla's own Islendinga Saga, usually in Snorri's favour.\(^5\) This comparison is not, I believe, a just one. Where Snorri could fabricate and

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1. 'Theme' is used in this connection to mean the saga author's purpose or message in writing the saga.
2. See below, Chapter Three, pp. 204 ff.
3. See below, Chapter Six, pp. 424 ff.
4. Snorri Sturluson, Heimskringla, ed. Bjarni Áðalbjarnarson. Íslenzk Forntlit xxxvi-xxxviii (Reykjavík, 1941-51); herein abbreviated as Hkr. 1,2,3.
5. See below, Chapter Six, pp. 415.
adjust his source material to his liking because of its distance from him in time, as well as its relative scarcity, Sturla had to deal with contemporary eye-witness accounts, the facts of which could not be altered. Snorri was also able, by the same freedom of selection and invention, to make all his material fit into a smoothly woven pattern of cause and effect. Yet no matter how lucid and reasonable the saga may seem, its unity is none the less artificial and imposed. Sturla's material was not capable of such manipulation. There was no distance of time to simplify cause and effect, to suggest pattern and interpretation, nor would his saga be believable to his contemporaries if he forced a pattern on events. Too much of his material was common knowledge to allow for invention, adjustment, or interpretive selection.

Sturla's literary background also included family sagas - thirteenth century works based on traditional accounts of Iceland's first settlers and their families in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and, although written about historical people, highly literary constructs. They inevitably provide a precedent for tracing the course of events on Icelandic soil.

In some of these works it is clear that structural unity depends neither upon chronology, as in Hákonar Saga; upon a primary abstract theme as in Knytlinga; or upon the simple engineering of connections between one event and another as in Heimskringla. Rather, unity may be dependent upon the complex interactions of the characters.
In Njáls Saga, for instance, although action and response may seem to take an inevitable shape and direction, action does not demand the specific response given to it. That response, sometimes unusual, is determined by the individual natures of the characters involved. Such a response is in turn answered by further action also determined by character. In such a saga, then, the portrayal of character is extremely important, for the reader must sufficiently apprehend and distinguish one character from another so that the actions of individual saga figures can be anticipated to some extent. It is from this anticipation that part of our sense of the inevitability of events springs.

The portrayal of character in Njáls Saga is not by any means entirely descriptive. The author employs dialogue, distinctive action, and interaction; and, although the characters themselves may not develop (in the sense of altering or maturing) during the saga, the reader's apprehension of them does. He may not reach a complete understanding of a given figure until the end of the saga or until the death of that figure in the saga. He discovers their natures much as one does those of people in real life.

Although the control necessary to such a complex structure is clearly very great, the measure of the saga writer's art lies properly in the apparent absence of any artifice. The structure is so flawless and so fluid in Njála that action and reaction assume a natural and inevitable flow which, except to close and critical analysis, 1.

It is accepted by Norse scholars today that Njála as we know it was written very near the end of the thirteenth century, most probably after Sturla had written Íslendinga Saga, possibly even after his death (1282). But in spite of the seeming anachronism, Njála is included here, not as an actual work in Sturla's literary background, but as representative of a kind of structural unity not found in thirteenth century Norse histories, but nevertheless present in some saga writing of Sturla's time. This character-based form of structural unity could have been demonstrated by using an earlier family saga - Laxdala, for instance - but Njála has been chosen because it compares well with Íslendinga Saga in the comprehensiveness of its cast of figures, its account of widespread and complex feuding, and its episode of a major conflagration.

Sturla does not model Íslendinga Saga exactly on the Njála kind of structural unity. But a unity based in some way upon character was an alternative he could take. He was sufficiently close to the saga figures, very often through personal knowledge, to apprehend the play of character in individual incidents and in the relationship between incidents involving a consistent set of key figures. This he portrays again and again with considerable success, not only for the more famous and powerful individuals like Sturla Sighvatsson, but for the less significant Icelanders as
well. With such a range of focus he shows how the civil strife affected the lives of all Icelanders at every level of property and influence and he is particularly attentive to the effect of the strife on the private and emotional lives of the people. In Hákonar Saga, passages of intense emotional encounter are rare, though finely wrought; in Íslendinga Saga many more such moments demanded a place.

Sturla fills his narrative with a bewildering array of factual detail and he seems deliberately to refuse to link all the events of the saga together in a seemingly continuous stream. Many of the events recorded occur simultaneously; they take place in different parts of the country and the focus may shift with apparent randomness. Series of clearly connected events, involving consistent sets of figures, may not be told consecutively, but rather interrupted by accounts of seemingly unrelated incidents. This contributes a sense of fruitlessness to human action and indeed, at first reading, the saga may thus seem overwhelmingly chaotic.

And yet the author himself is in control, not only within the accounts of individual incidents, where control of the structure is readily apparent, but throughout the saga as a whole. What appears

1. For examples of the importance of the individual natures of large figures in the narrative, see below, Chapter Six, Gizurr's career, pp. 396 ff, and Sturla Sighvatsson and Sighvatr Sturluson, pp. 449 ff. For instances involving less significant figures, see, pp. 390, 414 ff.

2. See below, Chapter Six, pp. 424 ff.

3. See below, Chapter Six, pp. 464 ff.
chaotic and indiscriminately inclusive at first sight, emerges after close analysis as a record in which every incident has some effect upon the direction events take, even though this may not be clear immediately. These causal relationships are traced below among some of the events in the most complex part of the saga as an illustration of the implicit structuring and control consistent throughout Islendinga Saga. We may see in the absence of any explicitly connected structure a deliberate attempt to convey the events as they were experienced and to represent accurately the reality of civil war as it swept over the Icelandic people, great and small. In this way, Sturla remains faithful to his own apprehension of events and committed to the truth as he conceived it.

Jan de Vries has said that Sturla pursued the work begun by his uncle Snorri Sturluson: "Sturla ist der Fortsetzer von Snorris Lebenswerk." He does not mean by this that Sturla imitated Snorri, but rather that he furthered him. In fact, Sturla furthered Icelandic historiography, not only as represented by Snorri, but by other thirteenth century writers as well. In the following chapters, the specific and individual nature of the saga writer's achievement is demonstrated for each of five thirteenth century sagas which represent Sturla's literary background, including Njála. Out of this literary inheritance, Sturla has refined his narrative art for the essential purpose of depicting authentically a society of irredeemable violence and anguish.

1. See below, Chapter Six, pp. 424 ff.
The saga has proved too big for a steady critical analysis until now. Pétur Sigurðsson,\textsuperscript{1} in his long monograph on Íslendinga Saga, has concerned himself largely with historical matters and with the question of authorship. His stylistic and structural comments are rare except when he discusses the Flugumyrarbrenna.\textsuperscript{2} These comments I have acknowledged in the context of my own discussion, together with the unsubstantiated judgments of other scholars, English and Icelandic. I cannot claim in my analysis to have covered every instance, but I have attempted to provide sufficient evidence to corroborate my arguments. The translations given throughout parallel to cited passages are my own renderings, although I have taken account of published translations by John Sephton, Samuel Laing, Guðbrandur Vigfússon, Magnús Magnússon and Hermann Pálsson, and Julia McGrew and George Thomas, as indicated in the Bibliography. I have adopted the spelling æ for etymological æ and òé, except where œ occurs in citation from a diplomatic text.

\textsuperscript{1} Pétur Sigurðsson, Úm Íslendinga Sögu Sturlu Dórðarsonar (Reykjavík, 1933-35).

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., pp. 111-114.
Chapter One

The Sophisticated Style of 'Sverris Saga'

*Sverris Saga* was begun during King Sverrir's reign (1184-1202) and completed after his death, which the saga records. At least part of the saga was written by Karl Jónsson, abbot of the Icelandic monastery at Bôngeyrar, but the question of authorship is complicated and unresolved. Yet whether there was one author or two, there exists throughout the saga a consistency of style and structure upon which the unity of the work depends. The following chapter offers a selection of evidence demonstrating this consistency.

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1. See Appendix A to this chapter, The provenance of *Sverris Saga*, pp. 120-123.
I  The structure and content of the saga

A  The proportions of the saga

In *Sverris Saga* the primary concern is Sverrir's political career. Detail is most extensive during the eight critical years (1177-1184) when Sverrir pitted himself against King Magnús Erlingsson and finally, in 1184, overthrew him. Together with a brief and legend-like account of his origins, these eight years comprise more than half the saga volume (pp. 1-107) and include most of the saga's political and battle speeches, as well as its finest battle accounts.

For the years 1185-1195, the saga is much briefer, covering them in a mere 27 pages (pp. 107-133). For the first few of these years Sverrir was occupied with a series of minor uprisings against him led by royal impostors, whom he eliminates. But for the years 1189-1195, the saga writer gives almost undivided attention to Sverrir's quarrels with the bishops who frequently opposed him during his career. Archbishop Eysteinn led the victorious defence of Niðarós against Sverrir at the Battle of Hattarhamar in 1178 (pp. 30-31), and Bishop Nikúlás had a hand in the Baglar's uprising in 1196 (pp. 134 ff.) and in their continual battles against Sverrir; but in both these cases the opposition comes principally from the bændr and the issues are not ecclesiastical.

1. See below, pp. 35 ff.
2. See below, pp. 94-112.
3. See below, pp. 95-97. A bishop participating in battle is not unheard of in other sagas. Most memorable is Bishop Sigurðr, who sides with Kálfr Árnason and other nobles and bændr to defeat St Óláfr at Stiklarstaðir in 1030. Hkr. 2, pp. 371-72
It is only for the years 1189-1195 that the saga writer records Sverrir's struggles to limit Church control over affairs of state and to increase his own power in ecclesiastical affairs. He imposes, for instance, a restriction on the size of the archbishop's bodyguard (pp. 122-124) and refuses to be bound by any agreements made between Magnús Erlingsson and the Church (p. 119). These disputes do not lead to physical battles but to the wielding of the weapons of exile by Sverrir and of excommunication by the archbishop, (p. 129). These ecclesiastical disputes are officially settled by diplomatic means in 1195.1

The last part of the saga, up until Sverrir's death in 1202, again becomes more detailed and concentrates in particular upon Sverrir's conflict with the Baglar whom he eventually crushes. These years comprise about one third of the saga content (pp. 134-95) containing several extensive battle accounts but fewer and shorter speeches than in the first part of the saga.

The only information in the saga concerning Sverrir's administration of the country are the frequent but very summary references to the establishment of royal bailiffs in conquered areas.2 Private and court

1. Sverrir receives a letter bearing the Papal seal and lifting the excommunication. This letter is delivered by Danes, whom Sverrir pays, and it is announced that the Pope's original envoys have been poisoned by a priest (pp. 133-134). All this seems rather suspicious, but there is nothing further in the saga to indicate that the letter was forged.

2. See chapters 26, 40, 43, 74, 100, 115, 142.
scenes such as are included in Håkonar Saga, Knytlinga Saga, and Heimskringla are, however, altogether absent from Sværres Saga.

Chapter 100 holds nearly all the personal information about King Sverrir's private life, his wife and children, which the saga provides, apart from the eulogy to him at the end, and even here the treatment is cursory:


One year after King Magnus fell, King Sverrir married and took Margré, daughter of the Swedish King Eiríkr, son of St Jatvarðr. Eiríkr lies buried in a shrine in Sweden at Uppsala.* King Sverrir had two sons, the elder was Sigurðr, who was nick-named Lavarðr. And the other was called Hákon. His daughters Cecilia and Íngibjórg.

* Margaret was the sister of the Swedish King Knut.

B The chronological progression of events

Although the proportion of detail varies, the saga writer has attempted throughout to maintain order by connecting the events of the saga in a chronological sequence, so that one event seems to lead directly into the next. This is achieved by bridging gaps in the narrative with references to specific dates:

1. See below, Chapters Four, pp.305-5, 323-7; Three, pp. 213-18, 249-57 and Two, pp. 172-81 respectively.

2. See below, pp. 85-89.

3. Page numbers after citations refer to Sv. unless noted otherwise in this chapter.

4. Dating by church calendar is extremely common in Sv. The examples above are selective, but indication of their variety in the saga may be found as follows: p. 137, l. 14 and 17; p. 55, l. 29; p. 166, l. 10; p. 138, l. 32; p. 194, l. 13.
Sunnum-daginn eptir hvitadaga var Sverrir konungr í Bjargyn... (p. 57, l. 16)
The Sunday after Whitsun, King Sverrir was in Bergen...

Um haustit eptir for hann norór til Prandheims... (p. 85, l. 20)
During the following autumn he went north to Prandheim...

Vaccói allt liðit með vapnum um nottnina til dags. Þat var um nottnina firir hinn ellaíta dag í iolum.(p. 171, l. 27-28)
All the host were awake with arms during the night until day. That was during the night before the eleventh day of Christmas.

...Miðvicu-dag í imbroðgrum um lenga-fostu drapu þeir Bendict syslo-mann Sverris konungs (p. 172, l. 27-28)
...Wednesday of Ember Days during Lent they killed Bendict, King Sverrir's bailiff.

Gaps between the distinct sections of the saga have been bridged, commonly enough, with references to seasons:

Eptir fall Magnus konungs for Sverrir konungr um sumarit í Vic austr oc allt til landzenda oc lagóí allt land undir sic (p. 107, l. 20-21).
After the fall of King Magnús, King Sverrir travelled during the summer east into Vík and all the way to the coast and laid all the land under his control.

Um sumarit eptir fall Kuflungs com Eirícr erkibiscup í Noreg oc haþpi fengit pallium í Rumaborg (p. 118, l. 16-17).
The summer after the fall of the Kuflungar, Archbishop Eiríkur came to Norway and had obtained the pallium in Rome.

Um varit eptir leitaði Hreiðarr vík konung hvort hans gríndi scyldi þangat verða. konungr svaraði sva. Ecki litz mer mioc frilp-vaðmið her í landi...pessi floccr var callaðr Baglar (p. 134, l. 7-9, 24).
The next spring, Hreiðarr questioned the king what his plan would be henceforward. The king answered, "There does not appear to me to be much promise of peace here in the land..." this band was called the Baglar.

1. See above, pp. 18-19.
C The partisan nature of Sverris Saga

1 Legendary origins and dreams

The account given of Sverrir's origins has about it an air of folk-tale and legend peculiar to this early part of the saga. He grows up in the Faroes as the reputed son of Gunnhildr and Unnas, a comb-maker, but several significant dreams suggest he will be a man of greater measure than his humble background promises. Dreams appear throughout the saga and consistently have the function of legitimising Sverrir's claim and position in Norway. All these dreams are discussed in Appendix D in comparison with the Heimskringla version of St Óláfr's dreams.

2 Miracles

The miracles recorded in the saga help to emphasise Sverrir's role as one chosen and protected by God. Early in the saga Sverrir receives his own signs of his special nature. Pursued by an enemy, he hides in a peasant's oven, and later escapes unscathed, even though she builds a fire in it:

Kona nokur fal hann i ofni oc setti hello fyrir ofns-munnann. Siðan gerði hon elld fyrir þeir leituðu hans um stofuna oc funno hann eigi (p. 2, p. 36-3, 1. 1).

A certain woman hid him in an oven and set a flat stone before the oven's mouth. Then she made a fire before it. They searched for him in the room and did not find him.

The saga mentions that men later recognised this incident as a sign of Sverrir's great destiny:
Mart þottuz menn nu siðan hava at merkiom er visso at hveriom manne hann varþ at hann þotti mikillar naturu vera (p. 3, ll. 1-3). Men who had certain knowledge what sort of man he became, have since thought much of the signs that he seemed to be of great supernatural power.

Other miracles, like the dreams, are spaced throughout the saga:

a) Chapter 13: When Sverrir and his men are forced to cross a large lake in a forest using only wooden rafts, Sverrir is the last to leave the raft on the other side, and when he does, the raft sinks. Here it is explicitly stated that his men then realised Sverrir was marked out for great things:

nu er þat ollum audsynt at sa floti bar þann farm er ðatlaðr var til þeira stor-virkia er þa varo eigi fram comin oc hér þi tignar æn þa hafði hann. er hann flaut undir mannfarminom. en sauck þann tima er menn varo af hánom. (p. 13, l. 28-31). Now it is clear to everyone that when it floated under the shipload of men, but sank as soon as men were off it, that that raft bore that load which was destined for those great deeds which had not then happened and for a higher title than he yet held.

b) Chapter 20: When Sverrir's men are caught in a severe snow-storm and threaten suicide, he persuades them to call on God's mercy and on the Virgin Mary and St Óláfr. And even as he speaks the weather abates:

gerþi þegar heiðviðri oc scol-scin. oc sva blitt veðr sem um mitt sumar væri (p. 23, ll. 4-5). Then clear weather occurred and sunshine and such mild weather as occurs in mid-summer.
c) Chapter 32: After Sverrir prays to St Óláfr to help him escape Magnús Erlingsson at sea, a fog comes up suddenly and hides Sverrir's ship so that Magnús is forced to abandon the pursuit:

sva mikl þoka at ecki scip so great a fog that one could sa fra óðro (p. 35, ll. 21-22). not see one ship from another.

d) Chapter 150: When the enemy, the Baglar, set fire to Bergen while Sverrir is there, the churches in the city are saved and the fire is controlled because relics are set in the path of the flames. Though the saga does not say that this was Sverrir's doing, the miracle certainly shows divine favour directed upon him:

gecc elldrinn eigi þar the fire did not go any lengra oc var þat all-further and it was a most biort iartegn (p. 157, manifest miracle.
ll. 37-38).

e) Chapter 181: Sverrir's body and face, after his death, are uncorrupted like a saint's or bishop's:

1. See, for example: Biskupa Sögur, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon (Copenhagen, 1858):

Porláks s. helga (p. 112): his colour was much brighter litr hans var miklu bjartari than other men's, but the vision en annarra manna... was so bright in his eyes, like var svá bjart í augum hans, a living man's.
sem lifandi manns.
Saga Porláks biskups hin yngri(p. 298): his colour was much brighter and litr hans var miklu bjartari ok more handsome than other men's... ðekkiligt en annarra manna... sár voru mörg fallin á hörundi hans...en öll voru þau gróin. many wounds had fallen on his
Gudmundar s. (p. 565): flesh...but all were healed:
þottust aldri sét hafa dauðs futtast áldri sét hafa dauðs
manns hold jafnbjargt ok men's hold jafnbjargt ok ðekkiligt sem þetta.
Óláfs s. helga, Ókr. 2, p. 387: they thought they had never seen andlit konungsins var svá fagrt, a dead man's flesh so bright and at roði var í kinnum, sem þa at the king's visage was as fair hann svefi, en miklu bjartara and red in the cheeks, as when en áðr var, meðan hann lifði. he slept, but much brighter than before, while he lived.
baru siðan allir eitt vitni um
at engi þottiz set hafa fegra
likama dauðs mannz enn hans.
var hann ok meðan hann lífði
allra manna fegrstr a
horundit (p. 194, ll. 16-18).

All since bore unanimous witness
that none thought he had seen a
fairer body of a dead man than
his. While he lived he was also
of all men the most fair in
complexion.

All these miracles point to Sverrir as God's favourite.

3 Sverrir calls upon God

There are many other instances apart from that in chapter 20
when Sverrir in his speeches calls upon or refers to the aid of
God or St Óláfr, with whom he associates himself, not only because
Óláfr is his claimed ancestor, but also because Óláfr was a king
who like himself fought for his throne in Norway. Yet these public
declarations of faith throughout his career distinguish Sverrir from
St Óláfr as he appears in the Heimskringla, for Óláfr very rarely
calls upon or even mentions God until after he has been exiled to
Russia.2 Clearly it is a righteous and rhetorical habit that
Sverrir has cultivated:

mun guð sva scipta með os.
þvi at þeir hafa lengi yfir
varo riki oc sæmund setið
(p. 39, ll. 36-37).

God shall now decide between
us, for they have long ruled
over our kingdom and honour.

1. See also Peter Foote, "Nafn guðs hit hæsta" in Speculum Norroenum,
Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre, eds. U. Dronke,

2. Óláfr does not call upon God's support even when converting the
heathen Norwegians. It is only when events begin to turn against
him that he explicitly declares his trust in God and begins to
then King Sverrir called loudly: By God's will and the holy King Ólafur's, prepare yourselves now, for I will surely do battle with King Magnus and no longer be driven back over the land. ... It will now (be) as before that our protection, as that of all men, is entirely in God's hands and his saints', and not dependent on numbers of men. Now I appeal my case to Almighty God and his holy King Óláfr and to Saint Sunneva.

God Himself we must praise for our victory...and we may not impute to ourselves this fair victory otherwise than that it has happened according to God's will and His arrangement.

4 Narrative references to God's support for Sverrir

Aside from Sverrir's own direct references to God, there are a few narrative references which have a similar function in the saga as documented evidence of God's favour for him. One of these follows directly after the miracle in chapter 20² concerning the snowstorm:

And as soon as he (Sverrir) had delivered the oath, God had granted them such speedy and sublime mercy that no one could tell from what direction the wind was. Bright weather then ensued.

1. For other examples see pages 86, 11. 16-18; 53, 11. 22-24; 175, 11. 32-33.
2. See above, page 23.
Examples of other instances are as follows:

and because Almighty God and the Holy Virgin Mary have given King Sverrir many handsome victories, it may be that envious and foolish men will not believe our story and declare that we cannot be honest if we say he always had victory.

King Sverrir then bowed in prayer and called upon St Ólafr and then he spoke before the men many fair words.

King Sverrir now thanked Almighty God and Mary, Very Holy Mother of God, and King Ólafr, for that handsome victory which God gave him.

5 Sverrir’s royal title and relationships stressed

Throughout the saga, the saga-writer attempts to convince us of Sverrir’s claimed paternity by mentioning unhesitatingly Sverrir’s relationships with the people who would have been connected to him if his father had been the royal Sigurðr Haraldsson. For instance, when he arrives in Norway, there is a man called Eysteinn leading the party opposing Magnús Erlingsson. Eysteinn is or claims to be the son of Eysteinn Haraldsson, Sigurðr’s brother. He and Sverrir would therefore be cousins if their paternity claims were accurate. The saga-writer states this with apparent confidence:
And when he arrived there, that man allowed himself to be given the name of king who was called Eysteinn. He and Sverrir were the sons of brothers.

In the same chapter, chapter 5, the author mentions Jarl Birgir, Sigrdr's brother-in-law, with equal assurance of Sverrir's relationship to him:

Jarl Birgir brósa, his in-law, who had married his father's sister Brigit.

And, in chapter 43, Sigrdr is spoken of explicitly as Sverrir's father and Hákon herðibreirið as Sverrir's brother, in an indirect speech given by Sverrir himself:

He declared what trustworthy friends the Þrandir had been to King Sigrdr, his father, and King Hákon, his brother, and Eysteinn the Birkibein.

Towards the end of the saga, Sverrir himself recites his mother's ancestry to show that she, too, was of noble blood. In the saga writer's record of public reaction to this declaration, the reader may detect a wry comment, for it is possible to interpret from the writer's words that Sverrir's men were as keen to claim relationship with their successful leader as Sverrir was to convince them of his nobility:
then he set before all the
bingmen her who-ancestry
in all its lines and many then
recognised their own relations
both on the father's and the
mother's side who had previously had
no knowledge of it.

Sverrir himself first receives the title of king in chapter 11
and it appears from the account that the title was forced upon him,
and that he, in all humility, was not anxious to accept it: 1

Yet in spite of Sverrir's apparent reluctance, the saga writer drives
home the fact of his kingship by referring to him as "Sverrir konung"
meticulously throughout the saga from this point forward.

6 The presentation of the enemy

The saga writer also wins the reader's sympathy and approval for Sverrir
by presenting Sverrir's enemies in unsympathetic or unflattering lights,
or by making clear their error in opposing the king.

1. While I have found no precedent for a would-be king refusing the
title, such modest reluctance to accept office is common in the
history of the Church. Several early Icelandic bishops are said
to have shown reluctance and any or all of them could be Sverrir's
model. See Bisk.: Jóns s. helga, pp. 159, 231; Halr s. pp. 128-29;
Forláks s., p. 273; it is also recorded of Guðmundr Árason, p. 473,
and Aron, p. 683.
In chapter 22, when Sverrir descends upon Eystradalr with a large army to be billeted over Christmas, the bændr's resentment, true to their traditionally conservative reputation, is not presented as a reasonable objection to feeding a whole army during a feast season, but as reprehensible close-fistedness:

En bændr ætluo at þeir mundo setiæz i costi þeira um jölin með sitt lið. oc toco sva við at sia. at engi mæð let iola-veizlo sina bua. hvartki mungat ne aðra costi (p. 24, li. 23-26).

We are then told how Sverrir pretends to march off, only to return and take the bændr by surprise after they have made their feast preparations. Their original stinginess, as the saga presents it, destroys our sympathy for the victims of this strategy; we only see comedy in the way Sverrir achieves his end.

In chapter 107, Archbishop Eysteinn confesses on his death-bed that he wrongly opposed Sverrir:

bað erkibiscup at konungr scylldi fyrir-gefa honom allt þat er hann hafði of-tekit við hann þa stund er staðit hafði þeira delia Magnus konungs oc Sverris konungs (p. 114, li. 7-9).

This error is stressed a few lines later where the author records how Swerrir himself spoke of their last conversation together:

But the bændr expected that Sverrir and his troops would take up quarters during Christmas at their (the bændr's) expense and so they saw to it that no man got ready his Christmas feast, neither ale nor other provisions.
sagði at erkibyscup hafði þvi iatat
at hann hafði meira af tekit um
motgang við sic en sva at hann
vissi at þat veri guðrettlixt.
oc eigi hafpi minnr aðrir lutir
til borit er hann þottir eigi
mega ifra sciliaz lið-veizlo
við Magnus konung (ll. 15-18).

he said that the archbishop
had agreed that he had opposed
him beyond what he knew to
be right before God and that
other things had been more the
cause of it, namely, that he
thought he could not break his
promise of support with King
Magnús.

In chapter 109, Sverrir similarly silences any objection to
his ruthless suppression of his rival Jón Kuflung, by underming
Jón’s claim to royal blood. Sverrir, after stripping the corpse,
brings forth an old peasant who testifies that Jón is his son and
identifies the body by the scar of an old wound:

Petr sagði þat til marca ef
hann er minn son Ormr þa er
þat marca at sveinninn liop a
lia oc scienðiz mic oc undir
ilinni a hógra fati (p. 117,
ll. 9-11).
Pétr said this of the marks,
"If he is my son Ormr, then
there is a scar from when the
boy jumped on a scythe and cut
himself badly on the sole of his
right foot."

King Sverrir made it manifest
to both townsmen and his own
men that this Jón whom the Kuflungr
had called their king was called
Ormr, son of Pétr and Astrifór.

Sverrir konungr lysti þvi
bæði fyrir þøjar-
monnum oc sinum monnumm
at sa Ion er Kuflungar
hofðu callat konung sinn
het Ormr son Petrs oc
Astridar (p. 117, ll. 15-17).

This rather vulgar method of defaming Jón, and Sverrir’s insistence
upon it, make its veracity suspect. Yet the attempt at self-preservation
which underlies Sverrir’s unscrupulous craftiness, wins the reader
to him.
Background events are conveniently omitted

Just as certain details about his rivals are suppressed or distorted to Sverrir's advantage in the narrative, so are certain details of background events omitted when close scrutiny of them might reflect badly on his behaviour or position. Such omissions are evident when Sverrir refers to incidents in his speeches about which the narrative gives no information.

In chapter 9, for instance, Sverrir addresses a scruffy band of Eysteinn's (his cousin's, see p. 27) followers, who wish him to lead them. He refuses to do so on several grounds, notably his inexperience and meagre acquaintance with Norway, and their lack of fitness for the task. But he also expresses the concern that they might eventually turn on him because he is an unknown, as they did on Eysteinn:

Nu kann vera at þer mælit slict við mik sem við himn fyrра hофиngia ýðarn at þer vissot eigi hvat manna hann var (p. 8, ll. 17-19).

Now it may be that you say such things of me as of him who was previously your leader, that you did not know what sort of man he was.

There is, however, nothing in Sverris Saga itself suggesting that Eysteinn's men did question his paternity. The matter is, of course, not of direct importance, but it may have been left out for other reasons beyond strict adherence to Sverrir's activities only. For if Eysteinn's paternity were questioned in the saga, this would set a precedent for the audience by which they might more seriously question Sverrir's own. And, by leaving Eysteinn uncriticised in the
saga, the author leaves Sverrir another approach by which he can attach himself to the royal line, by calling himself Eysteinn's cousin. The more relatives he can introduce into his claim the better. Sverrir's own reference in his speech to the question of Eysteinn's origins indicates that he himself is in no doubt. He merely remarks that Eysteinn's men doubted him, and since the saga presents the men as a mere rabble, their opinion appears to us less creditable than its object.

Another instance of convenient omission is indicated in chapter 38, when, after the death of Jarl Erlingr, King Magnús' father, Sverrir speaks over his grave and reminds his audience of a promise made to Magnús' men by Archbishop Eysteinn that their souls will be in paradise before their blood is cold on the earth.¹ No speech of the bishop's containing such a promise is recorded in the saga. Either Sverrir has invented it, or, more likely, he has deliberately held back mention of it until now so that the irony shall be most cutting.

A third example of omission is evident in Sverrir's death-bed speech. Here he mentions Bishop Nikúlás Arnason's expectation that Sverrir will die on the battlefield and be left as carrion. Sverrir takes satisfaction in disappointing the bishop by dying in splendour on his throne:

1. In Knýt. this same promise, but made by the Pope to some twelfth century crusaders, appears in a context in which no irony is intended. The relationship between the Knýt. and the Sv. versions is demonstrated in Appendix A to Chapter Three below.
hann hefir sagt at ek munda
hogginn nídr sem bu-smali
firi hund ok raffn (p. 193,
ll. 37-38).

he has said that I would be
cut down like a beast for
dog and raven.

As in the previous example, no other speech containing this statement
appears in the saga.

Clearly, Sverrir quotes his adversaries when he can easily refute
them. Either he does not give as full an account of such historical
utterances as he could, or he attributes to his opponents utterances
he himself has invented in order to enhance the drama of his own
situation.
II The speeches

A Sverrir's speeches

1 Sverrir's long political speeches - sophisticated in argument

In chapter 38, after the Battle at Steinberg in which Sverrir wins a major victory over King Magnús, Sverrir addresses his men and the survivors of Magnús' army over the grave of Erlingr skakki, Magnús' father. This speech is worth a detailed analysis because its structure is one of the most complex and controlled among those in the saga and because we find here ample evidence of Sverrir's clerical background, as well as a rich vocabulary and a familiarity with the everyday life and colloquial conversation of the common man. Both of these he mocks in this speech.

For his argument, Sverrir takes the expected pious form of grave-side speech and, after carrying it to its logical extreme using various subtle twists of anti-clerical irony, he reverses it and turns it upon his subject in condemnation. Corresponding to this shift from piety to condemnation of Erlingr, is the shift in Sverrir's posture from humility to arrogance. For the most part, the arrogance manifests itself in his forgiveness of the dead enemy for opposition against him.

Sverrir begins by stating that a speech over the great Erlingr's grave is due:
Eigi hafir at þagat se, ifir með ollu sva gofugs mannz grepti sem nu stondum ver ifir (p. 42, ll. 20-22).

It is not fitting that we should be completely silent over such an honourable man's grave as we now stand over.

His audience will expect from this a pious speech; in retrospect, however, there is irony even beneath this statement, though the tone continues very smooth for some time.

Sverrir next remarks the wonderful changes that have taken place, that one man, namely himself, has become king - in place of Magnús, jarl - in place of Erlingr, - and archbishop - in place of Eysteinn.

Note the rhythms of the second part of this statement, like the cadences of a canticle or psalm:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Allda-scipit er mikit oröit sem þer megut sia. oc er undar-} \\
\text{laga oröit. er einn maðr er nu fyrir íi. Einn fyrir konung.} \\
\text{oc einn fyrir Jarl. einn fyrir erkibyscup. oc em ec sa (p. 42, ll. 22-24).}
\end{align*}
\]

Everything has become very much changed, as you may see, and it is extra-ordinary that one man takes the place of three - one for king and one for jarl and one for archbishop. And I am that man.

It will later become clear that Sverrir really thinks these changes fitting rather than remarkable, but as yet, his audience still accept his mock humility as sincerity, as he intends. He wishes to increase the shock of his irony by delay. He brings up the archbishop's promise as the next in a series of points upon which this irony is to be built:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{allir þeir menn er berþiz með} \\
\text{Magnusi konungi. oc verþi land hans. oc letiz með þvi. at} \\
\text{salur þeira manna allra veri fyrir í Paradiso en hloðít} \\
\text{veri callt a iordanne (p. 42, ll. 29-32).}
\end{align*}
\]

...all those men who fought on behalf of King Magnús and defended his land and lost their lives by it, that the souls of all these men be in Paradise before their blood was cold on the earth.
Taking up this guarantee, Sverrir begins to carry it to its logical extreme, making it seem ridiculous. He remarks that they can now greet many men as saints if the archbishop’s promise is true. The qualifying clause discloses the irony now to some of Sverrir’s audience, but not likely all:

\[\text{ef þetta er sva sem erkiðscup heﬁr sagt. at allir se þeir orðnir helgir menn er fallit hafa með Erlingi Jarli (p. 43, ll. 1-2).}\]

Carrying the logic even further, he speculates how great a saint Erlingr must now be if the simple soldiers have been admitted to heaven for supporting Magnús, because Erlingr did most of all to push Magnús forward and it was his idea to have Magnús made king:

\[\text{er i fyrsto reð þvi er Magnus var til konungs tekinn þa er hann var barn (p. 43, ll. 3-4).}\]

and Erlingr has supported Magnús’ power ever since:

\[\text{hann heﬁr oc siðan flutt oc stutt hans riki her til alla stund (p. 43, ll. 4-5).}\]

The tone of "flutt oc stutt" betrays Sverrir's irony, for it presents to the mind's eye a satirical picture of Erlingr running about trying to shore up a kingdom that is perpetually falling down. The expression implies, too, that without Erlingr as a prop, Magnús' position is severely weakened.
Continuing his argument, Sverrir suggests that Erlingr's powers of intercession with God must now be great, provided the archbishop was not mistaken:

*Ef eigi er þat at erkibyscup hafi noccot vinhallr verit i malino. þa er hann sagði ðetta* (p. 43, ll. 7-8).

If it is not that the archbishop has been somewhat partisan in the matter when he said that.

Having planted this seed of doubt, he mocks their religious belief in the promise in two ways, by pointing out the logical and ridiculous extensions that this belief offers and by making conscious and ironic use of diction and rhetorical rhythms conventionally homiletic. First, Sverrir candidly declares his awareness that many would rather stand over his grave than Erlingr's, even if it were less honourably decked out. This remark is in part a subtle indication that Sverrir has no illusions about their convictions against him, even if they do not have the courage of them at present. But the remark also introduces a mock exhortation on the theme that the world's apparent evil can be interpreted as God's good. The evil in this case is the death of Magnús' supporters, and yet, Sverrir says, both parties - victors and defeated - may rejoice at this. Here the homiletic elements are obvious; the speaker includes himself in the general human condition and refers the impetus of the action to God:

*Syniz mer sem os hvarom-tveggjom matti mikill fagnaðr a vera er sva hefir til scipt um lif manna sem sialfr guð villdi* (p. 43, ll. 15-17).

It seems to me that it should be a great cause of rejoicing for both of us when the lives of men have been disposed as God Himself wished.

---

1. See below, pp. 54-58 for a detailed comparison of certain characteristics of Sverrir's speech style with those of the Norse homilies.
His own reason for rejoicing is, of course, the removal of the threatening Erlingr, but their reason, he says, with an ironic twist, is much greater, because their friends are dead and can now reap the benefits of the archbishop's promise:

En yör ma þo míclo meiri fagnaðr a vera liflåti þeira manna er nu ero við yör scilþir licamliðri samvisto. oc ihugit nu vændiliga fyrir-heitit erkJibyscups (p. 43, ll. 20-22).

But you may yet have even much greater cause for rejoicing in the deaths of those men who are now separated from bodily dealings with youj and now consider carefully the archbishop's promise.

Taking literally the words of the archbishop and thereby making them ridiculous, Sverrir points out that the blood of the dead will now be cold and they may therefore expect to witness an abundance of saints in the town, if not their miracles:

Oc at ver megim eigi fagna þeira iartegnum. þa mun þo gott orðit til kyccsatta i bónum (p. 43, ll. 23-24).

And though we may not celebrate their miracles, yet there must be a good supply of holy corpses in the town.

The phrase "gott orðit til" is a colloquial phrase used quantitatively of more mundane and worldly objects or persons than saints, and here carries the point of Sverrir's irony. He pursues this irony by sarcastically suggesting that the deaths of their friends are not a loss to them, but a gain, if they worship the dead as saints:

1. The phrase most often occurs in such contexts as these:

var þa bæði gott til fjár ok mannvirðingar
(there was both ample wealth and fame to earn)

ok var ekki gott til fjár
(and they got scant booty)

var þar gott til sterkra manna
(there was an abundance of able-bodied men)

The last phrase reminds the audience that the promise may not be believed by all - sva sem þér hafit hugat. It leads smoothly into the next sentence, and yet marks the shift in the argument from irony to open condemnation of the promise and of Erlingr:

En ef sva illa er sem mer segir
hugr um... (p. 43, l. 27).

But if it is as bad as my mind forbodes...

The promise of sainthood, he says, is a false one, and those who believe it must pay for the lie along with the dead:

þa muno þeir œrit lengi golldit
þeira lygi. oc allir þeir er
þvi trúðu (p. 43, ll. 29-30).

Then they will have suffered for this lie long enough and all those who believed it.

Sverrir suggests that far from thinking of the dead as saints they should rescue the souls of the dead from damnation by praying for them, and especially for Erlingr, whose support for Magnús Sverrir represents as a grievous sin. Though only a "lendir madr", Erlingr had his son made king, usurped the throne from its rightful heirs, the sons of Hákon and Eysteinn Haraldsson, and unlawfully ruled with his son Magnús. Here, Sverrir assumes a more sincere, but condescending tone and offers, with an arrogant magnanimity, to pray for the souls of all who have fallen in the battles during his quarrel with Erlingr and Magnús, and to forgive all his opponents. He also encourages his audience to pray for their dead friends because they have fallen without service and unshriven, with grim thoughts in their minds:
They were both without sacrament and without confession and with somewhat less preparation and grimmer thoughts than such as they might themselves chose.

Sverrir advises them to do all they can to win mercy for their dead friends' souls rather than suppose they need no prayers.

This ends the direct part of the speech. The author only reports that Sverrir went on to give a traditional graveside speech:

Then he turned his remarks to the customary manner at that time for speaking over noble persons' graves.

Notice the use of the phrase "gofugra manna grepti", the same phrase Sverrir used at the beginning of his speech. It reminds us how Sverrir undercut his audience's original expectations by subtly intruding irony into his remarks and accumulating it until its presence became so explicit that he could shift his attack to a direct one. Understandably, after such an overture, the reported traditional speech would have carried little of its customary consolation.

1. This precise word, the adjective meaning "without sacrament", appears in Noreges Gamle Løve, eds. Munch and Keyser (Christianis, 1846), vol. I, p. 347. "Gudspjónusta", meaning the viaticum, appears in Homiliebog, ed. C.R. Unger (Christianis, 1864) p. 137, l. 21.

2. The same full phrase appears in Mariu-Saga, ed. C.R. Unger (Christiania, 1871), p. 83, l. 7: tók hann bráta sótt ok andaðist skiptalauss ok þjónustulauss.
A little later in his career, at the death of Magnús Erlingsson, Sverrir makes another long speech (chapter 99, pp. 105-106) in which he again uses the homiletic style, this time more seriously, and yet arrogantly. The saga author first provides a rare description of the speaker's stance and prepares the audience for Sverrir's tone. This stance is equally a part of Sverrir's rhetoric, for what practised orator does not exploit the pregnant pause and power of a steady eye?:

Eptir þetta stoð upp sialfr konung. oc litaðiz um lengi oc toc seint til mals oc hof a þa leið (p. 105, ll. 27-28).

After that the king himself stood up and looked about for a long time and was slow in beginning his speech and began in this way.

The speech itself displays Sverrir's tight control over his argument as he alternates between a homiletic and a more colloquial style, using one to check and qualify the other, and at the same time demonstrating a decorous versatility. This discussion will concern itself primarily with the colloquial aspects of his style.

Sverrir begins his speech with the exhortative style of the preacher. He cites a psalm which he interprets as a prophecy of the power struggle between himself and Magnús. Presenting himself as God's agent ("en guð leysti mic nu sem fyrr" (p. 105, l. 35)) and Magnús as the proud oppressor, he cites supporting Biblical exempla, instances of humbled pride in the figures of Adam, Saul, Lucifer, and Pharaoh. In describing Saul's discomfiture, Sverrir says he roved about with an unclean spirit, like a beggar:
The word "flaccaði" is normally used in rather vulgar colloquial contexts and not biblical ones. It betrays the same imaginative exuberance with which Sverrir dramatises the domestic life of his enemies later in this speech.

The comparison with the Bible is just, Sverrir says, because Erlingr out-stepped his rightful place by making his son king when Erlingr himself had no royal blood, and by killing all the legal heirs to the throne and usurping their domains, points he made in his speech over Erlingr's grave. Erlingr was therefore justly cast down by God's humble agent, as Saul was by David. Here the diction is textured with alliteration and poly-syllabic words and the syntax of the sentences extended by subordination:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icelandic</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tocu oll riki konunganna þeira</td>
<td>they took all the realms of those kings who were by family born to them altogether, until God sent out of a distant skerry a little man and lowly to cast down their pride.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er at-bornir varo til. allt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þar til er guð sendi utan af</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utskeriom einn litinn mann oc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lagan at steypa þeira ofdrambi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p. 106, ll. 14-16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. See Sturl. 1, p. 78: "kvað þat aldri skyldu vera lengr, at gamall maðr flakkaði með svá vána konu." Another colloquial and also metaphorical expression is used to mark the end of the exempla and the turn of the argument toward Magnús' and Erlingr's specific offences of pride:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icelandic</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enn cann þat vera at yór þicki</td>
<td>Yet it may be that you think our speech mounts close to the brim (i.e. goes to extremes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upp hefiaz nar borði var</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reða (p. 106, ll. 7-8).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Neither Vigfússon nor Fritzner remark this image and it may be unique to Sv.

2. Emended to Einap for singular reading.
The next sentence is abruptly curtailed and mono-syllabic in diction. It acts thus as a natural pause point and focuses all eyes expectantly on Sverrir himself:

> en sa maôr var ec^1 and that man was I.
> (p. 106, ll. 15-17).

With a pretense at humility, he then draws attention to God's unlikely choice of agents for the chastisement of Erlingr, and cites a homely proverb to demonstrate the poetic justice of it:

> sart bitr solltin lus the hungry louse bites painfully.
> (p. 106, l. 19).

This proverb forms another pivotal point in the argument. For Sverrir now abandons this humble stance and justifies his aggression as the son of Sigurôr Haraldsson, by listing his personal grievances against Jarl Erlingr:

> fyrst þat er þeir Biorgyniar- First, when the Bergeners killed
> menn drapu Sigurô konung foår my father, King Sigurôr, who was
> minn er æt-borinn var til born to (the rule of) this land
> þessa landz (p. 106, ll. 22-24). by family.

This last phrase protects Sverrir from the accusation he himself made earlier against Erlingr: "Þeir hafa upp hefiaz er ecki varo konunga ætt*. Here, too, he makes specific the other earlier accusation: "drapu þeir niôr alla konungaættir:"

1. Notice that Sverrir used an almost identical conclusive phrase in his earlier speech: oc em ec sa. See above, p. 36.
En siðan eftir þeir flocc með Erlingi Jarli imot Haconi bróður minom. Siðan toc Erlingr bróðr mina. oc festi annan up sem cracu-unga. annarr var hogginn (p. 106, li. 24-26).

And since then they have raised troops with Jarl Erlingr against my brother Hákon. Since then Erlingr took my brothers and hoisted up one as a young crow and the other was slain.

The argument takes now another twist, for Sverrir, wishing to appear the national hero more than a private avenger of his kinsmen, puts forth as his greatest incentive in the struggle, superseding all personal grievances, the bondage of the Norwegian people under an illegal king:

miclo væri ver fusari. at sciliaz fra ef elgi sæi ver eymó a folki varo eða þeir drotnaði er elgi varo til bornir (p. 106, li. 28-30).

We would be much more inclined to give up if we had not seen the misery of our people and that those who were not born to it were ruling.

At this point there is a major shift in the argument. Sverrir ceases to defend his position as the agent of Erlingr's and Magnus' downfall and begins to take the offensive. Having presented sufficient logical reason why he ought to be accepted as king, he assumes the royal perspective and turns upon all who oppose him. By making a familiar dramatisation of their gossip, he indicates that the soldiers' hostile mummerings have reached his ears:

þetta mæla sumir sigr-sæll er Sverrir vítr er Sverrir. þa er svarat. hvat er þat kynlikt. mikit hefir hann til unnit gefiz flandanum. Sumir segia at ec sia diofullinn sialfr oc cominn af helviti oc se hans laus orðinn. (p. 106, li. 31-34).

Some say that Sverrir is victorious, Sverrir is wise. Then it is answered, "What is remarkable there? He has paid much for it, having given himself to the fiend." Some say I am the devil himself and am come from Hell and that he is become loose (among you).
The image of the gossipers Sverrir creates depends for much upon his syntax and rhythms. The first brief remarks made in his praise suggest a group of supporters having a post-mortem as they rest after the battle, nodding to each other in weary agreement. They are then interrupted by the more energetic critic who interprets Sverrir's success as Faustian.

Sverrir now returns to logical argument and carrying his opponents' criticism to its logical extreme, as he did with the archbishop's promise, he ridicules their short-sighted foolhardiness. For if Sverrir is the devil's agent, what are they but the devil's slaves?:

What are you then but thralls of the devil, if you serve him...Are you not such-like things extremely foolish to say and all man especially of the king, that I must have given myself to the fiend?

He would be a fool to sell his soul for so worthless a kingdom:

Sverrir would then be a fool if he wanted to win this miserable kingdom, which at no time has stood in freedom and yet were worth nothing even if it stood in peace, and yet lost for it his soul and all his salvation.
Sverrir quickly moves away from this train of thought before his audience questions his wisdom in wasting his efforts on a worthless kingdom at all. He returns to the point that there are traitors among his audience:

\[ \text{Syniz mer sva sem her væði allt saman kalfar oc ulfar (p. 107, ll. 3-4).} \]

It seems to me that here there are roaming calves and wolves mixed together here.

His audience may think him indiscriminate, he says, to accept now as declared supporters those who only recently were enemies. Here he uses a domestic metaphor:

\[ \text{Cann vera at ypr þicki rum-borat falld mitt. margr lytr sa nu hendinni er giarna villdi at af væri. Sa callar nu frendann er fyrir scommu callaði fiandann (p. 107, ll. 4-6).} \]

It may be that you think my sieve is coarse. Many bow down now to the hand which they would willingly were (lopped) off. He now calls me a friend who a short time ago called me a fiend.

Such hypocrites have not fooled Sverrir. He knows just how many there are, as he makes clear, using another colloquial image with ribald overtones:

\[ \text{Oc þat hygg ec ef her metti nu sia hvers mannz hug þess er her er comminn oc steði hveriom horn or enni er mer hyggr illa at margr scylldi þa her nu þfloftr fram ganga (p. 107, ll. 7-9).} \]

And I think that if the thoughts of each man who is come here might be seen now and a horn stood out from the forehead of everyone who thinks ill of me, that many might go from here with spouting horns.

The coarse and rather violent images he employs lead up to Sverrir's final thrust at his secret critics. Using two domestic anecdotes, he shows that in their cowardice they must leave their revenge to the pretence of children and serving girls:
pat mælir oc barnit er þat
gengr ut oc hefir stein i
hendi drepr nidr a griottit.
her scyllde hofuð Sverris
undir vera. slikt kenni
þer yòrurn bornum. þat sama
mælir oc grippkonan vesala
hver er hon gengr ut af herbergino
oc hefir vifl i hendi. lystr a
helluna. her scylldi hofuð
Sverrir undir vera segir hon
(p. 107, ll. 9-14).

That too says the child, who
goes outdoors and has a stone
in his hand and throws it on
the ground, "Sverrís head
should be under this." Such
things you teach your children.
The same also says the wretched
serving girl who, when she goes
out of the chamber and has a washing
bat in her hand and strikes it
on the rock, she says, "Sverrís
head should be under this."

These familiar anecdotes make a mockery of the traitors' threats,
but equally important, they imply that Sverrir's "eyes" catch all
tricks and are ever watchful of men's movements and attentive to
their talk, even within the supposed privacy of their farmsteads.
With such thorough intelligence he may well anticipate a natural
rather than a treacherous death:

En vera ma sva at Sverrir
verpi sott-dauðr eigi at
siðr (p. 107, ll. 14-15).

But it may be that Sverrir
dies of illness nonetheless.

With his sensitivity to men's reactions and his manipulative
and persuasive genius, Sverrir is too wise to end the speech on
such note of insult and derision. Instead, he gives Magnús'
supporters three days grace in which to make themselves scarce, while
to his loyal friends he extends his gratitude, thereby covering
for any offence they may have mistakenly taken and leaving behind
a careful and subtly ambiguous option for any who may wish to
pledge him sincere allegiance:
This speech then, though in it Sverrir makes more use of the colloquial and familiar, has as deliberate a shape as his speech over Erlingr's grave. It has, too, a major shift in the argument - from defensive to offensive - just as there is a definitive break out of irony into outright condemnation in the speech over Erlingr's grave in chapter 38.

2 Sverrir's shorter but equally characteristic political speeches

Not all Sverrir's speeches in this saga are so long or so complex in argument, but they nevertheless demonstrate many of the characteristics observed in the two longer speeches above.

a) The righteous aloofness with which Sverrir begins his speech in chapter 99 (see p. 42 above) is also a feature of his speech in chapter 125 in which Sverrir pardons the Orcadian Jarl Haraldr for aiding and abetting Sverrir's enemies. This speech is preceded with that same description of Sverrir's steady and quieting gaze:

konungrinn litaðiz um ok
tok seint til orða oc
mælti (p. 132, ll. 20-21).

The king looked about and was slow in beginning to speak and said...
The speech itself is only a few lines long. Sverrir says he is granting Haraldr mercy, not because Haraldr deserves it, but because Sverrir needs mercy from God more than he has deserved:

\[
\text{ec mun þess þurfa af allzvalldanda guði at hann miskunni mér frammarr en ec hefi til gerð (p. 132, ll. 26-27).}
\]

I shall require this of Almighty God that he have mercy on me more than I have deserved.

He qualifies this humility, however, by freely granting God's peace to Haraldr as well as his own:

\[
\text{ver i guðs griðum oc minum (p. 132, l. 28).}
\]

be in God's peace and mine.

Never without his political craft, Sverrir leaves the conditions of the settlement to be dealt with at his leisure when he may determine them as he pleases:

\[
\text{en ec mun sætt ockra upp segia i meira tomi (p. 132, ll. 28-29).}
\]

but the terms of our peace I will declare at greater leisure.

This last twist reveals to us that the earlier humble stance was purely for effect and not sincere.

b) In chapter 121, we have further instance of Sverrir's brilliant and ironic play on words (see above, p. 37, for instance). Sverrir is speaking against the blind archbishop Eiríkr who has left Norway for Denmark and has had the Pope excommunicate Sverrir. Sverrir says the ban is Eiríkr's only and not the Pope's:
Making a cruel jest at Eíríkr's blindness, Sverrir turns the ban about on him, suggesting that for his opposition to Sverrir, Eíríkr has been made blind, implying this is a punishment from God:

\[
\text{That same ban and oath, he says, which he places on me, has now driven itself into his eyes and he is therefore now blind. They shall be under ban who do banning work.}
\]

After declaring his legal right to the throne, Sverrir offers Eíríkr his bishopric back even though he is blind, provided Eíríkr will obey the law:

\[
\text{Let Eíríkr go back to his seat though he be blind, if he will keep the civil law as it ought to stand here in this land.}
\]

But Sverrir says he will not break the law himself to meet Eíríkr's demands, even if he were not blind, let alone now, when, as Sverrir puts it, he is blind in eye and in mind's eye, a clever extension of the meaning of "blindr":

\[
\text{And even though he had both eyes whole where now he is blind in both, as well as in the glance of the mind itself to see the right, even then should I not break the law of the saint King Óláf for his sake.}
\]
And he adds, repeating the phrase from his earlier remark and thereby mocking Eiríkr's ban:

\[ \text{bo at hann banniz iafnan though he continually bans or um eða blotiz (p. 130, l. 2). curses in the matter.} \]

c) Colloquialisms\(^1\) are more prevalent in the battle speeches, which are considered below, but there are a few other examples in Sverrir's political remarks which by their casualness confirm the constant readiness of Sverrir's tongue. In chapter 131, taunted by his enemy, Bishop Nikulás, to go ashore and do battle, Sverrir advises his men to row away and not bother with this petty rivalry:

\[ \text{Then King Sverrir replied so that his men heard, It would be said if we fought with Nikulas that it was a fight between bitches, where there is courage on neither side. The king had them row away to his host.} \]

The colloquial image of the dog-fight is here especially effective in its disdain of Nikulás as a military threat.

In chapter 50, in a brief direct remark, Sverrir makes a pun on the colloquial phrase "hafa i pung". All Magnús' men have offered Sverrir their support in a letter, except Nikulás Vúfungr, Sverrir says to his men:

---

1. See above, pp. 37, 39, 44, 47-48.
The saga-writer explains the literal meaning, leaving the metaphor implicit that Sverrir now controls them like the contents of his pocket:

In chapter 33, Sverrir makes further derisory use of colloquial expressions when addressing his restive troops at Grøninga-sund. He throws contempt upon their wanton destructiveness:

Sverrir makes contemptuous references to domestic tools in some of his battle speeches as well and the anecdote has already been mentioned about the serving girl in his speech in chapter 99, in which he mentions her washing bat ("vifl"). His familiarity and readiness with such terms can be easily explained by his early life in the Faroes as the son

1. For instance, Chapter 147, p. 153, l. 28: Kirnu-askinum; and chapter 176, p. 189, l. 22: sem vercmenn vid þust. See also below, p. 63-64.
of a comb-maker. His men, too, especially at the outset of his
career in Norway, were a rough lot and probably added much to
Sverrir's active stock of colloquialisms, teaching him which
expressions would most sting.

d) The influence of the homiletic style upon Sverrir's
oratory is considerable and evident throughout the saga, though
it is not always used with such self-conscious irony as in the
speeches in chapters 38 and 99. Of course, other kings in other
sagas make religious references and use religious arguments in
their speeches. Hákon, for instance, frequently declares his
personal trust in God to guide his life and career. But it is
only Knútr Sveinsson in Knytlinga Saga and Óláfr Haraldsson in
Heimskringla, both of them saints, who can be said to sermonise,
and neither delivers an entirely sermonic speech before a large group of
men, as Sverrir does in chapter 20. There Sverrir encourages his men
to persevere against the severe elements of a blizzard.

The points of Sverrir's argument reflect a clerical training and
correspond to some points made in Norse homilies surviving from
the end of the twelfth century and therefore roughly contemporary

---

1. See below, Chapter Four, pp. 308, 309.
2. See below, Chapter Three, pp. 214-18.
5. How much the clerical elements reflect Sverrir's training is
debatable. They may reflect instead that of Abbot Karl.
Holm-Olsen has discussed the likely limits of Sverrir's
6. See Unger, Gammel Norsk Homiliebog, op. cit. p. iii. This is the
text of the homilies cited throughout, herein cited as Hom.
with Sverrir's speech (1177). Such a correspondence exists between
Sverrir's speech and a homily:

Sverris Saga:
þo at os þícki strangr guðs
bardagi, at hann mun ægí
þar mikit a leggia er littit
er til gert (p. 22, ll. 23-
25).
and let us keep it in mind,
although God's battle seems
difficult to us, that he
will not punish severely
in the place where it is
little deserved.

Homily:
róynisc æigi gort hafa gott
værð fyrir aost guðs, hældr
fyrir værkaupi þessa hæims
sælo, eða fyrir manna lófe.
Maðr man róynasc af bardagum
guðs, hvarium hug hann gerer
god værð, eða hverri styrct
hann standesc fleistni, er
komr yfir hann (Horn. p. 13,
ll. 13-17).
A man is not tested by having
done good works for the love
of God rather than for wages
of this world's wealth, or
for praise of men. A man
is tested in God's battle,
whenever he thinks to do
a good deed or whenever he
stands strong against the
temptation when it comes over
him.

There is also a correspondence between Sverrir's emphasis on
humility as a means of earning rest for the soul, and a homily on
that virtue. In fact, the homily writer uses precisely the same
Biblical citation which Sverrir himself has used, Matthew 11:29:

Sverris Saga:
kendi hann sva. Nemi þær af
mer þvi at ec em litillatr
oc miuclyndr i hiarta. oc
munu þer finna hvild salum
yðrom (p. 22, ll. 28-29).
he taught thus:

Homily:
hann málte sialfr í guðspiale:
Nême þær at mer, þvi at ec em
litillatr oc miuclyndr i hiarta,
oc þa munu þer finna hvild á
salum yðrum (Hom. p. 15, ll. 10-12).
he spoke himself in the Gospel:

Learn from me because I am meek and gentle in
heart and you shall find rest for your soul.
The homilies also frequently conclude, as does Sverrir's speech in this case, with a Christian precept delivered with authority, as if it had been proved logically rather than on the basis of faith, for example:

Nu ma hverr maðr þat sia at betra er at lata með goðum lutom til guðs miscunnar. en hrapa með uraðum í fiandans hendr (Sv., p. 22, l. 29-31).

Því at sva verðr oss fyrigætet, sem ver fyrirgefom þæim er misbæðu oss af noccorre illzcu (Hom., pp. 12-13, ll. 19-20).

Ræsla guðs hon raecr a braut rezlo helvitis. Ræðomc ver guð, sva at ver ælscum hann, því at algorr aost hon raerc a braut þrælsleg rezlo (Hom., p. 27, ll. 9-11).

Now every man may see that it is better to make a good surrender to God's mercy than to fall by bad judgment into the hands of the fiend.

Because we are forgiven according as we forgive those who abuse us with some ill treatment.

The fear of God drives away the fear of Hell. Let us fear God, even as we love Him, because perfect love drives away slavish fear.

From a later sermonising speech it is evident that Sverrir, or the saga writer, was familiar with the homilies which preach against specific sins and are particularly vivid on vice. For when, in 1186, Sverrir bans the German merchants in Bergen from selling wine and spirits in Norway, he catalogues the terrible results of excessive drink, including physical, social, and spiritual damage:

oc þa er sva er þungliga comit at firir-farit er af ofdryckiu. allri eigunni oc heilsunni oc þar með vitinu...þa eggjar hon þess at vanreklaž allri rettri síðsemi oc rettum boðorðum. en girnað syndirnar oc af-hugaz allzvældanda guði oc ollu hinu retta minnaz a engan lutinn þann er hann hefir gert. Litit nu a ofdryckio-menninir þa er ber sciliz fra ollu i senn dryckionni oc lifino hvat licazt er hverr þa man við gripa salimi(p. Iii, ll. 14-22).

and when it reaches such an appalling state that by over-drinking all wealth and health are destroyed and reason with them...It encourages a man to neglect all proper conduct and to lust for sins and forget Almighty God and all that is right, to remember nothing which he has done. Consider now, you excessive drinkers, when you have departed at the same time from drinking and from life, who then is most likely to clutch upon your souls?
Many homiletic passages display a similar relish in telling over the vices, for instance those that accompany greed:

Oc þa er honom er ængi hatr at hava, æigi værwör honom höf at girmasc. Þaðan gerasc ofund, stuldin, viking, mandráp, lygi, æðar ösorær, rán, ofriki, órœ, ranger domar, hafnan sanlaics, glöyning óordënnar, sælo, oc harð-læir hiarta... (Hom., pp. 50-51, 11. 17-2).

And when there is no means of possession for him he has no moderation in coveting. As a result, there arises envy, thieving, killing, lying, oath-breaking, robbery, tyranny, restlessness, wrong judgment, forsaking of justice, forgetfulness of future happiness, and hardness of heart...

Sverrir's practice of calling upon the name of God has already been mentioned and is another obvious rhetorical device borrowed from clerical styles. Religious elements also appear in Sverrir's death-bed speech, but even there his self-righteous tone indicates that he uses them rhetorically rather than sincerely. He does not, for instance, ask merely for personal forgiveness, but with his last recorded words, ostentatiously requests it for his enemies:

margir hafi verit minir aufundar-menn þeir er þat hafa laætid ganga firir fullan fiandskap vid mik sem nu firir-gefi gud þeim þat ollum ok dami gud milli vor ok allt mitt mal (p. 194, 11. 8-11).

1. For other examples, see Horn., pp. 41, 52, 53, 54, 122.


3. See Horn., pp. 64, 1. 32; p. 65, 11. 29-31; p. 124, 11. 9-11.
More sincere is the tone of gleeful delight when Sverrir, in this same speech, reflects on the disappointment of Bishop Nikúlás, who had predicted a less comfortable end for Sverrir:

It will happen and be heard about in a different way than Bishop Nikúlás Arnason will expect, if I die here in my high seat and my friends stand over me. For he has said that I would be cut down as a beast for the dog and raven.

This last speech also shows Sverrir's political and personal concern to establish his son Hákon as his only heir, protecting him from upstart rivals who claim to be Sverrir's sons, as Sverrir claimed to be Sigurðr Haraldsson's son, along with a host of others whom Sverrir crushed. He reveals his weariness after this constant assaultment when he says that his reign has not been one of pleasure:

I have had more labour, strife, and difficulty in the kingdom than rest, or much of an easy life.

Here, whether consciously or not, Sverrir uses the same word - hóglífi - in the same way Magnus Erlingsson did in his last speech as it is preserved in the Eirspennill MS.:

I did not fight to gain the kingdom and little of the easy life have I had in this land;

and earlier in his speech to the men of Tunsberg, as the MS. AM 327 4° preserves it:

1. Konunga Sögur, Eirspennill, ed. C.R. Unger (Christiania, 1873) p. 93. In AM 327 4° the basis of the Indrebó text, slightly different words are used to say the same thing: Eigi keptumst ek til konungs-domains, ok litið hoglifi hefi ek haft innan lands; I did not fight to gain the kingdom and little of the easy life have I had in this land;
oc vil ec sækia til þessa landz oddi oc eggio meðan er mer delizz lifit til oc landz-menn vilia fylgia. En se ec þat rað firir mer er meira varti hoglifi oc minni mannhatta at taca len af Valdimarr konungi frenda minum (p. 90, ll. 17-20).

And I will hold claim to this land with fire and sword as long as I remain alive and the people will follow me, even though I realise there is a course of action open to me that would be easier and less dangerous - to accept a fief from my kinsman King Valdimarr (of Denmark).

The significance of this correspondence must remain uncertain. As it appears in Magnús' last speech in only one MS., and that not the one thought by Halvdan Koht to be closest to the original, it may well be a scribal slip or emendation in that place. The irony is, however, fitting, since Sverrir's aggression destroyed for both the "hóglífi" neither knew as king of Norway.

It is clear that in his political speeches in the saga, Sverrir's style throughout is consistent in spite of the range of subject matter. His arguments are often complex, always ordered and controlled; he makes frequent use of the colloquial and of irony; and there is considerable evidence throughout the saga of a clerical training and familiarity with the homilies. 2 While some of these features

1. Halvdan Koht, The Old Norse Sagas (London, 1931) p. 42: "One of the texts is more verbose than the other; in a single chapter it contains forty per cent more words without giving a bit of additional information....It is the clerical style intruding." He does not, unfortunately, tell us in which chapter he has been counting. Holm-Olsen, in Studies in Sverris Saga (Oslo, 1953) also discusses Sverrir's clerical training and the clerical elements in Sverris

2. Koht has also pointed to the synonymous pairs of words in Sverrir's and Svínaférr's speech as evidence of clerical influence (p. 42). He mentions, too, the writing of ecclesiastical histories during the same period (p. 61) which "bear the stamp of the interests that produce them." Something of that stamp may be responsible for the marks of clerical knowledge and rhetoric in Sv.
and their consistency could be due to the saga writer, the consistency in eccentricity suggests the influence of Sverrir himself. His battle speeches differ stylistically, but they too are consistent as a group. They are considered next.

3 Sverrir's battle speeches appeal to the emotions of his audience

In the speeches Sverrir delivers prior to battles we do not find the same cool reason and sound logic at the basis of his arguments as we did in the political speeches. Sensitive that his soldiers at such a time are better stirred to valour by direct appeal to their emotions and desires, he adopts instead a less intellectual approach. Consistent with this is his more frequent use of colloquialisms and anecdotes and the subordination of those elements of homiletic style evident in his political speeches. This change in style demonstrates Sverrir's discretion and insight into what is appropriate to a given audience and set of circumstances. Such insight is not learned from rhetorical textbooks; it is instinctive, and that part of a great leader's charisma which dismisses hesitation and uncertainty from the minds of his followers and joins them in a single-minded effort. Of course, we, as an arm-chair audience, must make imaginative allowance for the all-absorbing tension of the expectant and apprehensive state of the audience in the saga. Those who prepare for hand to hand combat to the death have neither the time nor the inclination for rhetoric and immaculate logic. What is brief and clear and uncomplicated drives home successfully, and, providing their spirits are roused, some logical contradiction will be tolerated easily by the audience.
A characteristic speech is found in chapter 47, delivered by Sverrir before a battle against Magnús Erlingsson on the plains of Íláf. Sverrir himself occupies a fortress at the head of the field, while Magnús approaches by sea. There are seven main points in Sverrir's argument, many of which occur in his other battle speeches, though not always identically expressed. This speech, too, like nearly all the others (except that in chapter 88, mentioned below, pp. 69-71), is positive; the argument depends upon the speaker's confidence in victory.

The principle points of Sverrir's argument are these:

a) He appeals to his troops' inherent greed for the material profits of victory, by emphasising the wealth of their opponents:

Standa fylkingar Magnus konungs um alla vollu med gylltum vapnum oc dyrum claóum. veri þa vel syslat ef þer bærit hvartveggia til boiarins i kveld (p. 50, ll. 3-6).

King Magnús' host stands all around the plain with gilt weapons and expensive garments. That were work well done if you carried both into the town tonight.

The phrase "vel syslat" is a practical one, usually related to business and to acquisition; it is therefore appropriate to Sverrir's stress on the potential booty of this conflict. He uses the same phrase in a brief remark in chapter 148 (p. 155, l. 15) when he is told that his men have overcome and killed the enemy Baglar's watchman:

1. See Cleasby-Vigfússon, p. 616, for examples.
konungr sagði at þa var vel syslat.

The king said that was work well done.

The phrase, as part of Sverrir's active vocabulary, is appropriate also to his straightforward and unintellectual approach in this speech.

Sverrir offers his men a mercenary incentive in another battle speech as well, before the Battle at Steinberg in which Erlingr skakki falls. In this speech, in chapter 35, when his men are still a motley crew of unknowns, he offers them the reward of social advancement together with material gain. Every man will acquire the title of the man he kills, Sverrir promises, as if he were promulgating a new law:

Sa er lendan mann fellir með saunnum vitnum. sa scal lendr madr vera. oc þess-kyns madr scal hverr vera sem hann sialfr ræðr ser til rums. Sa hirð-madr er hirð-mann drepr. oc taca þar af aðra marga goða luti i samðum af os (p. 39, ll. 29-32).

He who slays a landed man, with reliable witness, such shall be a landed man. And that title shall each man assume for which he makes himself a vacancy. Thus he shall be a guardsman who slays a guardsman, and he shall take through that many other good things in honour from us.

b) As his second point, and balancing with the mercenary incentives, Sverrir stresses the honour to be gained from this battle, since it will not be an easy task fighting Magnús' men and the victory will therefore be a noble one:
Eigi er sva sem yór se visat i scog til timbrhoggs. er þer sculot iafna hauggom við lenda menn Magnus konungs. er þat scamlaust at piggia oc sva at veita stor haugg. sem scalldit quað.
Era sem kol-við cliufi carll sa er vegr at iarle (p. 50, 11. 7-12).

It is not as though you were in the forest to fell trees when you must exchange blows with King Magnús' landed men. It is no disgrace to receive and to deal out great wounds, as the skald says:

It is not as if he were cutting wood for charcoal when a man strikes blows at an earl.

The images of wood-cutting and charcoal-making keep the tone at a familiar and domestic level and so strike more closely home. This indirect appeal to their humble origins must also remind them that the honour of victory will be even greater for them, as they are not by birth the social equals of their opponents.

Elsewhere in his battle speeches, Sverrir makes further use of domestic images and colloquialisms 1 to press his points upon men who have risen from the peasantry into his court. In chapter 147, before a battle with the Baglar, he turns the homeliness upon the enemy, mocking their inexperience in battle and at the same time subtly reminding his men how far they have come themselves, and so indirectly praising their achievement:

Let us give them the hardest of attacks because they will not care for blows who have run from home from churn pails and have never before seen how the Birkibeinar are accustomed to wield their weapons when they fight.

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1. Other colloquialisms in Sverrir's battle speeches not mentioned directly in this discussion: p. 81, 11. 26-27: komnir i botnholu; p. 81, 11. 29-30: sa hefir, er høttir; p. 175, 11. 2-4: opt verðr slikt a sæ quað selr var skotinn i auga.
In chapter 176, when his men begin to complain about hard conditions during their siege of Tunsberg, Sverrir turns their humble origins upon them in contempt:

Uhermannlict mal er slict at kurra at konungi sinum þo at þer þenit eigi sva vombina sem vercmenn vid þust (p. 189, ll. 20-22).

It is unwarrior-like speech to murmur at the king even though you do not fill your bellies like workmen at the forge.

Sverrir is clearly an astute manipulator who can wield his information as condemnation or praise. His familiarity with domestic implements also indicates his own lowly background in the Faroes. His personal sensitivity to this origin probably accounts for his exploitation of the same sensitivity in his men. Certainly, in his first speech in the saga, he stresses that both he and those who desire him to lead them are unknowns:

þer eroð menn snaubir. æn ec em fe-litill oc yðr okunnr (p. 7, ll. 31-32).

You are poor men and I am of small means and unknown to you.

finnz mer þat eina i sem litil myni vera manna-græin með yðr (p. 8, ll. 6-7).

I find that there may be (made) little distinction between one man and another among you.

c) Sverrir's third point is made by means of an anecdote. He continues here to appeal to their sense of honour, but this time, instead of stressing the honour of victory, he emphasises the terrible dishonour of defeat and death in flight. The anecdote makes the point immediate and memorable. Its plain diction, the predominance of mono-syllabic words, and the repetition of phrase and structure (marked here by under-scorings), are all aspects of a deliberate simplicity which would powerfully affect the troops in their pre-battle tension:
So said a farmer when he accompanied his son the battleships and gave him counsel. He told him to be forward and hardy in trials of his manhood and "Reputation lives longest after a man," he said. "And how would you behave if you came into battle and you knew beforehand that you would die there?" He answered, "What good would it do to spare myself from striking with both hands?"

The old man said, "Now could some man tell you with certainty that you would not die?" He answered, "What good would it do to refrain from pressing forward as best I could?" The old man said, "In every battle you are in it must turn out either that you die or come away (alive). And you be daring for that reason, for all is shaped beforehand. One cannot bring a man into hell who is not fated, nor save who is fated.

In flight is the worst fall."

Evidence of the memorability of this anecdote can be found in Hákonar Saga, by Sturla Pórðarson (see below, Chapter Four, p.312 ), where Sverrir's grandson, King Hákon, uses a version of the same anecdote and attributes it to Sverrir. Sverrir himself makes use of the main point of the anecdote in other battle speeches. In chapter 29, encouraging his men to turn to face Magnus rather than flee his pursuit after a battle at Niðarós, Sverrir describes their dishonourable fate if they do not put up some direct resistance:

\[
\text{mun lið vart allt drepit við litlum orðztir sva sem þær menn allir er í flotta falla (p. 33, ll. 8-9).}
\]
In chapter 14-7, encouraging his men to face rather than flee the Baglar, he makes the same point, that flight is equivalent to death:

munu þa Baglar reca os oc henda af allt slict er þeir villa oc fa þeir menn alldri orztir er i flotta falla (p. 153, ll. 11-12).
The Baglar will then put us to flight and capture all they wish to and those men will never get glory who fall in flight.

d) Sverrir next incites them to hard and fierce attack upon the enemy by presenting them with a crude visual image of weapon wielding:

Er af þvi einn ut-vegrinn til. at standa sem fastast oc lana þeim ecki framganginn. Oc er yðr Birkibeinum gott at reyna sverðin a miaðar-istrurnar þeira Vicvería (p. 50, ll. 28-30).

Sverrir's derisory contempt of the Baglar host in chapter 147, (p. 153, ll. 26-29, see point b above) functions as similar incitement to Sverrir's men. Their undoubted laughter confirms them in a single intent.

e) Sverrir builds their confidence by attesting to the fitness of their host:

ver hofum yfrit fritt lið oc We have a troop exceptionally mart at beríaz (p. 50, ll. 30-31). fine and large to do battle.

By contrast, he points out the enemy's strategic disadvantages and the ill-suited physical condition of many of their men:
But they have such a large host that they cannot attack with all of it at once. Most of their troops is better suited to be bridegrooms than guardsmen, and more are accustomed to mead-drinking than martial arts.

Their habitual ale-drinking \(^1\) corresponds well with Sverrir's earlier image of their beer-bellies (p. 50, l. 30). Such drunkenness among Magnús' men is a common rallying point for Sverrir, himself a poor drinker. He used it in chapter 35 in his speech before the Steinberg Battle:

\[\text{They will be very drunk and sleepy and without any plan.}\]

The contrast between the advantages and fitness of Sverrir's troops and the lack of them in the enemy host also occurs in Sverrir's speech in chapter 52 before a sea-battle with Magnús:

\[\text{yet we have big ships and so well fitted in troops and weapons that the Heklungar shall be reminded how the Birkibeinar are able to manage swords before we part, and let us let them have the same treatment as at our previous encounters, that they will have to take to their heels again. They are always keen-cutting at first, but become constantly weaker in times of stress. But in that you are the more reliable and more fierce as the trial is more severe and longer. I can assuredly say to you that in their host every other man must take fright when they see that you pursue them. Many for this reason will want to flee rather than come under your weapons.}\]

\[\text{1. See below, p. 110.}\]
The biting of the Birkibeinar swords is an image also used in chapter 147 (see point b above, p. 63). Sverrir makes another such contrast between the opposing host in a sea battle in chapter 120, using the colloquial image of toothache:

hafiz vel við goðir bróðr 
eigi munu þeir margar slicar 
hriðir gera os. verðum vel 
við þeir munu eigi síðr tann-
saríræn ver (p. 128, ll. 12-13).

Bear up good brothers! They won't make many such attacks against us. Let us bear it well. They will not be less toothsore than we are.

This same metaphor occurs later in the narrative:

Urðu þeir bóndur þa enn mioc 
tann-sarír sem fyrr. oc 
leiddiz þar at vera oc 
villdu helldr helm (p. 180, ll. 16-18).

The farmers then again became very sore in their teeth, as they did before, and grew weary of being there and would rather be at home.

f) Sverrir, as the sixth point in his speech, sets his men a good example of courage by promising to put himself and his hirð against Magnús himself. Here we see that in his speech he is more concerned with persuasion than sincerity, since in the narrative account of the battle, Guðlaugr and not Sverrir leads the wing encountering Magnús:

En i annat stað þar sem fram for merki Magnus konungs. rucko þar fyrir fylkingar Guðlaugs oc bøiar-manna (p. 51, ll. 15-17).

And in another place, where King Magnús' standard went forward, the host of Guðlaugr and the townsfolk gave way before them.

Sverrir encourages them not to flee, but he does so from the sidelines. While the saga narrative contains many instances of Sverrir's courage, it also gives much evidence of his concern to protect himself.
g) Sverrir closes his speech with God's blessing, upholding even here his reputation as God's agent, but without *homiletic* exaggeration. The blessing is manly and brief:¹

| Gangi nu vel fram göðir      | Advance well now, fine fellows |
| halsar oc geti guð til     | and God protect you!          |
| (p. 51, l. 7).              |                                |

In this speech from chapter 47, then, there are no twists in the argument, no tight movement from point to point. Indeed, in point e, when Sverrir describes the strategic disadvantages and unfitness of Magnús' troops, he is contradicting his point b, where he says that the task of fighting Magnús' men will be a difficult one. But such a contradiction would not be obvious to Sverrir's audience in the saga; their attention is neither critical nor reasoning and it demands a consistency only of praise and encouragement. The decorum of the speech is therefore unviolated.

Only one of Sverrir's speeches is not confident and bold. This he delivers before his final battle with Magnús in chapter 88. By a quirk of circumstance, Sverrir is victorious, but the outlook before the battle is bleak in the extreme and the intense seriousness of the speech conveys the sense that everything is at hazard for Sverrir. He is surprised in a fjord by Magnús' fleet while most

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¹ Similar blessings occur in chapter 147:

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hlaupit fram nu göðir halsar
oc geti guð til (p. 153, ll. 30-31).
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and in chapter 120:

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dugi hverr sem ma geti þa síðan
guð til (p. 127, l. 11).
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of Sverrir's men are away looting and burning in the surrounding countryside. Flight into the hostile district would be worse folly for Sverrir and the small host left with him than facing the attacking fleet. Sverrir offers his men the choice to flee or fight:

Vil ec at ver gerim nu rað vart hvart ver scolum veita viðr-tocu eða syniz yór at leifa scipin oc ganga a land (p. 94, ll. 19-20). I desire that we determine our plan, whether we shall give resistance or it seems to you (better) to abandon the ships and go ashore.

Sverrir offers alternative strategies to his men on other occasions, but it is always clear what his own wish is, for if they flee and lose their ships, he says he will never take up the cause against Magnús again:

Er þat oc satt at segia at sva með miclo starfi oc vandræðum sem ec hafða apr en ec fengi þessi scip. oc með þvi at ec lata þau nu. þa þicki mer þat licazt at ec raða eigi optarr til scipanna í Noregi (p. 94, ll. 24-27). It is also true to say that with so much effort and difficulty as I had before I acquired these ships and in the event that I lose them now, then I think it most likely that I shall never again attempt to man ships in Norway.

His men realise what he wants and support him, presenting him with the same encouraging arguments he has given them in the past: they will not flee untried:

quaðuz vilia vist beriaz oc leggiaz alldrí a flotta at ureyndu (p. 94, l. 35). they said they certainly wanted to do battle and not flee untried.

and they have often won when outnumbered:

1. See p. 58, ll. 35-36 and p. 153, ll. 2-4.
Sverrir acknowledges their choice, but is yet so subdued that he cannot promise them any certainty - not of victory, booty, or honour - except that one king that day will die:

And I can now also say to you, to make you better and more valiant (in the battle), that you will today set the king in Hell.

The saga author records the troops' reaction to this uncharacteristic attitude:

These words gave many men great concern which it might be.

Sverrir's humility and apprehensiveness before this most critical battle help measure the extent of his rejoicing later when he addresses his own and the survivors of Magnús' troops in chapter 99, after the victory. He is now sole king of Norway and his ironic and contemptuous tone marks the return of his self-confidence. According to the saga, it never deserts him again on the battle-field.

B The speeches of other men contrasted with Sverrir's

1 Magnús Erlingsson

An implicit comparison is made in Sverris Saga between Sverrir and Magnús Erlingsson both in the narrative and in their speeches. Here we consider Magnús' speeches in comparison with Sverrir's.

1. See above, pp. 42 ff.
2. See below, pp. 94-100.
Magnús delivers only one political speech, in chapter 84, and it has military import. He addresses the men of Tunsberg, trying to persuade them to support him in battle. His argument is simple and sincere; his diction, with few exceptions, plain. He uses no irony, no imagery, and does not adopt the homiletic style. His points are these:

a) They are familiar with the hardships imposed upon them by Sverrir:

\[\text{Kunnict mun yör vera...hverso mikil valc [oc] vandriði ver hofum þolat í rikino (p. 90, 11. 9-10).}\]

b) He asks them for aid and troops for the defence and promises he will not have to ask again often:

\[\text{Nu villda ec beîðaz af yör noccors styrcs til at ver mættim fa rikit. vil ec enn beîðaz at þer falt mer lið heðan ibrot. En þvi vil ec yör heita at þessa scyldlu scal eigi þurfa opt heðan ifra a yör at leggia (p. 90, 11. 10-13).}\]

Now I would like to request from you some support that we might defend the kingdom. I want to ask you again to give me some troops to lead away from here. But I will promise you that it will not be necessary to lay this obligation on you after this occasion.

c) He is candid that men understandably tire of sending out troops because of the destruction involved in war:

\[\text{Er þat oc eigi undarlict þott monnum leidiz at roa leið-angrinn með os. þvi at opt verþr scæðasamr mioc (p. 90, 11. 14-15).}\]

It is not surprising that men are tired of joining the levy with us because it often brings great injuries.
d) Nevertheless, he pursues his request for support because he is a crowned king and considers it his duty to defend his realm. His request is tinged with emotion because it is sincerely personal:

vil ec sækia til þessa landz
oddí oc eggjó meðan er mer
delíþ lífit til oc landż-
menn vía fylgía (p. 90, ll. 17-19).

I will claim this land with sword point and edge as long as life is allotted to me and landed men will follow.

e) He will defend the realm rather than take the easier and safer route of accepting a fief from his relative, King Valdimar of Denmark:

En se ec þat rað firir mer
er meira veri hoglífi oc
míni mannhatta. at taca
len af Valdamar konungi frenda
minum (p. 90, ll. 19-20).

But I see the alternative before me which would be more of an easy life and less dangerous, to take a fief from my kinsman King Valdimar.

There is in Magnús' sincerity his unpostured emotion, a certain appeal. He seems more trustworthy than Sverrir because less clever, and it is understandable that his men love him, as their behaviour over his grave indicates:

gengu nu margir til oc sa likit
scilþuz oc margir gratandi við.
oc einn af gestum Magnus konungs
cystí likit oc felldi tar við
(p. 104, ll. 15-17).

Many now came forward and saw the body and many wept as they went away. And one of King Magnús' courtiers kissed the body and dropped tears as he did so.

But it cannot be said that his political speech - if indeed this one is at all characteristic - is as sophisticated as those of his rival.
Magnús' battle speeches correspond to Sverrir's on two points. He mentions his own troops' fitness and the disadvantage of the enemy host in being out-numbered:

ver hofum yfrit mikit líð
oc fritt...þeir haflítið líð (p. 59, ll. 13-14).

We have a very great troop and a fine one...they have a small troop.

ekki scortir os líð...en Sverrir hefir nu dreipt líði sinu hingat oc þingat. ero nu her lucðir oc inni byrgðir firir os sem sauðir i kvi (p. 96, ll. 31-32, 33-35).

We are not lacking in troops. but Sverrir has now dispersed his troops hither and thither. They are now closed in and surrounded before us like sheep in a pen.

And Magnús also either thanks God for his assistance, or prays for it to be given them:

oc se guð þess loftaðr at nu man coma enda-dagri lífis þeira (p. 59, ll. 14-15).

And God be praised that today will be the last day of their life.

Lati guð oc sva luca þessom fundi at ver megíð sinum hafa frið oc fresli firir varum uvinom hvart er ver erum þa með lífi eða andaðir (p. 96, ll. 35-37).

May God also so end this encounter that we may henceforth have peace and freedom from our enemies whether we are alive or dead.

Aside from the conventional "sem sauðir i kvi", Magnús does not, however, heighten his remarks with the colloquialisms or imagery which we noticed in Sverrir's battle speeches, nor does he make any use of anecdotes.

In his two battle speeches he shows - as Sverrir never does - a distinct absence of psychological perception. In the second of the speeches he begins with an appeal to their reason, and that a negative appeal:
This is an insensitive remark to make just before a battle, when, like Sverrir, Magnus would be better to remind them what they have to gain - be it honour or wealth or revenge - rather than point out the cost of losing and the weariness of the whole business. In chapter 53, however, Magnus goes so far in his sincerity to remark that there will be no honour for his men at all in the encounter, since they are nobles and Sverrir's men are mere ruffians and vagabonds:

And yet our dealings with them are dishonourable because we have venerable men and worthy warriors to encounter them. But they have nothing but thieves and robbers and marauders of thrallish descent and poor beggars, may God cast abuse them down.

They will not be able to avenge their dead kinsmen even if they manage to kill all of Sverrir's men:

And our noble kinsmen are not properly avenged though we slay them all.

In Magnus' speeches, too, not only is there a lack of hearty encouragement for the men, such as Sverrir offers, but an explicit refusal to give any:
The second speech, in chapter 89, is in fact taken up largely with Magnús' personal complaint against the hardships he has endured during his reign (p. 96, ll. 15-27). This is somewhat softened by his expression of gratitude to his supporters which follows the complaint:

En allz-valldandi guð launum vinum oc hofþingom oc þar með allri alþyðo astsamliga fylgd er þeir hafa mer veitt i morgum þráutum (p. 96, ll. 27-29).

And Almighty God reward my friends and chieftains and with them all the people for the affectionate service which they have given me in many struggles.

Nevertheless, the whining self-pity of the speech contrasts sharply with the ebullient confidence characterising all but one of Sverrir's confidence battle speeches, he shares with his men through the familiarity of his colloquialisms and anecdotes. Magnús, for all his sincerity, remains remote from his audience, at least, as the saga presents him.
2 Ásbjörn: exaggerated encouragement

The encouragement of Magnús' troops before the battle at Norafjórðr is left to one of his captains, Ásbjörn. In his speech we also find a contrast with Sverrir's battle speeches, but at the opposite extreme from Magnús'. Ásbjörn's speech has almost no argument and consists primarily of straightforward abuse, lavished with a certain eloquence of imagery, but lacking the control and consequent dignity of Sverrir's speeches. The speech, in chapter 90, has only three points:

a) Sverrir is trapped:

Nu er sa dagr kominn er ver hofum allir langat til. at Sverrir oc þeir Birkibéinar eru her nu fyrir os reknir sem saúbir í kvi oc er nu lokit slægðum hans oc brogðum (p. 97, 11. 11-14).

Now the day is come which we have all longed for, that Sverrir and the Birkibéinar are here now before us driven as sheep in a pen and now his slyness and craft are ended.

There is undisguised glee in Ásbjörn's recognition of this opportunity. His grin and the excited sparkle of his eyes are almost there between the lines. Unlike Sverrir, whose words were calculated to move his men, Ásbjörn's are an expression of his own high spirits; as he goes on to describe Sverrir's "tricks" this becomes even more apparent.

b) Sverrir's wrongs are catalogued in strong terms:

1. Notice that this image repeats that in Magnús' speech which has just been delivered.
1 He is the devil's agent:

nu mun sa bregðaz honom...
he has taken all counsel, for and
er hann hefir oll rad af
that is the fiend whom he
tekit en þat er sa fiandin
trust
er hann truir a (p. 97, ll. 14-16).

Now he will fail him...

2 He sends his men on destructive errands:

hann sendi fra ser Svina-Petr
He sent Svína-Pétrr from him
til Bjorgyniar suðr oc hofðu
south to the Bergeners and
þeir þangat scapnaðar þrindi
they (Svína-Pétrr's party)
(p. 97, ll. 18-19).

He sent Svína-Pétrr from him
south to the Bergeners and
they (Svína-Pétrr's party)
had on that errand their
just deserts.

3 He has sent the most evil man into Sogn:

þeir ero oc sendir inn i Sogn er
They are also sent into Sogn
verstir ero af þeim fiandar-
who are the worst of the
liminir gestirir oc einn sa
courtiers, fiend's limbs, and one
er flest illt hefir gert Ulfr
who has done the most evil, Ulfr
þorpara-son (p. 97, ll. 19-21).

They are also sent into Sogn
who are the worst of the
courtiers, fiend's limbs, and one
who has done the most evil, Ulfr
the peasant's son.

4 Sverrir has augmented his evil deeds by burning in

Christian lands:

Sverrir hefir nu enn aukir sinar
Sverrir has now further
illgerbir oc herscap er hann
augmented his evil deeds and
hefir eytt med elldi cristit
harrying when he has wasted
land (p. 97, ll. 21-23).

with fire a Christian land.

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Such a speech must serve its purpose well, but it does so differently from Sverrir's battle speeches. Sverrir, by controlled psychological suggestion, instilled a battle eagerness in his men. He himself remains cool; his control makes that evident. Æsbjörn instills the spirit, not by manipulation, but by the example of his own eagerness. Which is most successful is not important here, only the contrast in style and approach. Yet it must be said that Sverrir's control demonstrates his conscious superiority over his audience, in both intuitive and strategic genius. This cannot but account for a great part of the success of his leadership.

3 Svína-Pétr: ironic diction

Svína-Pétr is the man Sverrir sends to announce the death of Magnús Erlingsson in Bergen. His speech, in chapter 96, is full of vivid and often ruthlessly ironic expressions, but his argument is straightforward and shows none of irony evident in the arguments of Sverrir's political speeches. In five simple statements, Pétr boldly declares what Sverrir could not possibly say himself:

a) Pétr announces himself, turning his nickname into a pun which he levels against them for having once driven Sverrir's men from Bergen. He marks the return of the Birkibeinar with a satisfaction contemptuous in its brevity:
opt hit sama svin i acri. Ec heiti oc Svina-Petr. En scavat er a at minnaz at ver varum heban recnr oc keyrdor or tessom bø oc helldr haðuliga. oc erum nu enn aprt commir 

Often the same pig in the field (i.e. a bad penny always turns up again). I am called Pig-Petr. It is a short time to remember that we were driven from here and flung out of this town and rather ignominiously. But now we are come back again.

b) Pétr announces the deaths of Magnús and his nobles, though it is clear they have already heard the news. He questions their apparent sorrow with an exaggerated innocence and, by using rhyming or alliterating pairs of words in a sing-song fashion to encourage their prayers for the dead, he makes clear his mockery:

en hverio gegnir þetta er allir menn drepa niðr hofði eða bera

But what is the meaning when all men hang their heads or cover their heads with cloaks? And God knows that how ever distraught you are, King Magnús is nonetheless now dead and all his host with him. Such funeral honours will be more handsome to them if you have ringing and singing done for their souls, or give money to poor men or clerks for the singing of prayers.

en hverio gegnir þetta er allir
men drepa niðr hofði eða bera
claði yfir hofði ser. oc þat veit guð at alldri lati þer
nu sva illa eða syrgrat eði
se nu dauðr Magnus konungr oc þar med allir hans herr. man þeim su eptir-gerðin vera vænni.
at þer latit ringia eða syngia
firir salom þeira. eða gefit
fe fatócum monnum eða clercum
til bóna-halla (p. 103, ll. 9-15).

But what is the meaning when all men hang their heads or cover their heads with cloaks? And God knows that how ever distraught you are, King Magnús is nonetheless now dead and all his host with him. Such funeral honours will be more handsome to them if you have ringing and singing done for their souls, or give money to poor men or clerks for the singing of prayers.

c) He points out the futility of resistance to Sverrir, using the same mocking sing-song tone and wry colloquial vocabulary:

Ecki tyr yfir nu tauta eða tutla
It avails you not a whit now to
hann Sverrir af konungdominum. mutter or tease Sverrir from
(p. 103, ll. 15-16).
his kingdom.

1. According to Fritzner, Ortbog over det Gamle Norske Sprog (Christiania, 1885-96) the word is only used here in Old Norse. But in modern Icelandic it is more common and used of fish nibbling or birds pecking.
For Sverrir has overcome more substantial enemies than they:

firir þvi at Sverrir konungr hefir nu beygt halsana a meirom storbuccum en þer erut bøndr eða kaupmenn (p. 103, ll. 16-18).

because King Sverrir has already bent the necks of bigger bucks than you are, farmers and merchants.

He ridicules their common domestic concerns, implying that those who fear mere natural elements are no match for Sverrir:

þviat caupmaðrinn oc buandinn kvipir ser oc sino fe. hann kvipir firir vind oc vatn (p. 103, ll. 18-19).

because the merchant and the farmer, for themselves and their property: they quiver for the wind and rain.

d) Pétr encourages the Bergeners to accept Sverrir as king by describing the benefits of his leadership in the most full and glowing terms, as if Sverrir were liberating them from a great oppressor. Again he uses pairs of words and with a conscious enthusiasm. Sverrir, Pétr says, is God's envoy, with every noble attribute:


Accept now King Sverrir whom God has sent you that you have a just chieftain and a wise one, munificent, eloquent, righteous and peaceful, renowned and reliable in defending the land and in all aspects of the land's government.

Aware of the Bergeners' suspicious resentments, Pétr assures them that the old Sverrir and his men, who once ravaged in the town, are now gone:
Nu er ibrotu sa Sverrir er vid hernæði for til margra caupstaða. brautu era nu oc þeir somu Birkibeinar er her sveimoðu um þóinn oc sopuðu uhreinliga hondum um hírðzlor yðrar buanda (p. 103, ll. 23-26). Gone is now that Sverrir who came with warfare to many market places. Gone also are those same Birkibeinar who wandered about the town here and carried off with unclean hands the goods of you farmers.

There are echoes of the New Testament here, of throwing off the old dispensation and putting on the new, in the shape of a reformed Sverrir:

En her muno nu coma með konungi varum miðkir híðmenn oc hog-værir. er vera skállass oc lykill firir frelsi oc friþi þessa caupstaðar oc annarra (p. 103, ll. 26-28).

But there will now come here with our king guardsmen meek and gentle, who shall be the latch and key for the freedom and peace of this market and others.

The irony is, of course, that King Magnús was well-loved by the Bergeners and, as Pétr recognises, Sverrir is the oppressor in their eyes.

e) Finally, Pétr warns all traitors to depart and offers Sverrir’s peace to any who request it, asking God’s blessing on the new king. It must seem hard to the Bergeners to be called impostors and traitors when in their eyes it is Sverrir who deserves these epithets. Pétr, of course, uses the terms with a deliberate maliciousness:

latit oc abrot fara þa er konungr kemr til bðiarins alla þa menn er sannir er at svicræðum við konunginn eða hans menn sva at eigi hafi sidan til sættar gengit (p. 103, ll. 30-33).

Let them also be off, when the king comes to the town, all those men who of a truth are treacherous toward the king or his men, those that have not since sought reconciliation.
Pétr's final prayer is calculated to antagonise his audience:

firir þat sama man guð honom
fagna oc i frið leiða oc
allir guðs helgir menn
(p. 103, ll. 34-35).

for which may God grant
him joy and lead him in
peace, and all God's
saints.

In MS. AM 327 4°, this ends Pétr's speech, but in Eirspennill, a younger MS, he adds a metaphorical remark to his advice to Sverrir's enemies to flee, reminding them that Sverrir's agents will not hesitate to kill them:

allir gæta þeir sin við
umræningum konungs, þeir
sjá ekki lengi í augu
monnum ok vapn þeirra
eru ekki ættfræði.

All protect themselves from the king's scouts. They don't look long into men's eyes and their weapons are not wise in pedigrees.

Whether or not this belongs in the original, it is consistent with the high style of the rest of Pétr's speech, and characteristic of his blunt irony. Such irony is powerful; but Sverrir's, being more subtle and sustained by its inherence in the progression of the arguments of his speeches, has a finer and more sophisticated cutting edge.

III Evidence of stylistic sophistication in the narrative

Of Sverrir's speeches in the saga, especially that delivered over Erlingr skakki's grave, Gathorne-Hardy writes:

No imaginative reconstruction could have given so vivid a presentation of the essential Sverrir - the priest and mystic, the shrewd tactician, the unscrupulous propagandist - and, I am afraid we must add, the cad.

Sverrir's speech style is the vehicle by which this range of skills is conveyed, and even beyond his verbal dexterity and versatility, it reveals a man at once aloof and yet possessed with a rare intuition for human nature, a strong sense of decorum, a fine and subtly ironic wit. The sophistication of his style is not shared by other speakers in the saga, but we find evidence of it in the saga narrative: in its diction, ranging, like Sverrir's own, from the homiletic to the purely colloquial; in the use of anecdote as a basis for the narrative, introducing drama and a dry humour; and in the tight control of the narrative in the disposition of the anecdotes and the deliberate structuring within them. The narrative also portrays a Sverrir completely in keeping with the man we meet in the speeches. This next section demonstrates these points in detail.

A Wealth of diction in the descriptions of Sverrir and Magnús

Neither Sverrir nor Magnús is described physically or as to character until his death, an unusual arrangement compared to other existing kings' sagas or to clerical works like the Biskupa Sögur.

In Sverris Saga the placing of these descriptions gives them the function of eulogy. In both we find a combination of lay and clerical terms.

1 Sverrir

The description of Sverrir in chapter 181 is remarkable not so much for quantity as quality of detail, supported by events in the saga itself. As a eulogy, it is therefore organically bound to the saga and is not merely a traditional adjunct. In this respect, the description differs from many in the kings' and bishops' sagas, where characteristics are often included for which the saga provides no evidence. The saga-writer also leads naturally into the description after the account of Sverrir's death, by comparing his appearance in death with that when he was alive:

baru siban allir eitt vitni
um at engi þóttiz set hafa
fegra likama dauðs mannz
enn hans. var hann ok meðan
hann lifði allra mana fegrstr
a horundit (p. 194, ll. 16-18).

All since bore unanimous witness that none thought he had seen a fairer body of a dead man than his. While he lived he was also of all men the most fair in complexion.

The detail of his appearance in death resembles several accounts in the Biskupa Sögur (see above, p. 24, note 1). Features of Sverris Saga also resembling the Biskupa Sögur are Sverrir's death-bed speech (see above, p. 57), and the Latin date of his death:

Sverrir konungr andaðið octauo
idus marcij. anno ab in-
carnacione domini nostri
Iesu Christi. M° CC°. 1
XV. (p. 195, ll. 18-19).

King Sverrir died the eighth hour of the day (2 P.M.) on the fifteenth of March, the year from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ 1215 (1202, by modern reckoning).

1. For comparative examples see Bisk.: Hungravaka, pp. 64, 70, 74-75, 85; Porvalds s. Viðförla, p. 112; Páls s. p. 145; Jóns s., p. 176; Þorláks s., p. 299.
Some of the details in the description proper are, of course, not especially distinctive:

lagr a vöxt, pyckr, sterkr at aflí, breidleitr. vel farit andlítinu, kyrfrlitr, athuga- samr, storðr, djarfr, frækn (p. 194).

low grown, stocky, physically strong, broad-faced, a well-shaped countenance, calm, attentive, ambitious, bold, valiant.

But many features are less common or even quite unique:

a) Touching on Sverrir's physical fastidiousness with that astute fondness for his human weaknesses evident in the anecdotes (see below, pp. 94 ff):

optazt skapat skeggit, a beard most often barbered, (p. 194, ll. 20-21).

b) Reminding us of the striking eyes with which Sverrir subdued his audiences before he spoke:

raudlitud augun ok lagu fast ok fagrt (p. 194, l. 21).

reddish-coloured eyes also deep-set and handsome.

c) Offering a unique detail complimenting his voice-projection:

skyrt ordtakit, ok rømrinn sva mikill yfír malinu, at þó at hann þátti eigi hatt melá, þá skildu allir, þott fjarri væri (p. 194, ll. 22-24).

distinct in speech, and the ring of his voice so great as he spoke that although he seemed not to raise his voice, yet all understood, though they might be far away.

1. The component words of this phrase are non-distinctive, but the combination is not common. "Mikill" or "litill vexti" are more common ways of expressing stature and imply the growing process, while this phrases indicates the final stature only and is therefore more static, more appropriate to a eulogy.
d) Mentioning a prudence for which we find evidence in the saga itself:¹

\[
\text{aldregi drakk hann afeinginn} \quad \text{He never drank excessive dryck, sva at hann spilti firir} \quad \text{drink such that he impaired \( \hat{p} \text{at viti sinu} \) (p. 194, ll. 26-27).} \quad \text{his judgment.}
\]

e) Emphasising a similar moderation:

\[
\text{konungr matadiz jafnan einmællt} \quad \text{the king ate only once a day (p. 194, l. 28).}
\]

f) Making a generalisation also supported by saga events:²

\[
\text{eliunarmaðr mikill við vQS} \quad \text{very tough in enduring bad ok voku (p. 194, l. 29).} \quad \text{weather and lack of sleep.}
\]

In this description of Sverrir there are also present certain details of his physical peculiarities. The saga writer states:

\[
\text{hann var haar i Scetinu} \quad \text{he was tall (when he sat)} \quad \text{(p. 194, ll. 25-25).} \quad \text{on his throne.}
\]

This suggests that Sverrir had a long back, but the description also states that he was short in the leg:

\[
\text{enn skammr fotleggrinn} \quad \text{but short in the leg.} \quad \text{(p. 194, l. 26).}
\]

It is possible to imagine his legs dangling in an undignified and conspicuous manner, but the saga says nothing. Perhaps he used a footstool.

¹. Sv. p. 6, ll. 30-35.

². For example, in the snow-storm, p. 21, ll. 27-33; during the trek through the forest, p. 12, ll. 21-22, ll. 26-30; and at the siege of Tunsberg, p. 189, ll. 14-17.
The second part of the description of Sverrir takes the form of a comparison between Sverrir and his claimed father, Sigurðr Haraldsson. Such a comparison is rare, but does occur once in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla between Sigurðr Jorsalafari and his brother Eysteinn, ancestors of Magnús Erlingsson. Snorri perhaps borrowed the idea from Sverris Saga, though this cannot be proved. It is in this second part of the description of Sverrir especially that pairs of words appear, often alliterated and similar to those used in descriptions in the Biskupa Sögur. In the comparison, Sverrir differs from Sigurðr in most respects and is pictured as consistent, careful, and composed, beside his father's intellectual looseness.

Where Sigurðr is:
letltaatur ok aakafllyndar
(of a light-hearted and impetuous nature),

aud-tryggr ok tallydin
(credulous and easily swayed),

hverfraadr ok mislyndr
(vacillating in decision making and variable in temper),

odlaatr ok opin-spiallr
(headstrong and garrulous),

fia-frodr ok fiolrædr
(ignorant and too ready to talk)
(p. 194, ll. 32-37).

Sverrir is:
staafestr ok stillr vel
(steadfast and composed),

varudigr ok vin-vandr
(wary and particular as to friends),

fast-udigr ok iafn-lyndr
(staunch and even-tempered),

fast-ordr ok faalyndr
(true to his word and reserved),

raadugr ok raaduandr
(shrewd and careful in discussion).

Of his father's more laudable qualities, Sverrir has a share.
Both are:
The comparison ends with a further ironic ambiguity:

\[
jafn-vel maeltu beir bat er 
\text{likewise, those who had been his}
uvinir hans hofdu verit at eigi 
\text{enemies said that such a man had}
hefdi slikr madr komit i 
\text{not come to Norway in their days}
Noreg a beira dogum sem 
\text{like Sverrir.}
Sverrir (p. 195, ll. 4-6).
\]

His enemies could well mean "no such man worse than Sverrir." No victim of his bitter tongue or his ingenious but often unscrupulous military strategies could have praised him wholeheartedly.

2 Magnús Erlingsson

The description of Magnús in chapter 98, pp. 104-105, is much briefer than that of Sverrir at the end of the saga and much less distinctive in detail. The differences are understandable and deliberate, since Sverrir is the main figure and receives the primary focus. The physical characteristics are typical of many figures in the kings' sagas, and do not contradict the Heimskringla description of Magnús: ¹

---

The only distinctive physical feature is his mouth, but this is given no significance in the saga:

hann var nokkot munnliotr

(p. 105, ll. 8-9).  

Ironically, Magnus shares this feature with Sverrir's claimed father, Sigurðr Haraldsson, at least according to the Heimskringla:

Sigurðr konungr gerðis: man, mikill ok sterkr,...
munnliotr ok vel at Sórum
andlitssköpum'  

Personal characteristics mentioned contrast him sharply with Sverrir as an open, gregarious, and rather self-indulgent man, given to entertainments and luxury of all kinds:

var [hann] litillatr ok glaðr...
mioc i sið ungra manna,
drykio-maðr mikill...kvenna-
maðr mikillþotti gott at
leica oc vera um-fram alla
menn at fimleic... sundr-
gerða-maðr at clæðum (p. 105,
ll. 2-6).

None of these characteristics was attributed to Sverrir, just as none of his intellectual qualities is mentioned of Magnus. This description then, presents Magnus as something of a foil to Sverrir. His actions support and strengthen the contrast. (See below, pp. 94 ff)

1. Hkr. 3, p. 330. Readers will also remember that Skarpheðinn is called "munnliótr" in Nj., chapter 23.
B Colloquialisms, concrete language and imagery in the narrative

The familiarity with clerical style evident in the narrative **Sverris Saga** is not surprising if we accept that Abbot Karl began the saga and either he or another monk from his cloister completed it. More interesting and curious is the wealth of concrete and colloquial language and imagery throughout the saga and comparable in range and distinction to that in Sverrir's speeches. The following selection of examples demonstrates this:

a) Chapter 88 (p. 95, l. 10):

```
oc festu svarðlyckiur allt
innan i borðunum.
```

This - svarðlykkja - is a rare technical term meaning a coil of walrus hide rope. Neither Fritzner nor Cleasby-Vigfússon cite any other instances and it may therefore indicate that the account is based upon a sailor's detailed eye-witness account. It is a surprisingly sharp detail.

b) Chapter 102 (p. 108, ll. 34-35):

```
var skipit sva reist oc
hrist at i sundr brotñaðu
brandarnir oc gecc þo eigi
or stað. þa logðu þeir elld
i oc brenndu upp;
```

The ship was so bent and shaken that the prow broke off and yet it could not be budged. Then they laid a fire and burned it up;

another unique detail concerning ships, here the unwieldy Maria-suðr, as it meets its end.
c) Chapter 165 (p. 180, ll. 11-12):

fundu þa bændr at þeir mundo
smæra steikt hafa en þeir
átluðu.
Eirspennill (p. 185):
Fundu þa bændr, at þeir
mundu smæra steikt hafa en
haft konunginn á teininum.

Then the bændr discovered they
must have a smaller roast than
they expected.

Then the bændr discovered that
they must have a smaller roast
on the spit than the king.

The enemy farmer host have captured a man they mistakenly thought was
Sverrir. This domestic metaphor occurs in no other existing Norse
text, to my knowledge.

d) Chapter 179 (p. 192, ll. 28-30):

margir kromduz lengi þeir er
lifui helldu.

"Kromduz"\(^1\) means literally "were squeezed", but here it is used
metaphorically of wasting away in sickness.

e) Chapter 23 (p. 25, ll. 8-9):

var han [Sverrir] þa fyr
ibrotu oc austr a Vermalandi
en iarl kom upp þannig.
ocatti hann þa at blistra i
spor honum.

He (Sverrir) was then away
beforehand and east in Verma-
land when the jarl arrived
there. And then he had to
whistle in his footsteps.

This is probably a hunting phrase and appears also in Kormáks Saga:\(^2\)

kveðr Kormáki munu þykkja
audveldra at blistra í spor
Steingerðar ok gera farar
sínar hrakligan en berjask
við Bersa.

He said Kormákr would be thought
content to whistle in Steingerðr's
footsteps and follow his way
wretchedly, rather than fight with
Bersi.

---

1. Vigfússon cites a similar usage in Íslenzk Íjóðsögur, vol. ii, p. 274,
and Frítzner cites Gunnlaugs saga, ed. Sigurgeir Nordal, Íslenzk Fornrit

2. Kormáks Saga, ed. Einarr O. Sveinsson. Íslenzk Fornrit, volume viii,
(Reykjavik, 1939) p. 227.
f) Chapter 176 (p. 189, ll. 14-16):

Now winter came and frost and ice set in. It then became more difficult for the Birki-betinar to gather provisions for themselves. But the bændr then became even harder to take by the horns.

This phrase is used elsewhere, but not in the context of a besieged town.

All of these terms and phrases enliven the narrative and sharpen the visual images of the action. In many cases they may have been suggested to the saga-writer by the verbal accounts of his informants, but it is certain from their frequency and effectiveness that they are used in the narrative deliberately. Such colloquial language and imagery, together with the stylistic elements from kings' and bishops' sagas in the descriptions of Sverrir and Magnús, make clear that there is in the diction of the narrative a flexibility of style comparable to that in Sverrir's speeches.

C Dramatic and anecdotal basis of the narrative

The saga-writer, like Sverrir himself in his speeches, makes use of the dramatic anecdote, but to a much greater extent, almost to the exclusion of the straightforward narrative reporting used in other thirteenth century kings' sagas. Using drama and anecdote the saga-writer focuses selectively on the behaviour of Sverrir and

1 In chapter 30, however, there are no anecdotes and the account is very brief. Possibly there were no eye-witness accounts available to the saga-writer.
on that of his enemy, Magnús, to the advantage of Sverrir's image; he provides, by close and controlled focus, an immediacy of suspense; he is allowed scope for much dry humour; and through the selection and careful disposition of the anecdotes, he offers variety and dramatic contrast, providing all the essential details and creating links between events. These features are now considered in detail.

1 The focus on Sverrir and Magnús in battle

a) Sverrir's fallibility

In the early part of his career, up to the death of Magnús, Sverrir displays more an attitude of self-preservation during battle than one of bravery: at Niðarós, where he is defeated; at Ílja; and at Norafjörður, where Magnús is killed. One may easily speculate that his intellect and imagination, keener than the average soldier's, made the consequences of battle more vivid to him and therefore more fearful. It is certainly clear from his dreams early in the saga that the enormity of the task he set himself often filled him with dread and awe, symbolised in the dreams by his fear when carrying St Óláfr's standard:

\[
\text{hann þottiz við taca merkino oc þo með nockorri reizlo} \\
\text{(p. 5, ll. 2-3).}
\]

He thought he took the standard and yet with some fear.

and his apprehensiveness and trembling before the figure of the prophet Samuel:
hann þottiz vera ihuga-fullr
hvát þessi maðr myndi vilia
(p. 10, ll. 11-12).

he seemed to be apprehensive
of what the man might want.

gambar maðr...melti hit
þríðia sinn. hrez eigi þu
broðir (p. 10, ll. 18-19).

the old man...said the third
time, "Fear not, brother."

In the battles themselves his behaviour is presented less seriously.

His acts of cowardice, candidly reported by the saga-writer, are indeed
humorous. Such human fallibility makes Sverrir endearing not only to
the modern audience, but to his own men in the saga, who risk their
lives to save him. His human side thus acts as a counter to his
aloofness in the speeches and makes him more accessible and more
credible to us as an historical figure. In a contemporary history,
this credibility is, of course, more important than in the history
of some figure out of the writer's distant past. It is a necessary aspect
of the saga's committed approach.

In chapter 28, we find Sverrir in flight at the Battle at
Niðarós, an encounter his men insisted upon making against Sverrir's
advice. Sverrir, dressed in disguise and placed at the front of his
ship closest to the land, is prepared from the outset for a quick
and inconspicuous escape:

Sverrir konungr var sva clædr
at hann var i kufli blam oc
sipum. hann for fram at scipi
miec sva snemma oc atlaði til
landgongu (p. 31, ll. 12-14).

King Sverrir was so clad that he
was in a hooded cloak, blue and
long. He went very early forward
in the ship and intended to go
ashore.
But as he rushes forward in flight, he slips on a loose plank and falls into the hold, trapped there by the stampede to safety of the rest of his crew. The image is almost slap-stick:

Oc er hann com fram um siglo þa scauz niðr þilia undir fotum honom oc fell hann í rumit. en menn liopu sva þyct yfir hann at hann matti eigi upp standa. oc dvalþþ pat ferþ hans mioc langa stund (p. 31, 11. 14-17).

And when he came forward as far as the mast, then a plank slipped under his foot and he fell into the hold. But men leapt so thickly over him that he could not stand up. And that delayed his journey for a very long time.

Sverrir's face, peering up through the floor boards and no doubt forlorn in aspect, is finally spotted by the Falstaffian figure, Helgi Barley-Belly, who assists him from the hold with a wry comment:

Illa munum ver sciliaz við varn konung (p. 31, 1. 20). It would be a bad thing for us to say good-bye to our king.

The focus now shifts to Sverrir, who, quick to preserve his disguise, cautions Helgi not to call him King, but betrays a humorous sense for the ludicrousness of his situation:

Oc þa mælti konungr. Helgi konunga þu nu eigi i meira lagi fyrst (p. 31, 11. 21-22). And then the king said, "Helgi, don't king me any more for a while."

Once ashore, Helgi must again assist Sverrir by fending off his assailants as Sverrir meanwhile attempts to scramble up the bank. But he is hampered by the folds of his disguise and tumbles back onto the beach:

1. There is no precise translation in English for this word, a title used verbally to mean the act of giving a title. A similar ironic usage (which is probably not verbal) appears in Hkr. 3, p. 37: Einarr þambarskelfir segir: "Ófjarl, Ófjarl, fôstri".
But the king climbed up a steep bank. And when he had come a good way up the bank, he then stepped on his cloak and his feet slipped from under him. He tumbled down back onto the beach.

Again Helgi must defend him, but this time he and Sverrir get away. The humour of the passage depends upon the unrelenting pace of the narrative; the saga-writer holds our attention on its edge with the continuous pattern of "and then...and then...and then...", over thirteen lines.

Further instances of Sverrir's self-preservationist practicality, also both humourous and suspense-filled, occur throughout the saga. At the Battle of Illa, he only enters the fray when the enemy begin to flee:

Sverrir konungr sat a hesti Oc er hann sa ufarar sinna manna. leyði hann at þeim. oc callaði hatt hví flyi þer. snuit aprþ oc beriz sem best. se þer eigi at flyr allr herr þeira til scipanna (p. 51, ll. 18-21).

At the Battle of Nordness Sverrir forces his captain's ship into the most heated part of the battle:

konungr toc þa einn palstaf oc stacc við kinnurningum a scipi Guðlaugs. oc het nu a sina menn at þeir scyldo draga þa fram með scipino.

King Sverrir sat on a horse back. And when he saw the misfortunes of his men, he galloped to them and called out loudly, "Why are you fleeing? Turn back and fight as best you can. Don't you see that all their host is fleeing to their ships?"

At the Battle of Nordness Sverrir forces his captain's ship into the most heated part of the battle:

the king then took a grappling iron and hooked the bows of Guðlaugr's ship and told his men they should drag it forward off his own ship. They did so.
Sverrir himself then disappears from the battle account entirely until victory is achieved, suggesting his role was minimal.

At the Battle at Norafjörður, Sverrir again dresses in disguise:

konungr hafði oll brunóð
clæði (p. 95, ll. 25-26). the king was completely clothed in brown.

He later makes his escape to land where he remains until the battle turns in his favour:

eigi naði hann up-gongo a scip sitt. oc reiði han ibraut oc til landz (p. 98, ll. 28-29).

Sverrir konungr var a landi oc er hann sa þessi tíðindi gecc hann ofan til batzins (p. 100, ll. 10-11).

He was unable to board his ship and he rowed away to land.

King Sverrir was ashore and when he saw these happenings he went at once down to the boat.

b) Magnús Erlingsson as heroic foil to Sverrir

Though Sverrir's shortcomings as a warrior are clear enough from his own behaviour, the saga-writer further marks them and at the same time points out the advantages of Sverrir's prudence, by setting up Magnús Erlingsson as a foil in direct contrast to the Faroe Islander. Magnús is the model warrior-hero in this saga,
fearless and bold and always foremost in the battles' most dangerous places, with no bodyguards or horse to protect him. At Ílja, he is the last man to flee and makes his presence known with a final blow in cryptic reply to one of Sverrir's men, who is spreading the rumour that Magnús is fleeing from the battle:

Then one man said, "King Magnus konungr. Maðr einn Magnus is fleeing." A man replies, "Not yet," he says, and leapt at him and struck him a fatal blow. That was King Magnus konungr (p. 51, ll. 26-28).

At Nordness, however, his conspicuous bravery costs him the victory. His finery sets him apart from the others, a clear target for Sverrir's men:

But the Birkibeinar recognised him by his weapons and clothes and rained their weapons thickly upon him.

Pushing himself forward to the gunwhales of his ship, Magnus is the recipient of a shower of weapons. Wounded in the instep, he lurches back, slips in some blood, and falls:

One man cast a sword at him and it struck his instep and passed right through the instep. The king reacted swiftly to that and protected himself, but one foot slipped on the planking, which was bloody, and he fell backwards.

At his fall, Sverrir's men raise a victory cry, while Magnús' men begin to flee at the orders of Magnús' brother Ormr. Magnús himself is completely ignored when he protests that he is unhurt:
Magnus konungr liop upp sciott oc callaði þegar bað þa eigi flyla oc let sic ecki saca. þa let engi sem heyrði (p. 61, ll. 26-28).

King Magnús leapt up quickly and called out at once, begged them not to flee and said he was not hurt. Then no one behaved as if he heard.

Magnús clearly does not receive the same response to his leadership as does Sverrir. 1 Magnús' orders are also disobeyed in chapter 70, when he forbids all but a few to go ashore at Niðarós to their women and their drink, yet many go in spite of him:

Magnus konungr latti þa alla at fara til þjóðarins. en lofaði fam. En margir foro eigi at siðr (p. 76, ll. 35-36).

King Magnús tried to prevent all from going to the town, and permitted only a few. But many went nonetheless.

c) Sverrir's acts of courage and prowess

Once Magnús is removed and Sverrir becomes sole king of Norway, his behaviour in battle reflects his more confident position and is portrayed in a manner more traditional and befitting a king. Fighting against the Baglar in chapter 148, Sverrir rides with his troops and bloodies his halberd:

Sverrir konungr reið hia liðino þa er flottinn var rekinn oc var kesi hans aull bloðug allt upp a scaptit sva at bloðit rann upp a hendr honom (p. 154, ll. 9-11).

King Sverrir rode with his troops when the fugitive host was pursued and his halberd was all bloody, all the way up the shaft so that the blood ran down his hand.

There is also in this chapter a lengthy account of his skilful encounter with one of the enemy, whom he defeats (p. 154, ll. 12-25).

1. Sverrir's presence and encouragement greatly inspire his men, in spite of his own hesitation to fight boldly at times. For instances of his troops' obedience, see p. 51, ll. 22-23; p. 32, ll. 4-7; p. 98, ll. 20-23; p. 180, ll. 6-13.
In a later incident, he kills nine men single-handedly, though it is true they are unarmed:

\[
\text{konungr reið at þeim er festunum slogu oc drapu þar .ix. menn (p. 165, ll. 20-21).}
\]

The king rode at those who were cutting the cables and slew nine men there.

And in yet another battle, he leads his men into the battle magnificently dressed in English armour:

\[
\text{hann hafði goða brynio oc stercan panzera um utan oc yxt rauðan hiðp oc viða stalthfu sva sem Syðr-menn hafa oc undir bryn-collu. sverþ a hlíð oc kesiu i hendi. hann reið i ondverþu lóinu sva at hestrinn toc briosti við skioðldum buanda (p. 175, ll. 34-37).}
\]

he had a good bernie and a strong coat of mail on the outside and a scarlet doublet over it and a wide steel helmet, such as Englishmen wear, and below it a collar of mail, a sword at his side and a halberd in his hand. He rode in the front of the troops so that his horse set its breast at the farmer's shields.

The bændr want to slay him, but their attempts are futile and they are presented with some scorn expending their energies in words rather than action:

\[
\text{Bændr kendo fullgerla konung- inn oc mælt hverr til annars. drepi hann hoggi hann. leggi hann. drepi hestinn undir honum. þetta var mælt en eigi gert (p. 179, ll. 30-32).}
\]

The bændr full clearly recognised the king and said to each other, "Kill him, strike him, attack him, slay the horse from under him." That was said but not done.

Even when conspicuously dressed, Sverrir is invulnerable, unlike Magnús, a further implication that he is God's agent and will die, not on the battle-field, but in his bed, as he himself prophesied.\(^1\)

---

\(^1\) See Sv., chapter 99, p. 107, ll. 14-15, or p. 48 above.
This more heroic behaviour removes the stigma of cowardice which his earlier more cautious action may have left, in spite of the wit with which it is related. On the other hand, the later instances of Sverrir's courage are made more meaningful because we can see how much his confidence has grown since the early days of his career.

2 Deliberate selection and structuring of the anecdotes

The saga-writer does not include anecdotes at random. Though he may have had many eye-witness accounts available for his use, perhaps variations of the same event in some cases, he has selected and shaped them deliberately to present Sverrir in a consistent and positive light and at the same time to offer a coherent and engaging narrative. Some evidence of this has been displayed immediately above in the anecdotes which focus closely on Sverrir himself and reveal his character. Below, anecdotal material is examined for some of the aesthetic effects the saga-writer achieves by means of controlled but varied focus, dramatic contrast, the provision of essential details, and the creation of links between events. With these effects, the saga-writer deliberately controls the pace of the saga and supports its unity, which is primarily dependent upon the character of Sverrir himself.

a) Controlled and varied focus - the battle at Norafjörður

In the account of the Battle at Niðarós, when Sverrir makes a rather ignominious escape from defeat at the hands of Magnús'
men, the focus shifts several times, though only one of those
shifts is a shift of place - from Sverrir's ship to the beach
(see p. 96 above). But even before that major shift, the focus
has moved from Sverrir's point of view, looking up from the ship's
hold, to Helgi's, looking down from the deck into the face of his
unfortunate king. Both sorts of alteration in perspective, the
major and the minor, are important control devices. Their frequency
determines the pace of the saga - the more shifts there are, the
faster the action seems to move - and they also control and
direct the imaginative "eyes" of the audience, determining what
we shall see, how much of it, and in what order. The saga-writer
exercises this form of control in every anecdote or series of
anecdotes in the saga, but most powerfully in his account of the
Battle at Norafjörður, where the major shift from one focal point to
another becomes virtually the introduction of a new anecdote.

The account begins in chapter 88 when Sverrir and his men
first discover they are about to be attacked in the fjord by
Magnús. Here there are several quick but minor shifts in focus:
from a general view of the men at their mid-day meal to Sverrir
over-hearing the news of ships:

En er menn hofðu mataz um hrið.
þa heyrði konungr at menn
noccóir melto þeir er gegnt
varo konungs-scipino við
sionar-vaurðuna. sogðu at
þeir sa morg scip sigla utan
eptir Sogn-sær (p. 93,
l. 31-34).

But when men had eaten for a
while, then the king heard
some men talking, those who
were opposite the king's ship
with the watch. They said
that they saw many ships
sailing out along the
Sogn-sær.
to the speculations of the watch-men:

Varð-menn mæltu sin imilli hvat scipum þat mun vera. mæltu sumir at vera myndi ferior oc myndo Sygnir hafa samflet sunnan or Biorgyn. En sumir mæltu at licara þotti vera lang-scipa seglum (p. 93, l. 36 - p. 94, l. 2).

The watchmen discussed among themselves what ships these might be. Some said it must be merchant ships and the Sogners must have a fleet sailing together from the south from Bergen. But some said they were more likely to be the sails of longships.

to Sverrir's reaction to their speculations:


And when the king heard these remarks, he stood up from the table and went ashore to where the watchmen were. Men crowded out of the ships to him and each gave his opinion of what the ships must be. The king stood up after a while, and looked out and said, "There is no point in denying their hostile intent. Those are certainly longships' sails."

Sverrir then delivers his pre-battle speech (see above, pp. 69).

Afterwards he gives instructions to his men, which they carry out, though at first rather abortively in their panic. A brief interlude ensues during which the narrative focuses closely on Sverrir as he washes and robes himself in inconspicuous clothing (p. 95, ll. 23-26). He then addresses his men again, though his words are not reported, standing above his ship with his hand on the stern:

Eptir þat gecc hann ofan a bergit þar er hans scip la undir rock under which his ship lay niðri oc mælti þa enn noccorum orðum oc toc um scipstafnin (p. 95, ll. 26-28).

After that he went down to the
His men move his hand because the pitch there is not yet dry:

But his men took his hands off because the tar was not yet dry on the ship's (rear) beak.

This luminous detail, rather than shifting the focus, concentrates it, bringing us very close in to the scene of action and drawing our attention to a small gesture nonetheless indicative of the great love and respect for Sverrir existing among his men. Further general preparation follows before the scene shifts in chapter 89 to Magnús.

Chapters 89 and 90 contain the speeches of Magnús and Ásbjörn, already mentioned above (see pp. 76-79). At the end of chapter 90 comes a static description of Magnús' battle dress and weapons. This form of close focus is noticeable because its stasis over several lines is rare in this saga. The narrative normally has a remarkable continuity of movement, though the pace may alter.

Chapter 91 describes first the initial encounter between Sverrir's giant ship the Maria-súðr and Magnús' ships, following the general action until the focus closes on Sverrir as he leaves his ship to advise the others in his fleet and, unable to return, makes for land. The narrative leaves him there and returns to the Maria-súðr where we are given a graphic account of the fierce attack suffered by Sverrir's men:
En nálæga. varo allir sarir af vapnum oc grioti. Sva varo fleir moðir oc barþir at fleir voru sumir er annat-tveggia hofðu litit sar eða ecki oc varo daþir af erfiðe (p. 99, ll. 7-10).

But near at hand all the men were wounded from weapons and stones. They were so weary and battered that some, who were otherwise either little wounded or not at all, died from exhaustion.

Chapter 92 contains the climax of the battle. Eiríkr, Sverrir's claimed brother (that is, son of King Sigurðr), acting on Sverrir's advice, leads thirteen ships out against those loose around the Maria-súðr. He then lashes his own ship to the side of one of a group of Magnús' ships which are lashed together in a row alongside the Maria-súðr, with their prows toward her gunwhale:

Eiríkr konungs-son lagði scip sitt sibyr ðat er utanst la þeirra er tengð varo (p. 99, ll. 25-26).

Eiríkr the king's son laid his ship alongside that which lay outermost of those which were bound together.

The focus now holds to this area of the battle. After an interlude of heavy fighting, the Birkibeinar take the lead and board the enemy ship:

Siban sneruz Birkibeinar til upgongu (p. 99, ll. 29-30).

Then the Birkibeinar began to board.

Our eyes now follow only the standard-bearer, Benedictus, who boards first and is killed, precipitating the Birkibeinar retreat:


Benedictus was the name of a man who carried Eiríkr king's son's standard. He boarded first with the forecastlemen. But when the Heklungar saw that, they attacked them hard and killed Benedictus and even more who had boarded. But some they drove back off.
Encouraged by Eiríkr, who for a moment receives our attention (ll. 34-35), the Birkibeinar make a second attack and succeed in pushing Magnús' men back onto the ship lashed next in line:

After that the king's son encouraged his troops. They attempted then another time the boarding and recaptured their standard. They then proceeded to attack so that the Heklungar retreated and they leapt up onto the ship which lay next to them.

Now the pace moves even more quickly, speeded by more frequent shifts in focus so that the see-saw pattern of attack, repulse, and retreat is accelerated until the individual stages can no longer be distinguished:

But the Birkibeinar pursued them unrelentingly...Now there was here less resistance than on the first ship and all leapt off it onto the ship which was next and so on, one after the other. But the Birkibeinar (came) after them with whoop and yell and much inciting. They struck everywhere and killed those who were in their way.

Important is the authorial intrusion in the midst of this:

as always happens when fear or flight come upon men in battle that seldom are the fleeing men good for facing the enemy again though they were very brisk in resistance (at first).
The greater length and more complex grammar of the sentence are striking compared to those immediately preceding and following it, and, while giving his audience a pause in which to catch their breath, the saga-writer here indicates that the battle has turned decisively in Sverrir's favour. For Magnús' men, driven back from ship to ship, are finally forced by their numbers out onto Magnús' own ship, which is nearest land and from which they leap into the fjord:

Oc þa er mugrinn flottans geystiz in a stor-scipin. þa liopu menn a caf af konungs-scipino. þvi at þat la næst landino (p. 100, ll. 6-8).

And when the crowd of fugitives burst out onto the great ship, then men leapt diving from the king's ship because it lay nearest the land.

The others crowd onto the last four ships and by their combined weight, sink them:

En onnur iii þau er størst varo succu niðr undir mann-muginum (p. 100, ll. 8-9).

But the other four which were the largest of them sunk down under the crowd of men.

Thus, Eiríkr's one crew, has, by strategic genius and bold attack, wiped out several of Magnús' crews, including Magnús himself, as is reported after the fact:

Magnus konungr liop firir borð af scipi sinu oc allt þat lið er a var þesso scipi. tyndiz þar allr fiolþi liðs þeira (p. 100, ll. 20-22).

King Magnús leapt from the side of his ship and the whole troop that was on board this ship. They perished there, the whole host of them.
This final encounter, witnessed by us at close hand, is what Sverrir himself has just seen from shore. The narrative focus now returns to him, having left him there in the middle of chapter 91. He returns to his own ship as soon as possible and there celebrates a thanksgiving mass. The remainder of the account gives the customary list of the important men who died as well as the actual date and time of the battle, in support of the chronological sequence of the saga events. These details decelerate the pace of the action and prevent an abrupt transition from the battle account to the immediately ensuing narrative.

b) Dramatic contrast

A shift in focus from one party to another in the battle accounts sometimes has the additional effect of dramatic contrast. This is often achieved by the juxtaposition of battle speeches delivered by Sverrir and Magnús and by setting in contrast their battle behaviour. At the battle of Steinberg, however, the contrast is more general and applies to the opposing troops at large. Magnús' troops are unfit and unenthusiastic about the battle. The saga-writer mentions that they have been up the previous evening playing sports:

\[\text{þeir vaucðu ut a Eyrom þessa somu nott oc hofðu þar leic (p. 40, ll. 9-10).}\]

Many of the men are drunk as well as tired:
King Magnus' troops lay for the most part up in the town and had been dead-drunk during the evening.

Nevertheless, several captains and their men gather at Christ Church to meet Jarl Erlingr Skakki, who addresses them briefly. But when he has the trumpet sounded and they leave the church yard he sees that he is not well-supported and his response to this desertion is almost pathetic:

And when they came out beyond the steeple, the earl looked on both sides and said, "Where are we all now?"

In chapter 37 (p. 41), the focus shifts to Sverrir's troops, who by contrast are much more eager. The saga-author mentions that many are ill-equipped and are only workmen sent by farmers, who fear to oppose Erlingr personally:

King Sverrir had from Orkadalar nearly 360 men or somewhat more and that troop was scantily armed. The farmers had sent from home their workmen because they did not dare to go themselves and were afraid of Jarl Erlingr's retribution.

But the author makes clear that Sverrir's peasant troops will nonetheless be doughty and willing warriors. He focuses upon one huge representative, carrying only a club for a weapon:
He was both large and strong and had a large wooden cudgel on his shoulder and not another weapon.

One of Sverrir's regulars accosts him and questions him sceptically, contemptuous of the man's station in life:

He was both large and strong and had a large wooden cudgel on his shoulder and not another weapon.

But the peasant has an equal and ready wit and more good nature:

This man was called Eyvindr. He replied, "The weapons I intend to fight with will come to meet me from the town and the jarl's men are still carrying them."
This dramatic contrast between the opposing forces, though implicit and facilitated only by the shift in focus, wins our sympathy for Sverrir's troops and prepares us for his victory at Steinberg. The contrast is thus used in a partisan fashion and as a pointer to the shape and structure of the battle account.

c) Essential details provided

Even as the anecdotes are themselves selected and placed for specific aesthetic effects, so are the details within each anecdote. Some evidence of this has already been given indirectly: the details of Sverrir and Magnús' battle dress; of the way in which Sverrir's men prevent him from soiling his hand on the ship's prow; of the drunkenness of Magnús' men before the Battle at Steinberg; and of the author's intrusion to interpret events. The saga-writer's mention of weather conditions demonstrates this feature further. In some cases, seasonal or special weather conditions give rise to anecdotes, such as Sverrir's difficult trek with his troops in the forest:

At that time the ways were worst as snow melted in the woods and ice on the waters. They journeyed sometimes on moors or in great swamps and dense forests or over great tracts of felled trees.

Then weather became so bad that seldom has such been experienced. Then so much snow fell that it was beyond all precedent.

their extremity in the snow-storm:

At that time the ways were worst as snow melted in the woods and ice on the waters. They journeyed sometimes on moors or in great swamps and dense forests or over great tracts of felled trees.
and the troops' complaint at the siege at Tunsberg:

Now winter came and frost and ice set in. It then became more difficult for the Birkibeinar to scrape together provisions for themselves. But the bandr then became even harder to take by the horns. Their food supplies worsened greatly and there arose a great murmuring among the troops.

Elsewhere, such details make an incident more immediate because the setting becomes more tangible:

There was then sunny weather and a little breeze from the sea up the fjord so that the standard rose and fluttered out from the pole.

At the time the frost was severe and the waters locked with ice; then King Sverrir's bailiffs and the farmers formed the plan to attack them with troops and do battle.

Mention of the winter setting of this battle constantly recurs: a trumpet calls the army out onto the ice (p. 173, ll. 12-14), and the deep snow made skiing excellent, but a walker would sink in the drifts if he left the path (p. 174, l. 17; see also, p. 179, ll. 4, 26). Such details assist the precision of focus and the realism of the battle account.
d) Links created

Details within anecdotes sometimes function to link one anecdote with another, though this be removed by a short or great distance in the narrative. For instance, in chapter 153, Sverrir expresses a wish that Þorsteinn Kúgaðr be given quarter if he asks it, even though he once defected to the enemy Baglar from Sverrir's troops. But Sverrir is unsure how successful Þorsteinn will be in making his request if he is met in the streets by Sverrir's men before he reaches Sverrir himself:

\begin{verbatim}
grip man hann hafa af mer en ec veit eigi ef Birkibeinar meta honom a strætum uti. hvern veg þa ferr hans mal (p. 161, ll. 5-7).
\end{verbatim}

He will receive peace from me but I don't know which way his case will go if the Birkibeinar meet him in the streets outside.

A few lines later, Þorsteinn arrives in the court disguised in a deep hood:

\begin{verbatim}
Þorsteinn hafði diupan hott a hofði oc kendo menn hann ecki fyrr en hann com firir konung (p. 161, ll. 10-12).
\end{verbatim}

Porsteinn wore a deep hood on his head and men did not recognise him before he came before the king.

The detail of the hood indicates that Þorsteinn also realised his danger, perhaps through an informant from the court, and his arrival is therefore directly linked to Sverrir's words given earlier.

A more distant link operates between chapter 109 and 165. In the first case, Sverrir arrives in Bergen after defeating his enemy, Jón Kuflung, and is greeted enthusiastically:
That was the first time that King Sverrir and his troops came to the Bergeners and the whole people was glad.

This, of course, reminds us that the Bergeners, formerly great supporters of Magnús Erlingsson, once hung their heads in sorrow when Sverrir arrived there, after Magnus' death (see above, Svína-Pétr's speech, pp. 79-83). A stronger link operates forward to chapter 165, Sverrir makes a timely arrival in Bergen just after the people have heard of a pending attack by the Baglar. He is therefore welcomed again:

Allir uróu honom fegnir oc mest firir þa soc at þeir hofóu af nochorn spraca at Baglar væri a leid norðan oc æðlaði til heiðarins bratt (p. 181, ll. 4-6).

All became glad of him and most for the reason that they had some rumour that the Baglar were on the way from the north and intended to (arrive) at the town soon.

In the Eirspennill text, this link is made quite explicit:

þa var þat annat sinn, er allir Bjørgynjar menn uróu konunginn fegnir...
(Eirspennill, p. 186).

That was the second time when all the Bergener men were glad of the king.

This type of link is also created anywhere in the saga where the focus of the narrative shifts back to a previously mentioned location or figure(s). Such links supplement the purely chronological sequence of events and provide further evidence that the narrative is securely under the control of the saga-writer.
IV Conclusions

The above discussions sufficiently indicate that the style of Sverrir's speeches and that of the saga narrative correspond well in many respects.

A Both speeches and narrative reflect a tight and unflagging control over the material. In the speeches this is evident from the arguments they present, whether the logic there is aimed at his audience's reason or their emotions, as in the battle speeches. In the narrative, there is evident control of the chronological progression of events, of the selection and disposition of details within individual anecdotes, and of the shifting focus. In both speeches and narrative, control is deliberate.

B Both reflect a flexible range of style. In the speeches, the homiletic style is used, very often ironically; as well as a more political rhetoric, especially when Sverrir introduces personal or national grievances against the enemy; and the colloquial, especially in the battle speeches or when he wishes to make a point personal to his audience. In the narrative, a similar familiarity with homiletic language is evident in physical and character descriptions, where it is often combined with language more traditionally applied to kings; the colloquial, too, is manifest in dialogue, imagery, and narrative detail throughout the saga.
C In both, use is made of anecdote and dramatisation. Though this is clearly a marked and distinguishing feature of the narrative structure, there is considerable instance of it in the speeches as well, particularly associated with passages abundant in colloquialisms.

D Both speeches and narrative reflect astute sensitivity to human nature. In the speeches this is a corollary of argument control as well as stylistic flexibility; Sverrir has an unfailing instinct as to which style best suits a particular occasion or point in a speech, for the most efficacious manipulation of his audience. In the narrative such sensitivity finds voice in the occasional intrusion of the saga-writer's interpretative statements; in his use of Sverrir's fallibility as a subtle means of winning the reader's sympathy for Sverrir; and in the breathless suspense created in many accounts by his controlled shifting of focus.

E Both reflect a sophisticated humour, very often ironic and nearly always dispensed in such a fashion that the saga audience may laugh at human fallibility from a superior vantage point. Humour in the saga treads the careful path of being sharp but never cruel, and Sverrir himself can be its butt, in both speeches and narrative.

F Both the speeches and the narrative assist the task of championing Sverrir and his cause, and both do so with a delicacy and subtlety dependent upon all the previously mentioned stylistic features.
The material in the narrative anecdotes must have come from eye-witness sources, and some of these men must have been in the enemy camp at the time of events. Yet, while the colloquialisms in the narrative may have been borrowed from such eye-witness accounts, the saga-writer has for the most part re-worded and perhaps re-shaped them, selected from them and ordered them, to form a unified whole reflecting his own consistent style. Events in the early part of Sverrir's career receive more detailed attention, but they are also the most interesting and critical years of his reign. The less dense accounts later show the same stylistic features and therefore need not necessarily reflect a change in authorship. Yet the consistency of the narrative style does not rule out a change in authorship if the two authors had the same training and background, as would be the case with Abbot Karl Jónsson and a successor from his own cloister. But the question has not been decided definitively on the grounds of existing evidence.¹

The correspondence between speech and narrative styles begs two further questions: do Sverrir's speeches reflect his own personal style or the saga-writer's version of it? and, vice versa, was the narrative style heavily influenced by Sverrir's own? There is evidence outside the saga that Sverrir had a reputation for fine oratory which lasted long after his death,² but this reputation may

---

have been based on the saga itself. On the other hand, if Sverrir influenced the saga-writer's style, can we reasonably account for the consistency of that style right to the end of the saga and long after Sverrir would have been in a position to control the saga-writer, who, whoever he was, was then back in Iceland? Again, these questions cannot be answered definitively here. We may, however, with reasonable assurance, assume that both Sverrir himself and the saga-writer wrote equally sophisticated and versatile styles. Both had received clerical training, and Abbot Karl, by originally undertaking the task of the saga, made plain his interest in more than merely religious composition.

For the immediate concerns of this dissertation, answers to these questions are unnecessary. The saga itself remains a rich ground for the student of Norse historical styles. The above discussion is not exhaustive, but is intended to provide a useful standard against which to measure other contemporary Norse historical styles of the thirteenth century.
APPENDIX A: The provenance of Sverris Saga

Karl Jónsson, Abbot of Þingeyrar in Iceland, arrived in Norway in the autumn of 1185. So says Sturlunga Saga:

That summer there went out from Eyjafjörð on another ship, Abbot Karl and Ingimundr Porgeirsson and Ögmundr Órvarsson and many other Icelandic men.

King Sverrir had only just succeeded to the throne of Norway, and, as Ludvig Holm-Olsen has pointed out, it seems unlikely that Karl or his companions made their voyage out to go to Sverrir's court. Indeed, Ingimundr had long been a supporter of Magnús Erlingsson's party. Karl need not necessarily have shared Ingimundr's sympathies, but he probably became Sverrir's historian only after his arrival in Norway. Holm-Olsen speculates that Karl had come to gather information for a saga about Magnus Erlingsson, intending to pick up where Eiríkr Oddsson left off his history of Norwegian kings, the Hryggjarstikki, at 1161, and that Karl went to Sverrir seeking information. Sverrir then commissioned Karl to write a separate work about his early years under Sverrir's direction, as the prologue to the saga states:

2. Ludvig Holm-Olsen, Studier i Sverres Saga (Oslo, 1953) p. 25.
3. Ibid., pp. 23-25.
En þat er at segia fra Sverri konungi syni Sigurpar konungs Harallz-sonar oc er þat uphaf bocarinnar er ritat er eptir þeirri bok er fyrst ritaði Karl aboti Ion-son. en yfir sat sialfr Sverrir konungr. oc reð fyrir hvat rita skyldi er su fra-sogn eigi langt fram komin. (p. 1, ll. 4-8).

And that is to be told about King Sverrir son of King Sigurðr Haraldsson, and that is the beginning of the book which Abbot Karl Jónsson first wrote and which King Sverrir himself sat over and determined what should be written. Such an account has not come far.¹

Sverrir no doubt realised that Karl, as an Icelander, would lend the work a semblance of objectivity, but nonetheless a semblance:²

Et verk om Sverre kunne i 1185 ikke skrives i Aresjånd. Det var på förhand dømt til å bli et partsinnlegg.³

The section of Sverris Saga supervised by Sverrir is known as Grýla and its length has been debated for nearly three-quarters of a century. Holm-Olsen has already summarised this debate.⁴ Most scholars have agreed that Karl wrote under Sverrir's direction at least as far as chapter 30, since this part of the saga is written solely from Sverrir's point of view. After this, there are no damming facts about his origins left to cover over and the saga writer could have been safely left to do his own researches. But, as Gathorne-Hardy has pointed out,⁵ chapter 30 reaches only until the

1. Sephton, in his translation of the saga, suggests this last sentence means that the account has not come far from its source. It seems more likely that it means that the account directly supervised by Sverrir does not extend far.

2. The partisan nature of Sverris Saga is discussed above, pp.


4. Ibid., pp. 30-32. See also his entry for Sverris Saga in KLMN, op. cit., vol. XVII, pp. 551-58.

5. Hardy, op. cit., p. 158.
year 1178, just before Sverrir directly confronted Erlingr skakki and King Magnús. This leaves a gap of seven years before Karl's personal experience of Sverrir's career begins and could account for the sketchiness of chapters 30 and 31 when Karl may have been casting about for other sources. Holm-Olsen also believes that the Grýla ends at 1178 and that Sverrir exercised close control over the writing only to guarantee a careful statement of his obscure origins, in answer to those who doubted the legitimacy of his claim to the throne, and of his early career before he achieved notoriety as King Magnús' rival.\(^1\)

How much more of Sverris Saga Karl wrote is uncertain, though we may almost certainly believe he covered the period during which he himself was in Norway, until 1188 (i.e. chapter 106). It is conceivable that he finished the saga in Iceland, since he lived for 11 years after Sverrir's death in 1202. Some scholars, namely Müller, Munch, N.M. Petersen, and Rudolf Keyser, believe Styrmir Kárason wrote the last part under Karl's guidance, when Karl was too old to write himself. Whether or not this is true, the writing is consistently sophisticated throughout, and reveals a remarkable facility with a wide range of styles, as the preceding chapter attempts to demonstrate.

Halvdan Koht has suggested\(^2\) that Karl could not have written all the post-1188 material because a man is mentioned in chapter 151


2. Halvdan Koht, "Norsk historie-skriving...serskitt Sverris Saga" in Edda II (Copenhagen, 1915).
as Archbishop Guttormr, even though he only received that office in 1215, two years after Karl's death. But there is no reason why a knowing scribe could not have replaced an original "prestr" with "erkiðiskup" at a later date, and the discrepancy is therefore insufficient as a ground for supposing dual-authorship.
APPENDIX B: The proportions of *Sverris Saga*

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APPENDIX C: Sverrir's claimed genealogy

Haraldr gilli

King Ingi
d. 1164

King Eysteinn
d. 1155

King Sigurðr
d. 1157

Cecilia

m(1) Earl Fólkvið
of Sweden

m(2) Barðr of Reinn

Earl Hákon galin
d. 1214

Earl Knútr
d. 1261

King Hákon Sverrisson d. 1204

Sigurðr lávarðr d. 1200

King Hákon Hákonarson d. 1263

Guttormr, d. 1204

King Magnús Hákonarson d. 1290
Seven dreams are mentioned in Sverris Saga, spaced at irregular intervals, but concentrated in the first part of the saga which Sverrir himself closely supervised and for which he is the only or principal source. Five of the dreams are recorded in detail: chapters 2, 4, 10, 42, 180; the sixth dream is told only briefly, but is unusual: chapter 175; and of the fourth, no details whatever are given - Sverrir merely mentions that he had the dream: chapter 27. Although the dreams are independent of each other, within the context of the saga they form a pattern marking Sverrir's progress to the throne of Norway from his humble Faroese origins:

1 (Chapter 2): a vision of his ultimate earthly kingdom;

2 (Chapter 4): a prophecy of his first victory over his royal rivals Magnús Erlingsson and Erlingr skakki;

3 (Chapter 10): a prophecy of his becoming king;

5 (Chapter 42): a prophecy of his elimination of Erlingr and much of Magnús' force;

6 (Chapter 163): a prophecy of the bændr threat to his established kingdom;

7 (Chapter 180): a prophecy of his ascent to the kingdom of God.

Dreams one and seven can be seen to encapsulate Sverrir's earthly career.
Obvious parallels exist between this dream pattern and the pattern of St Óláfr's four dreams as they appear in Heimskringla:

1 (Chapter 18): a prophecy that Óláfr and his descendents will rule over Norway;

2 (Chapter 188): an encouragement from a dream man (Óláfr Tryggvason) to Óláfr to return to Norway and reclaim his throne;

3 (Chapter 202): a vision of St Óláfr's perpetual influence;

4 (Chapter 214): Óláfr's dream of his ascension into heaven.

The pattern of the Sverris Saga dreams is supported by certain shared elements among the dreams. Not all these elements are present in every dream, but rather, a selection of them combines in each case with other unique elements, so that textural links are established without monotony. The recurrent elements are listed below together with any parallels from St Óláfr's dreams where these occur.

A Sophisticated Christian symbols

dream 1 The bird:

Hann sagði þann draum einn at hann þottiz vera i Noregi oc verða at fugli sva miclom at nef hans toc aust til lands-endu en væli-fjarðar hans toku norðr i Finnbuin. En með vangionum hulpi hann landit allt (Sv., p. 3, 11. 3-7).

He told one dream that he seemed to be in Norway and became a bird so large that his beak reached to the east to the end of the land and his tail feathers reached north into Finland. But with his wings he covered the entire country.
The bird or bird-like creature is a very common image in both testaments of the Bible, perhaps most strikingly in Ezekiel (1:6-11) and Revelation (4:8, 9:9, 12:14), but also notably in I Kings (6:27), Isaiah (6:2), and the Psalms (17:8, 63:7). The concept of the span extending over Norway also echoes St Olaf’s dream of the extent of his influence in his third dream:

"Ek sá nú yfir Nóreg, er ek leið vestr af fjallinu. Kom mér þá í hug, at ek hafða mægan dag glæð verit í því landi. Mér gaf þá sýn, at ek sá um allan Práðheim ok því nesst um allan Nóreg..."

(Ikr. 2, p. 351).

"I saw just now over Norway when I looked west from the mountains. It came then into mind that I had spent many happy days in this land. Then I had a view such that I saw over all Práðheim and then next over all Norway..."

The bird symbol is, however, unique to Sverrir’s dream in Norse literature in such a context and Turville-Petre has remarked that birds in Norse dreams are altogether uncommon.¹

There is perhaps here another very faint echo of Revelation (10:1-3):

Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was wrapped in a cloud, with the rainbow round his head; his face shone like the sun and his legs were like pillars of fire. In his hand he held a little scroll unrolled. His right foot he planted on the sea, and his left on the land.

B The appearance of a Christian dream man

A man who is or may be construed as being Samuel appears in three of Sverrir's dreams:

dream 3 honum syndiz þessi maðr afar gamall oc sno-hvitr
fyrir hærom. hann hafði scegg mikit oc clæði afar sið rioðr
i andliti oc stutt harr um-
hværfis ochellhr ogurligr...ek
em Samuel, guds spamadr (Sv.,
p. 10, ll. 8-11, 20).

this man seemed to him extremely
old and with snow-white hair. He
had a large beard and very old-
fashioned (i.e. Biblical)
clothing, a ruddy countenance
with short hair surrounding
it and rather awful..."I am
Samuel, God's prophet."

dream 5
honum syndiz þessi maðr
ogurligr (Sv., p. 46, ll. 3).

this man seemed awful to
him.

dream 7
"Maðr kom at mer,...
sa enn sami er mer hefir
oft fyrhr syniz..." (Sv.,
p. 193, ll. 15-16).

"A man came to me...the same one
who has often appeared to me
before."

In Óláfr's first dream, a man appears to Óláfr described in some
of the same terms used of Samuel in Sverrir's dreams:

til hans kom merkiligr maðr
ok þekkiligr ok þo ogurligr
ok mælti við hann (Hkr. 2, p. 25).

a remarkable man appeared to
him, handsome and yet awful,
and spoke to him.

In Óláfr's second dream, Óláfr Tryggvason appears:

1. Snow-white is a royal colour in Norse dreams, as well as one
signifying purity. In Halfdans s. svarta in the Heimskringla,
Ragnhildr dreams of a tree with snow-white branches, indicating
the kings who will descend from her, and on p. 2 of Sverris Saga,
Sverrir's mother dreams before his birth that she gives birth to
a glowing, snow-white stone.
Hann sa man standa fyrir rekkjunn, mikinn ok veglignan ok hafði klaðnað dýrðilgan... þar myndi vera kominn Olaf Tryggvason (Hkr. 2, p. 340).

He saw a man standing before the bed, large and magnificent, and he was dressed in costly garments...Olaf Tryggvason must have come there.

C Christian rites and rituals

dream 2 Baptism:
Síðan nefndi hann Sverrir Magnus oc bað hann þva ser í því sama vatni. hann þottiz sva gera sem hann bauð (Sv., p. 4, ll. 27-29).

Then he named Sverrir Magnús and told him to wash himself in the same water. He seemed to do as he was asked commanded.

dream 3 Anointing, implying that Sverrir is one of God's chosen agents:
Eptir þat toc þessi gamli maðr horn or spreppu er hann hafði a halsi ser. oc syndiz honum sem crísmi var i hornino. þa meldi sá hinn gamli maðr við Sverri, lat mic sia hendra þinar segir hann. Eptir þat þottiz hann retta fram bápar hendra sinar til hans. Sa maðr smurði hendra hans oc meldi sva helgiz oc styrkiz þessar hendra (Sv., p. 10, ll. 21-26).

After that this old man took a horn from the bag which he wore at his neck. And it seemed to him that there was consecrated oil in the horn. Then the old man spoke to Sverrir. "Let me see your hands," he says. After that it seemed that he stretched out both hands to him. The man anointed his hands and spoke thus: "May these hands be sanctified and strengthened."

dream 5 Fasting human flesh, the central symbolic act of the eucharist:
madr steicð la a elldinum. þa meldi draummaðr. at hann scyllði niðr setiax oc mattaz. leggr síðan manninn fyrir hann. hann þottiz þa til taca oc eta holldit af beinunum (Sv., p. 46, ll. 6-9).

A roasted man lay on the fire. Then the dream man said that he should sit down and eat. Then he laid the man before him. He seemed then to begin to eat the flesh from the bones.

1. Ólafur's son was named Magnús, so that the dream suggests that St Ólafur has adopted Sverrir as his son.
Sverrir himself points out in the saga that this dream could indicate an ascension or a second coming, but his companion seems certain that it means Sverrir will go to heaven. Öláfr's fourth dream has a similar significance and is also described afterwards to a single named companion:


D The dreamer's fear or humble bearing toward the dream man is explicitly mentioned

dream 2
hann þottiz við taca merkino oc þo með nockorri reþlo (Sv., p. 5, ll. 2-3).

he seemed to take the standard and yet with some apprehension.

dream 3
hann þottiz vera ihuga-fullr hvat er þessi maðr myndi vilia (Sv., p. 10, ll. 11-12).

he seemed to be troubled about what this man might want.

dream 5
oc þottiz ecki oðru treystaz en gera eptir þvi sem honum bauð (Sv., p. 46, ll. 3-4).

and it seemed he did not dare to do other than he was asked.
"he has never showed me anything false. And I seemed to be conscious that I was ill and weak."

E The setting of the dream is in a loft

it seemed to him that there were few men with the king, not more than 15 or 16, and the king washed himself at a table in a loft room.

he seemed to be sleeping in a loft in the town.

F Interpretations and/or public opinion is given with the dream account

He dreamed remarkable dreams and some men reckoned them to be lies and made sport of them...Sverrir said, "It seems unlikely to me that I will become an archbishop, because I am not well suited to be a priest."

Then he woke up and considered his dream. He thought it better dreamed than not and yet it seemed extraordinary. Then he told his friends, though few, and it was explained almost as it came to pass. And when such things came into his mind he was strengthened by that.

1. There is perhaps here a faint echo of Luke 2:19, when Mary ponders in her heart the words and deeds of the young Jesus.
St Óláfr's dream which is a parallel to this one of Sverrir's is interpreted more explicitly in the Heimskringla:

Hann skildi þann draumar til þess, at hann myndi konungr vera yfri landi ok hans ættmenn langa ævi. (Hkr. 2, p. 25).

He understood his dream to mean that he and the men of his race would be king over the land for a long time.

After that he woke and then told the dream to the twelve men who slept in the room he did himself. All thought the dream significant and remarkable. And all his men became somewhat cheered by this dream. And when he sought after them to interpret the dream, then none trusted himself. But it seemed to all better dreamed than not. And when he realised that this dream would not be explained, he asked them not to talk of it, though it had appeared to him. All who were there seemed to notice that his disposition altered greatly after this dream.

Sverrir had encouraged his troops so much to march into the town because he interpreted the dream that this man who lay in the fire must be Jarl Erlingr, who was then beginning to age greatly, and King Magnus and his host must then be decrepit in counsel and feeble. He would then destroy the most part of the lendir men and hirdmen with his host. But King Magnús would escape, just as the head was unconsumed.

---

1. Óláfr's third dream-vision is interpreted by the bishop as "heilaglig ok stormerkilig", (Hkr. 2, p. 351).
dream 6
þar hafa hændr tekit menn mina (Sv., p. 175, ll. 7-8).

There the farmers have captured my men.

dream 7
Petr mælti. allt muni þer þetta herra kunna giorr at sia enn nökurr annar. enn a þat horfir minn hugr at um þa muni rætt uppripuna er a enum efzsta domi er. ok monda ek sva við buaz herra at þat mun draum maðrinn birt hafa. konungr svarar. ecki er þetta u-armælilig (Sv., p. 193, ll. 21-25).

Peter spoke. "You, lord, will be altogether more able to interpret this than any other man. But my heart tells me that the resurrection mentioned is at the last judgment. And I would so prepare yourself, lord, as if that is what the dream man must have revealed." The king answered, "That is not unlikely."

G All Sverrir's dreams are accurate forecasts of later events, as are Óláfr's, provided the reader is willing to accept that both men ascended into heaven, which is a matter for faith rather than proof.

Because of these shared elements among Sverrir's dreams and because of the pattern they help produce, the dreams appear to be contrived, a combination of Sverrir's own conscious and unconscious fantasy, the memory of his clerical training,¹ and his almost certain familiarity with the lively clerical tradition of St Óláfr.² Yet it is not possible to determine at what level of consciousness these last two influences acted on Sverrir or to what extent the final saga versions of the dreams represent refinement and development of Sverrir's accounts by Abbot Karl. Nevertheless, it seems probable that Sverrir did have actual dreams bearing some resemblance, however slight, to those recorded.³

1. The patent scriptural elements have been frequently noted in Sverrir's dreams by others: Turville-Petre, op. cit., pp. 35-36; and Hardy, op. cit., pp. 90, 92.

2. Curiously, G.D. Kelchner has not cited the Sverrir-St Óláfr parallels in her book Dreams in Old Norse Literature (Cambridge, 1935).

3. Turville-Petre, op. cit., p. 50.
I Existing scholarship on the style and structure of Heimskringla

For the purposes of the discussion in this chapter, the most important scholarly works are those of Hallvard Lie, Sigurður Nordal, and Halvdan Koht.

Hallvard Lie's work, Studier i Heimskringlas Stil, deserves a careful English translation. His analyses of specific dramatic passages and their relation to source versions are often sensitive and acute, and both his general and particular observations are mentioned below where they support or refine those of this chapter. While Lie's contribution makes a fine start on the problem, two criticisms can be made which show the need for further, deeper, and more patient analysis.

The first of these criticisms concerns Lie's comparative demonstration of the use of rhetorical devices in the speeches in Heimskringla and Sverris Saga. His discussion of the use of tautology in these sagas is representative of his method. Lie has

1. Hallvard Lie, Studier i Heimskringlas Stil (Oslo, 1937)
2. Sigurður Nordal, Snorri Sturluson (Reykjavík, 1920)
3. Halvdan Koht, The Old Norse Sagas (London, 1931)
isolated and counted the tautologies appearing in his selection of speeches, apparently in an attempt to evaluate the different usage in each saga. But without considering these tautologies in their full context, it is not possible to illustrate the facility with which the two saga writers employ these rhetorical instruments or to give insight into their literary purposes.

For instance, from *Sverris Saga*, Lie lists seven tautologies in the speech by Svína-Pétr in chapter 96:

three nominal: fyrir frelsi ok friði þessa kaupstaðar:
látið þér nú í brot famflærðar ok fálsara ok dróttinssvika;
býðir öllum mönnum grið ok sætt.

one adjectival: gerizk nú hollir ok trúir ok þjónustufullir konungi yðrum;

three verbal: vér várum héðan reknir ok keyrðir ór þessum br;
aldri látið þér nú svá illa eða snöktið ok syrgið;
ekkýrri yðr nú at tauta eða tutla hann Sverri ór konungdóminum.

1. Lie, loc. cit., pp. 107-110
This list does not indicate how skilfully these pairs of words are used to produce the mocking and derisive tone of the speech.\footnote{1} They are not mere artistic embellishments for the gratification of the speaker's or the audience's ears, or for the reader; rather, the speaker is shown employing them here to bring home to the Bergeners with a haughty condescension their humiliating vulnerability after Sverrir's defeat of Magnús Erlingsson. In Sverrir's speeches too, tautological pairs depend much, for their effect, upon the novelty of their usage in context, for instance, his use of "flutt ok stutt" in chapter 38 of the saga.\footnote{2} But if the pairs are taken out of the full context of the speech as Lie has done, none of these effects is apparent.

Alongside such instances from Sverris Saga which Lie offers as evidence of spontaneity and sophistication in the speeches in that saga, he places four examples of tautology from the speech by Ásbjörn of Mædalhús in chapter 15 of Hákonar Saga Góða in Heimskringla (Hkr 1, pp. 169-70). These, Lie observes,\footnote{3} are more heavy and formal than those in the Sverris Saga sample. This is accurate as far as it goes, but only further analysis reveals how Snorri has deliberately put these more conventional tautologies in the speaker's mouth to suggest that Ásbjörn is attempting to increase the grandeur, dignity, and loftiness of himself and/or his subject, as if he is reading a charter or proclamation.

\footnote{1}{A study of direct speech in Rómverja Saga, which I undertook in the early stages of my work for this thesis (but which I have not included here for reasons of space), did not suggest any influence from the writing of Lucan or Sallust on speech and dialogue in the Icelandic historical writings I have considered. Clearly much work remains to be done in the comparison of Latin and Norse historians.}

\footnote{2}{See Chapter One, above, p. 37.}

\footnote{3}{Lie, op. cit., p. 110}
The context of the speech makes this plain. Ásbjörn is the bændr's spokesman at the Frostlapping, presenting to King Hákon their grievances and the demands which must be fulfilled as a condition of their continued allegiance to the throne. Their principal complaint is that Hákon is trying to force them to receive Christianity, while they insist on their religious freedom if they are to grant him fealty according to the old law. The tone is firm but respectful, the points of the argument are logically arranged and calmly presented. In the absence of any humour or emotional appeal there is a grave and fixed sincerity, which, together with the emphasis of the tautologies, seem appropriate to the tone and purpose attributed to Ásbjörn.

The first point in the speech emphasises the strong tradition behind the heathen religious practices:

...átrúnaði þeim, er feðr várir haða haft fyrir oss ok allt forellri (Hkr. 1, p. 170) ...the faith which our fathers have held before us and all our ancestors.

Ásbjörn then acknowledges the tradition of the king's lawful privileges, indicating the bændr's respect for royal power in a pair of words equally formal and unremarkable:

...vér höfum þík ráða látit með oss öllum lögum ok landsrétt (Hkr. 1, p. 170) ...we have allowed you to control for us all law and constitution.
Other phrases appear to have been carefully chosen and juxtaposed to indicate that the bandr's proper respect for Hákon does not weaken their own sense of independence and confederacy:

\[
\text{Nú er þat vili várr ok sambykki bôndanna... (Hkr. 1, p. 170)} \quad \text{Now it is our wish and the common consensus of the bandr...}
\]

even though they are clearly aware of the king's power to try to force them to submit in all things:

\[
\text{En ef þér vilió þetta mál taka við oss... (Hkr. 1, p. 170) But if you will adopt the plan... to vie with us in might and aggression...}
\]

In this speech the tautological pairs help portray Ásbjörn as a man of ordinary powers of speech addressing with much common sense a formal problem in a formal context. His speech is well ordered and his diction, though decorous, is not striking; Ásbjörn is, after all, a farmer, and great oratory is not commonly called for in his station in life. According to Snorri's portrait, he has acquitted himself well.

The other criticism which can be made is that Lie's analyses, where he does offer them, are sometimes too superficial. This is particularly true of his comparison\(^1\) between Magnús Erlingsson's speech to his men before the battle at Nordness in \textit{Sverris Saga}, chapter 53, and the Danish Bishop Sigurðr's speech to the bandr rebelling against King Óláfr Haraldsson (1030) in the \textit{Heimskringla} (Hkr. 2, p. 371-72). Lie has suggested\(^2\) that Bishop Sigurðr's speech may have been modelled on Magnús', but he does not mention correspond-

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1. Ibid., p. 117
2. Ibid., p. 90
ences between some points of Sigurðr's argument and those made in Magnús's other speech, before Óláfr, and in Sverrir's battle speeches. Lie also fails to observe the personal and negative tone in Magnús' speech before Nordness and the preponderance of negatives within it, features contrasting noticeably with the impersonal and positive tone of Sigurðr's speech.

Detailed analysis has been offered in Chapter One to demonstrate that the immediacy and liveliness of the speeches of King Sverrir himself contribute significantly to the vivid, flattering image of Sverrir the saga presents. These features are absent from Bishop Sigurðr's speech because Snorri uses the speech primarily to present information rather than to build or enhance the image of the speaker. Bishop Sigurðr's personality is entirely confined by his speech and no other dimension is suggested. He is important only insofar as he is a figure of authority who might reasonably be expected to make such a speech. As such, he is Snorri's dramatic agent, the vessel of discourse and the means by which the author most economically reveals "cause" - the reasons why the bændr oppose Óláfr - without Snorri himself stepping into the narrative to interpret explicitly. Through this speech, he links up past and present events in a logically patterned summary, avoiding by means of direct discourse the dustiness of a factual account. Thus both intellectual and aesthetic concerns are satisfied.

1. See above, pp. 35 ff.
Because it has this informative function and because it is Snorri's literary construct, bearing only coincidental resemblance to any speech that may have been delivered at the time in actual fact, the speech reveals deliberate structuring and seems premeditated rather than spontaneous in the mouth of the bishop. The facts are presented with gradually increasing vehemence and in an order carefully calculated to inspire his men. The argument itself bears some resemblance to those in some of the battle speeches in Sverris Saga:

1 First, Bishop Sigrðr builds up the confidence of his audience by complimenting them on their size and strength:

Hér er nú saman komit mikít fjölmenni, svá at í þessi fátaekja landi mun eigi kostr at sjá meira her innlenzkan. (Hkr. 2, p. 371)

Many men are now gathered here, so vast a number that there will never be an opportunity to see a greater native host in this impoverished land.

For a comparable point in a speech by Sverrir, see Sverris Saga, p. 50, l. 30-31, or p. 58, l. 9-18, or above, Chapter One, p. 66.

2 Sigrðr is then shown to disarm his men of complacency by remarking on the necessity of just such a large force as theirs:

Skyldi yðr nú vel í hald koma þessi styrkr fjölmennis, því at nú er ærin nauðsyn til, ef Óláfr þessi átlað enn eigi af láta at herja á yðr. (Hkr. 2, p. 371)

This strong force should stand you in good stead because there is now sufficient need of it if this Óláfr still does not intend to cease warring upon you.

3 Having pointed out the ample means and need for defence, Sigrðr cites reasons why they should be offended with Óláfr, just as Sverrir frequently cites grievances against the enemy in his speeches. Sigrðr begins with Óláfr's offence against whole countries and kings, but his catalogue moves on to include those against the nobility:

1. See above, Chapter One, pp. 37, 44-45.
Eða hverr er só hér ríkismanna, er eigi mýni honum eiga at hefna stórsaka? (Hkr. 2, p. 372)

Or who here is a powerful man who has no great wrong to avenge upon him?

4 After taking this offensive turn and making them share its perspective, he enflames them further by stressing the indignation they should feel at the trespass in their territory by such prolifigates as make up Óláf's troops:

Nú ferr hann með útlendan her, ok er þat flest markamenn ok stigamenn eða aðrir ránsmenn. (Hkr. 2, p. 372)

Now he trespasses with a foreign host and that is mostly border men, highway men, and other robbers.

Sverrir also insults the enemy troops, often more colloquially, but he is also careful to present the enemy as a worthy opponent to his own forces, regardless of any logical contradiction this may necessitate. Such a careful psychological balance is absent from Sigurðr's speech, just as it is absent from another battle speech by Magnús Erlingsson which Lie does not mention here, the speech before Norafjörðr.

5 A rhetorical question is now used to sharpen the audience's sense of Óláfr's menace now that his followers consist of unprincipled men:

Etlið þær hann nú munu yðr linan, er hann ferr með þetta illþýði, er hann gerði þá slík herverki, er allir lóttu hann, þeir er honum fylgðu? (Hkr. 2, p. 372)

Do you think he will be soft toward you now when he travels with this evil company, when he committed such atrocities even when all who followed him advised against it?

6 Finally, the bishop encourages his men to oppose Óláfr actively and to treat his followers with utter ruthlessness, thus ending the address at a pitch of vehemence:

...ok drepa niðr illþýði þetta fyrir örn ok Úlf...nema þær vilið heldr draga hre þeira í holt ok hreyði. (Hkr. 2, p. 372)

...and slaughter this rabble for eagles and wolves...unless you prefer to drag their corpses into copses and stoney places.

1. Sv., p. 96, and above, Chapter One, p. 74-76.
This resembles in its coarseness Ásbjörn's remark in chapter 90 of Sverris Saga, when he addresses Magnús' men before Norafjörð and reminds them that the task ahead is scarcely a delicate one:

\[\text{uvant er at brytia mat firir hunda eða rafna.} \]
\[\text{it does not require care to cut meat for dogs and ravens.}\]

Clearly the individual points in Bishop Sigurðr's argument resemble those made in various places in Sverris Saga, and the Heimskringla speech is not closely modelled on any particular speech, as Lie suggests. The bishop's speech differs from those in Sverris Saga because it is not intended as the vehicle of personality, nor does the speaker commit himself personally to the threatening battle, as do both Sverrir and Magnús. The order of points is also Snorri's own. The calculated structure, lacking the features of Sverrir's speeches - irony, colloquialism, and anecdote - which lend immediacy and spontaneity, exposes its literary nature and its function as a seemingly objective means of illuminating the background to a political situation. These things can not be discerned from Lie's brief analysis.

Sigurðr Nordal's analysis is largely descriptive, showing the variety of ways Snorri has improved on his sources in instances of dialogue. For this purpose Nordal offers three passages from the Heimskringla and their corresponding source passages:

1. See Chapter One, above, pp. 78.
2. See Chapter One, above, pp. 63-69, 74-76.
1. The conversation between Óláfr and his young half-brothers.¹

2. The discussion among his enemies of Óláfr Tryggvason's ships at Svöld.²

3. The comparison of Sigurðr Jórsalafari and his brother Eysteinn.³

Other passages have therefore been selected for close analysis in this chapter.

In his discussion, Nordal often points to the seamlessness of the narrative as a mark of Snorri's pervasive control, even when he has clearly drawn his material from several places.⁴ Nordal also remarks the connections between the individual kings' sagas in the collection and suggests that the work was conceived as a whole:⁵

Snorri er ekki að skrifa sundurlausar afisögur konunga, heldur sögu konungsættar, landssögu í afisagnaformi.

While Nordal is well aware of the element of deliberate structuring in the Heimskringla, he appears to consider this structure the reflection of Snorri's aesthetic purpose only, and not of a reasoned historical intention, as I suggest in this chapter.

1. Sigurður Nordal, op. cit., pp. 222-24
2. Ibid., pp. 224-28
3. Ibid., pp. 228-32
4. Ibid., pp. 183-84, 204, 194
5. Ibid., pp. 195, 198
6. Ibid., p. 195
Halvdan Koht's treatment is brief compared to Nordal's and he offers almost no close analysis in support of his observations. But among these is one which he particularly emphasises and which begins to take the work of Nordal a step further. I refer to Koht's awareness of the architecture of the saga, remarked by him several times in his discussion. These statements all lead up to Koht's important recognition of the interdependence between Snorri's intellectual or historical purpose and his aesthetic practice. Koht also fully appreciates the subtlety and power with which this interdependence shapes the reader's response:

He has worked out his historical system with such mental power and such exquisite art that it has imposed itself upon all later generations of historians. He has written the lives of the kings in so masterful a way that you are immediately convinced of the truth. It needs an effort to break loose from his grip on you.

Snorri is not only the greatest artist of medieval historians, he is the magician of history.

This chapter offers a fuller discussion of the relationship between structural design and style in the Heimskringla, supported by close analysis of selected passages which demonstrate deliberation and control at every level, from the incorporation of single details to the shaping of the whole work. The analyses avoid repetition of existing scholarship and compare Snorri closely with his sources only when it illuminates his purpose behind his own design. For this, comparison has been restricted to parallel passages from Morkinskinna, Fagrskinna, and the Legendary Saga of St Óláfr.

2. Ibid., pp. 117-18.
II The rationalisation of myth: Ynglinga Saga

Gustav Storm has said that Fagrskinna more than any other of Snorri's sources served him as a model and that the most striking feature of Fagrskinna is its pure rationalism, omitting legendary and seemingly detached passages about trolls or miracles, except in connection with St Óláfr. Snorri's rationalism is not so pure, for he has not forsworn legendary material entirely. He does, however, attempt to account for it logically and associates it as far as possible with saga figures, later events, and in some cases dramatic contexts. Sometimes he uses legendary material itself, in the form of curses and prophecies, to establish connections between separate parts of the Heimskringla. This practice softens authorial intrusion and maintains a continuous narrative flow so that the account of events does not seem contrived.

The rational approach to legend is nowhere more evident than in Ynglinga Saga, in which Snorri treats the mythological origins of the Norwegian royal line and the traditional series of rulers until c. 870 A.D., frequently interpreting traditional and rather sparse information for his contemporary Christian readers. Especially in the very early chapters of Ynglinga, Snorri explains why various figures such as Óðinn, Njörðr, Freyr, and Freyja, became

1. Gustav Storm, Snorre Sturlassons Historieskrivning (Copenhagen, 1873) p. 45
2. Ibid., p. 47
deified by pagans. For instance, according to Snorri, Öðinn was a very great warrior who was never defeated in battle, so that his men came to believe that he had supernatural powers of protection which he was able to share with them:

and so it happened, that his men believed that he had the right to victory in every battle. It was his practice, if he sent his men to battle or on other expeditions, that he first laid his hand on their heads and gave them a blessing; they believed that it would then go well. It was also the habit of his men, when they were in a dangerous situation on sea or land, that they called on his name, and seemed always to get relief from it; they thought that they had complete protection where he was.

After this explanation, the modern reader is inclined to take the subsequent accounts of Öðinn's other weird powers, such as his shape-changing, with the proverbial grain of salt. Snorri would seem to intend this to some extent, though many original readers would no doubt have been less sceptical of supernatural powers and events than we are.

Other explanatory details which help to set the traditional stories on a more rational footing cover a wide range of subject matter. Snorri notes, for instance, when and how the title of king came to be applied to the Ynglingar and how Denmark got its name:
Móðir Dyggva var Dróttr, döttir Danps konungs, sonar Rígs, er fyrstr var konungr kallaðr á danska tungu. Hans áttmenn höfðu ávalt síðan konungsnaðin fyrir ít ætta tígnarnafn. Dyggvi var fyrst konungr kallaðr sinna áttmanna, ... Dróttr dróttning var systir Dans konungs ins mikilláta, er Danmörk er víð kend. (Hkr. 1, pp. 34-35)

Snorri also explains, by tracing its development, how an ill-treated slave instigates an uprising against one king and manages to secure the throne for a short period (Hkr. 1, pp. 50-51). In this example it is important that Snorri does not make or imply any moral judgment upon serf or king, that neither figure is individualised, and that events seem to carry the figures in their sweep with utter disregard for their inner natures.¹ This treatment keeps the audience at a distance from events as if there is no present moral consequence, and so emphasises the pastness of the incidents. A subsequent dispute between the Norwegian king’s son and King Fróði of Denmark is similarly traced in cause and effect in chapter 27 (Hkr. 1, pp. 53-54). Other explanations in Æglinga Saga range from the origin of a military alliance through a marriage (Hkr. 1, pp. 67-68), to the origin of a specific nickname (Hkr. 1, p. 54). The historical accuracy of these explanations is not important; they are significant in that they make plain Snorri’s desire to rationalise, to show reason and cause.

¹. This is in complete contrast to the treatment of inner nature in Njáls Saga and Íslendinga Saga. See below, Chapter Five, pp. 359 ff and Chapter Six, pp. 445 ff.
In Ynglinga Saga there is no single figure on which to focus the narrative as there are in the individual kings' sagas which follow, nor is there sufficient material on which to base dialogue and drama, features so important to the coherence of the later sections of Heimskringla (see below, pp. 186 ff.). Snorri nevertheless connects Ynglinga Saga with the rest of the Heimskringla and informs the shape of the entire work by means of a prophecy included in chapter 14, when the witch Huld curses the Ynglingar with everlasting strife within their family:

Then the sorceress Hulđ said to them that she would so do magic and with that result that a murderer of his own family should always be in the family of the Ynglingar ever after.

The remainder of Heimskringla can be seen, on a very simple level, as the fulfilment of this curse. Snorri also records prophecies and curses which work themselves out with Ynglinga Saga (see, for example, Hkr. 1, chapters 19 and 38).
III Dramatic passages reflect Snorri's aesthetic and intellectual concerns

A Dramatic passages reveal that Snorri's literary concerns take precedence over historical accuracy

In at least one place in Heimskringla, it is evident that for the sake of aesthetic concerns - to enhance the dramatic effect of an account and to give it added significance - Snorri has operated unashamedly on his sources without any apparent concern that he may be misrepresenting history.

The passage in question contains the motif of the breaking of a skilled archer's bow in battle. In Snorri's known sources the motif occurs in the Legendary Saga of St Óláfr. Here, the bow-breaking incident occurs in the account of St Óláfr's victorious sea battle against Jarl Sveinn in 1015 at Nesjar, off the western shore of the Oslo fjord. Here the Bowman is Einarr Æmbarskelfir, a landed man of noble birth who captains one of Jarl Sveinn's ships. When Einarr realises that the battle is lost, he urges Sveinn to flee, but before departing himself, he tries to turn the course of events by attempting to kill St Óláfr. This is where the bow enters, and, in brief, these are the elements of the motif in this context:

1. Ólafs Saga Hins Helga, ed. O. A. Johannsen (Christiania, 1922) is a diplomatic edition of the Legendary Saga, an anonymous work from the early thirteenth century extant in a manuscript (DG II, 4°) housed in the university library at Uppsala. Johannsen's edition is herein abbreviated as Leg.
1 Einarr strings one arrow and shoots it into the gunwhale directly in front of King Óláfr:

Einarr...tok til boga sins.  
Oc lagðe or a stræng oc skaut  
i skip Olafs oc laust i borðet  
firir konungenn. (Leg., p. 25)

2 The arrow becomes embedded in the gunwhale:

Oc sva hart at oren socc i  
borðeno.  
...and so hard that the  
arrow sank into the ship's  
side.

3 The second arrow he shoots straight at Óláfr as he  
stands on the poop deck. A man with a shield throws  
himself in the arrow's path, but its flight is so swift  
that the arrow passes through the shield and the man and  
strikes the gunwhale next to the king:

Siðan skaut ainar annare or  
I lyptingena til Olafs oc  
liop maðr firir með skilldi.  
Oc skaut hann igiagnum bæðe  
skiolldenn oc manenn oc  
næsti hann ut við borðet hia  
konungenom.

4 Óláfr is disconcerted and orders the enemy archer to be  
shot at:

Þa mælti Ólafr. æigi man  
ek þiðia þriðia. skoz þessa  
mannz. Oc vist skilldi  
ðokcor maðr liosta bogann  
firir hanum.

Then said Óláfr: "I will not  
wait for a third shot from  
this man! And certainly some  
man should strike the bow from  
him."

5 As Einarr sets an arrow to his bow for the third time,  
he seems to see two bowmen aiming at him from Óláfr's ships.  
Then, as he draws, his bow snaps in his hands:
Einarr set a third time an arrow to his string and intended not to miss the king. Then it happened that it appeared to him that two men shot at him. And when he drew the bow then it broke apart in two before him. And he did not know why.

Then the Jarl said: "What now, Einarr? Or did your bow break?" Einarr answers: "The bow didn't break, but rather all Norway out of your hands."

Then Einarr told his men to set up sail on his ship. When that was done, Einarr flung the anchor into the jarl's ship and sailed with him by force from the battle.

When Snorri wrote his saga of St Óláfr in about 1230 and when, in about 1235, he incorporated it into his Heimskringla, he did not include the bow-breaking motif in his version of the Nesjar Battle. Yet he clearly knew the Legendary Saga account, for he has boldly lifted the motif from its original context and relocated it in the Heimskringla saga of King Óláfr Tryggvason. In the account

1. This is no doubt a hagiographical detail suggesting intervention by a divine being in the form of the second archer shooting at Einarr in order to save St Óláfr's life. It may, however, be interpreted more prosaically that two of Óláfr's archers attempted to answer his command at the same time.
of that king's last battle (1000), Einarr Pamharskelfir is a young man (Hkr. 1, p. 346), fighting on the king's side. He uses his bow much as he does in the Legendary Saga, but there are significant differences in Snorri's version. He has adjusted the motif by replacing some details with others to restrict the focus more narrowly to Einarr and his target, and he has avoided the more casual pace of the Legendary Saga version by introducing more subordinate clauses and more pithy dialogue.

In the Heimskringla account, Einarr's target is Jarl Eiríkr, a Norwegian allied in this battle with the kings of Denmark and Sweden in their attempt to overthrow Óláfr. Snorri omits the leisurely preliminaries - taking the arrow, drawing the bow. Only the verb connects Einarr with his target, and because Snorri leaves the word for arrow implicit, the action seems to become the instrument of action, as if the flight of the arrow is so swift that no one actually sees it until it strikes:

Einarr skaut at Eiríki jarli
ok laust í styrisfhakkann
fyrir ofan hófuð jarli ok
gekk allt upp á reyrböndin.
(Hkr. 1, p. 362)

The jarl scarcely has time to glance at the missile and question its origin when a second one whizzes between his arm and torso, striking a plank and protruding on the other side. This detail replaces the less realistic Legendary Saga version of the second arrow, in which our attention is distracted from Óláfr to the shield-bearer. In the Heimskringla, the focus is held to Eiríkr:
Jarl leit til ok spurði, ef þeir vissi, hverr þar skaut, en jafnskjót kom önnur ör, svá nær jarli, at flaug milli síðunnarr ok handarinnar ok svá aprt í hófðafjöllina, at langt stoð út broddrinn.

(Hkr. 1, p. 362)

The jarl looked round and asked if they knew who shot there, but just as swiftly came another arrow, so near the jarl that it flew between his side and his arm and back into the headboard so that the shaft stood a long way out (the other side).

Eiríkr, like Óláfr, commands that the Bowman be shot, but in the Heimskringla the order is directed at a specific individual, Finnr, rather than an anonymous group of by-standing warriors. Again, Snorri controls our attention strictly:

Pá mætti jarl við þann mann er sumir nefna Finn, en sumir segja, at hann veri finnskr – sá var inn mestl bogmaðr – "Skjótu mann þann inn mikla í krappar-rúminu." (Hkr. 1, p. 362)

Then said the jarl to that man whom some name Finnr, but some say he was a Finn - who was one of the most skilled of archers - "Shoot that man, the tall one on the third deck."

In the Legendary Saga it is deliberately left mysterious why the bow breaks, but in Heimskringla the details are explicit and there is no room for speculation. The pace of the action is thus maintained:

Finnr skaut, ok kom örin á boga Einars miðjan í því bili, en Einarr dró it þríðja sinn bogann. Brast þá boginn í tvá hluti. (Hkr. 1, p. 362)

Finnr shot, and the arrow hit Einarr's bow in the middle at the very moment when Einarr drew the bow the third time. The bow then broke in two parts.

Now the fated Óláfr enters the action:

Pá mætti Óláfr konungr: "Hvat brast þar svá hátt?" (Hkr. 1, pp. 362-363)

Then said King Óláfr: "What broke there so loudly?"

1. Snorri here adjusts the hagiography of the Legendary Saga, replacing the suggestion of divine intervention with the human figure of the Finn, often associated in sagas with pagan magic. He thus retains the supernatural element, but in a more controlled fashion.
Snorri has reduced the casual reply attributed to Einarr in the
Legendary Saga version, making it more pithy and emphatic and more
appropriate to the context - men scarcely have time for much talk
in the midst of battle:

Einarr svarar: "Nóregr ór
hendi þér, konungr."
(Hkr. 1, p. 363)

Einarr answers: "Norway out
of your hands, king."

Óláfr brushes aside the omen and encourages Einarr to try again, using
the king's bow. But the bow is too slack for Einarr; in drawing it
taut he pulls the head of the arrow behind the wooden arch of the bow,
rendering both speed and precision impossible:

Einarr tok bogann ok dró
þegar fyrir odd örvarinnar
ok málti: "Öf veykr, of veykr
allvalds bogi."
(Hkr. 1, p. 363)

Einarr took the bow and drew
it over the head of the arrow
and said: "Too weak, too weak,
the sovereign's bow."

Casting back the bow, he takes up weapons for hand to hand combat. It
seems the enemy have boarded Óláfr's ship:

ok kastaði aptr boganum, tók
þá skjöld sinn ok sverð ok
barðisk. (Hkr. 1, p. 363)

and cast back the bow, took
then his shield and sword
and fought hand to hand.

This element of hand-to-hand combat also appears in a version of
the bow-breaking motif in chapter 55 of Sverris Saga. Here Sverrir
is engaged in a sea battle against King Magnús Erlingsson, Sverrir's
last obstacle to sole reign over Norway. On board Sverrir's ship
is the archer Hallvarðr gaðla. His aim seems less accurate than usual.
He shoots three arrows at Magnús' ship, but all go wide of any
living mark:
Hallvarör gala...scaut um daginn auru til skips Magnus konungs. oc flaug firir ofan scipit. þa scaut hann annarri i borð niðr. oc hinni þriðio undir kiolinn. (Sv., pp. 60-61, ll. 36-1)

Hallvarör gala...shot during the day an arrow at King Magnus' ship. And it flew above the ship. Then he shot another into the side low down. And a third under the keel.

There follows a brief exchange, between Hallvarör and an unnamed man, in which Hallvarör is criticised for shooting better for prizes at contests. Goaded by the man's taunts, Hallvarör hits his target every time with his next twelve arrows. Hallvarör then breaks his bow by stepping on it:

Oc er þessi tylpt var uppi. þa lagði hann bogann undir fot ser oc braut i sundr.

And when the twelfth was used, then he put his bow beneath his foot and broke it apart.

King Sverrir now appears and questions this behaviour. His words differ from both Jarl Sveinn's and King Óláfr Tryggvason's:

þa mælti konungr. hvi for-ðu nu sva með boganum. Enn er os hin sama liðs-þarf sem fyrr.

Then said the king: "Why are you doing that to the bow? We still have the same need of help as before."

Hallvarör replies in self-defence, promising to fight on and acting on his promise at once:


Hallvarör answers: "I have done my duty with shooting and now I will defend my post as every other man." He took then sword and shield and went forward to the side of the ship and fought now hand to hand as the best of all men.
These separate saga passages show that the motif had wide currency among saga writers, although each writer was free to select from possible elements the combination of his choice. Clearly Snorri's selection and his placing of the motif were governed by concerns primarily literary rather than historical. Like the Legendary Saga writer, Snorri uses the motif to give a crescendo to the fighting. But the different context in which Snorri sets the motif and his alteration and paring away of unexciting elements in the Leg. version, give that crescendo more force in the Heimskringla.¹

B Snorri reworks source material to produce more precise and coherent dramatic passages

Snorri's dramatic passages often reveal deliberate adaptations of source material to produce more coherent and precise accounts less susceptible to accusations of ambiguity. A representative passage is Snorri's version of the events surrounding Magnús Ólafsson's battle with the Wends in 1043, told in Magnúss saga góða in the Heimskringla (Hkr. 3, pp. 42 ff). I have chosen to compare it with the Fagrskinna² version (Fsk. pp. 269-11) with which it corresponds more closely, but I have noted details shared with Morkinskinna³ (Msk. pp. 42-44) in the course of the discussion.

¹. There is nothing comparable to Snorri's adaptation in either of Sturla Póðarson's works, Hákonar Saga and Íslendinga Saga. While Sturí clearly did not have the literary sources for these contemporary works such as Snorri had for the Heimskringla, he nevertheless does not seem to manipulate facts purely for the sake of dramatic intensity.

². Fagrskinna, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1902-03), abbreviated Fsk.

³. Morkinskinna, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1931), abbreviated Msk.
Hallvard Lie has noted that Snorri is explicit and specific about the time at which Magnús' dream of St Óláf takes place - En er komit var at degi (p. 43); And when it was daybreak - while Fsk. leaves the reader to infer this from the fact that Magnús gets up and rouses his troops immediately after the dream (Fsk. p. 210). Lie offers this as an instance of Snorri's use of temporal detail to set the scene for a dialogue sequence. This is an important observation, but it leaves unexamined Snorri's extensive and masterful reshaping of the source material. His account of the battle preparations is less prolix than Fsk.'s in many respects, showing very subtle alterations:

1 Snorri makes clear exactly when Magnús is joined by Duke Ótto of Brúnswick, that is, after the Danes have gathered out of Jutland, but before they meet Magnús:

...ok drósk honum brátt herr um allt Jötland. Þá kom til hans Ótta hertogi af Saxlandi ór Brúnsvík (Hkr. 3, p. 41) ...and an army gathered to him quickly from all over Jutland. Then Duke Otto of Saxland from Brunswick came to him.

Ótto's advice to Magnús to fight the Wends appears more informed than it does in Fsk., where he seems to arrive at some unspecified time after the Danes have met Magnús:

Dann time com til hans magr hans Otte... (Fsk. pp. 209-10) At that time his in-law Ótto came to him...

1. Lie, op. cit., p. 18: "...Snorre gjennem klare, eksakte, tidsangivelser formår å gi en plastisk backgrunn for sine dialogiske optrin."
2 Snorri is more specific about the nature of Magnús' relationship to Ótto. Where Fsk. calls him "magr hans", Snorri writes:

Hann átti þa Þolfhildi, dóttur Óláfs konungs ín helga, systur Magnúss konungs (Hkr. 3, p. 41) He was then married to Ólfhilda, daughter of King Óláfr the saint, sister of King Magnús.

This relationship and its origins, as well as the episode in which Magnús' sister incites Ótto to join her brother, are recorded at great length in Msk. (pp. 38-42).

3 Snorri makes the Danes ask for Magnús' help with a Christian emphasis:

Danahöfðingjar eggjuðu Magnús konung aust færa í móti Vinða- herinum og láta eigi heiðit fólk ganga þar yfir land ok eyða...(Hkr. 3, p. 41) The Danish leaders urged Magnús to attack the Wendish host and not allow heathen people to march over the land and devastate it.

Yet in the Fsk. version, the Danes resent Magnús' call to join the levy against the Wends when they learn how huge the Wend's force is (so also Msk. pp. 38, 42):

Var þa illr kurr’i Danum ok sagðu at konongr villði coma þæm i ofæró (Fsk. p. 209) There was then a discontented grumbling among the Danes and they said that the king would bring them into an impossible situation.

4 In the Heimskringla, Magnús' response to the Christian request is recorded in the same sentence and thus appears to be automatic:

...ok var þat ráð tekit, at konungr snýr her sínnum suðr á leið til Heiðabýjar (Hkr. p. 41) ...and that plan was adopted that the king turned his army south on the way to Heidabæ.
The author of Fsk., however, indicates that Magnús had first to quell his troops, who refuse to assist the previously treacherous Danes, by delivering a speech in which he argues that Christian people must be defended against heathen attack. This makes Magnús appear very righteous, but in the briefer Heimskringla version he is more decisive, with unquestionable control over his men.

5 Snorri gives the location of the battle immediately before the disquieting news of the vastness of the Wends' army (a disquiet directly answered by the dream), whereas in Fsk. Magnús' precise location is only mentioned just before the dream scene itself:

\[ \text{The next night King Magnús and his men lay under their} \]
\[ \text{shields on Hýrskógsheiðr, because the army was expected there. And} \]
\[ \text{King Magnús slept.} \]

6 Snorri dramatises the information that Magnús is outnumbered. He does not report it as mere fact, as Fsk. does, but rather as news which Magnús receives on arrival at the heath. Though the bearer of the news is not mentioned, Snorri's handling of the information suggests an underlying exchange between the king and the messenger:

\[ \text{then news of the Wendish army came to him.} \]
The bearer is implied in the word 'njosn', leading the reader to imagine him giving his report in the words Snorri uses in the narrative:

ok þat með, at þeir höfðu svá mikinn her, at engi fekk talt ok Magnús konungr hafði engan hlut við fjölmennis ok honum veri só einn til at flýja undan (Hkr. 3, pp. 41-42) and also, that they had so great an army that no one could determine their number and King Magnús had no chance against such an overwhelming host and it was his only alternative to flee.

In this Snorri seems to follow Msk.'s version:

þa var honum sögg hersaga ath Vindaherr giorðizt aa hendr honum (Msk. p. 38)

7 Snorri makes Magnús seem noble in his decision not to flee. In Fsk., Magnús is not yet near the enemy when he receives the news of the outnumbering and he can therefore consider and debate his course of action at his leisure. But in Snorri's version, Magnús must act quickly: without hesitation he refuses to flee, but only on the condition, pragmatically added, that his men think there is some chance of victory. Notice that in the Msk. version he pledges himself more rashly: "en konungr vill þo fyrir ongvan mun flyja" (Msk., p. 38).}

Certainly in Heimskringla Magnús' men appear reluctant and reasonably so, being outnumbered, but there is no indication, as in Fsk., that they consider the Danes unworthy of their assistance:
...en flestir lóttu, ok sögðu allir eitt, at Vinór höfðu óflýjanda her (Hkr. 3, p. 42) ...but most objected and they said with one accord that the Wends had an overwhelming host.

Ötto, however, as in Fsk., supports Magnús' desire to defend the Christians:

en Ótta hertogi fýsti heldr at berjask (Hkr. 3, p. 42) But Duke Ötto was rather eager to do battle.

Here Snorri tones down the religiosity of his source by omitting Magnús' speech in reply to these opinions, as given in Fsk. Instead, Snorri makes Magnús' decision clear in his order that the troops sleep in their armour:

...ok lét alla manna herklæðask ok lágú þeir útí um nóttina undir skjöldum sínunm, því at þeim var sagt, at herr Vinóa var kominn nasr þeim (Hkr. 3, p. 42). ...and he had all men arm themselves and they lay out during the night under their shields because they had been told that the Wendish army was already close to them.

8 Snorri's phrase "því at þeim var sagt" suggests a further exchange between the king and his spies. The phrase binds the fact of the enemy approach to the sequence of action and, by discreetly offering the reader an opportunity to imagine the exchange, lends to mere fact an immediacy entirely absent from the Fsk. wording of the same information:

því at þar var þa hers von (Fsk., p. 210) because the army was then expected.
Snorri's alteration is an example, though slight, of one of his most powerful stylistic practices, that is, wherever possible to associate facts with persons and dramatic contexts.

9 In addition to the Fsk. portrait, but in accord with the more honourable and pragmatic public image of Magnús he is projecting, Snorri gives a glimpse of Magnús' inner feelings. After he has arranged his men for the night, the king turns to his own troubled thoughts:

Ok var konungr allhugsjúkr
(Hkr. 3, p. 42). And the king was very troubled in his mind.

Snorri appears to have borrowed the adjective from Msk. (pp. 38 and 42) but he uses it differently, making clear that Magnús is worried less about possible danger and death for himself than the likelihood, which his pragmatism forces him to acknowledge, that he may have to lead a retreat for the first time in his life:

Dótti honum ild, ef hann skyldi flýja verða, því at hann hafði þat aldri reyn. (Hkr. 3, p. 42). He considered it unfortunate if he should have to flee, because he had never before experienced that.

This reveals Magnús' sense of responsibility as a leader as well as his pride in an unsmirched record. Snorri balances this with evidence of Magnús' religious faith by recording the king's sleeplessness in the early part of the night in which he chants prayers. Fsk. ("oc sofnæ Magnus konungr" p. 210) and Msk. ("lagdizth konungr nidr ok sofnar bratt" p. 42) both say that Magnús actually slept all during the night and
because of that sleep the Magnús of Fsk. and Msk. seems to the reader perhaps a little naive and insensitive, wrapped in a false security. In contrast, Snorri's Magnús displays both conscientiousness and an authentic apprehension of the impending battle.

In introducing the dream itself, Snorri does not commit himself personally to the miracle. When the king at last falls asleep, he dreams:

...pá sofnaði konungr ok dreymdi, at hann sá inn helga Óláf (Hkr. 3, p. 43) ...then the king slept and dreamed that he saw the holy King Óláfr.

Yet in the Fsk. version the vision is presented as a fact; Óláfr actually appeared:

oc sofnaðe Magnús konongr, oc vitrædezk hanum Óláfr inn hálgi (Fsk., p. 210) and King Magnús slept and Óláfr the holy appeared to him.

It is never Snorri's practice to commit himself so plainly. ¹

In the Heimskringla version of the dream itself, Óláfr first asks Magnús if he is troubled, though the question is clearly rhetorical. It acts as gentle criticism of Magnús for succumbing to the worry he evidently suffers:

¹. Sigurður Nordal, op. cit., p. 189, remarks that Snorri prefers dreams to visions, probably because they are not so emphatically religious and do not necessarily require the personal commitment either of author or of reader.
Are you now very troubled and fearful when the Wends come against you with a great army?

The word "hugsjúkr" was used earlier to describe the young king's troubled mind ("var konungr allhúgsukir"). This repetition connects the dream with the earlier sleepless worry, and may be intended to suggest that the one springs out of the other, the product of fatigue. No such repetition occurs in Msk.

Snorri's Óláfr makes a direct reference to the overwhelming size of the enemy host, but encourages Magnús not to lose heart:

"Ekki skaltu hræðask heiðingja, though they are many together."

You shall not fear heathens, though they are many together.

In Fsk., however, Óláfr tells Magnús his own troops are sufficient, even though we have been told the heathens outnumber his force very greatly, by forty to one before Ótto joins them:

"(e)r íi hafir þu at to fight against heathen men."
"You have sufficient troops to fight against heathen men."

beriast við heiðna menn."

1. The combination "hugsjúkr ok óttafullr" is extremely rare. The other occurrence of which I am aware is in Oddr Snorrason, Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1932) in the passage reporting the Norwegian reaction to Óláfr's death: "oc eru nu miok hugsuðr oc ottafullr" (p. 259). But Snorri's Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar does not use the phrase in that place. Perhaps he had edited it out but stored it away in the back of his mind, only to bring it forward here in Magnúss Saga Góða in connection with Óláfr inn helgi.
The Ms.

The Msk. version is almost identical (Msk., p. 42). In both Ms.

and Fsk. Óláf

and Ms.

Óláf

means that Magnús has enough men because he also

has Óláf's support, and it seems from the wording that Óláf

intends to take up arms like any soldier:

Ec man coma at beriast með

ber (Fsk. p. 210) I will come to fight along-

side you.

Snorri however, has Óláf suggest for himself a role of guardian angel,

following Magnús in battle and protecting him and his interests:

"Ek mun fylgja þér í orrostu þessi." (Hkr. 3, p. 43). battle.

In both versions, Óláf tells Magnús to go to battle when he hears

Óláf's trumpet (lúðr).

In the narrative following the dream, Snorri's alterations make

his account tighter in structure, quicker in action, and the events

more significant and absorbing because the meaning is left implicit.

Fsk. does not reflect these qualities. There the narrative after

the dream begins with these words:

Þa vaknaðe konongrenn oc

sagðe draum sinn ollum

hær sinum (Fsk., p. 210).

Then the king awoke and told

his dream to the whole army.

There follows an excerpt from Magnús' exact words, using the same

vocabulary for fighting as Óláf did in the dream:

oc mego ber þat til sannz

vita at hinn hæðgi Óláf

konongr man beriast með

oss. (Fsk., p. 210) and you may know it for a

truth that the holy King

Óláf will fight alongside

us.
A space of time then elapses blankly between Magnús' speech and the next recorded incident, as is indicated by the phrase "litlu síðar". This leaves the reader to wonder what happened in this interval and to conjure up a lugubrious picture of the men standing about waiting for a miracle. This occurs when they hear the bell, believed by the Norwegians to be the bell, Glöð, ringing far away in Niðarós:

They all heard in the air that a bell rang and all the Norwegians thought they recognised from the chime that Glöð rang north in Niðarós.

Their response is stated explicitly:

Now all were comforted at this miracle, so that no one was afraid, whether many opposed them or few.

Snorri begins his version of events after the dream by subordinating the first clause of Fsk's initial flat compound statement, and thereby establishing a more fluid sequence and natural sense of the passage of time:

And when the king awoke, then he told his dream.

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1. This is not a feature of the Msk. account where the miracle occurs at once. (Msk. p. 43)
The economy of the last part of the sentence contrasts noticeably with Fsk. Since no audience is specified, the reader can assume a general telling, and since the contents of the dream have just been given, there is no need to repeat or even summarise them, as in Fsk. At this point Snorri adds a small detail which precisely identifies the time of the dream telling:

Tók pá at lýsa af degi (Hkr. 3, p. 43).

Then day began to break.

From this it is evident that the bell is heard in the brief and magical time of twilight:

Pa heyrði allt fólk í lopt upp klukkuhljóð, ok kenndu Magnúss konungs menn, heir er verit höfðu í Niðarósi, at svá bótli sem Glöð veri hringt. (Hkr. 3, p. 43)

Then all the people heard in the air above them a bell chime, and King Magnús' men, those who had been in Niðarós, recognised it and thought that Glöð was ringing.

Notice the clause underscored which is additional to Fsk. It functions to explain why some of the men recognised the peal - they had heard it before. Snorri thus implies that for the rest of the troops, all the Danes, any Norwegians who had never been to Niðarós, and Ótto's men, the peal was merely a peal, any peal, while for a select group it had a truly miraculous identity. For, as the next sentence informs the reader, it belonged to a bell peculiarly connected with St Óláfr himself:

Pá klukku hafði Óláfr konungr gefið til Clemenskirkju í Kaupangi (Hkr. 3, p. 43).

That bell King Óláfr had given to the church of St Clement in Niðarós.
This might be thought an instance of authorial condescension to the reader, and a just criticism if the reader is Norwegian. But it must be remembered that Snorri is writing with Icelanders in mind, many, if not most of whom would not have known this fact about the saint's gift to St Clement's Church. The information therefore explains, without being too explicit, why the peal fulfilled the promise of the dream that the men would hear Óláfr's "lúðr", or war trumpet. Snorri omits, however, the passage in Fsk. which describes the troops' reaction, that their spirits were cheered by the miracle. (A similar statement occurs in Msk., p. 43). Snorri gives sufficient information to convey the precise grounds of belief and then moves at once into the account of the battle itself, indicating by the men's very readiness to fight that their faith has overcome all previous fears and hesitation:

Hljóp þá upp allr konungs-herinn ok stefndi í móti heǐðingjum (Hkr. 3, p. 43)

The beginning of the battle account in Heimskringla further affirms their belief and refers punctiliously back to the dream promise as the Fsk. version does not. There, the battle appears to begin when the Wend's attack:

Þvi næst sa þær oc hvar Vinóa hær for (Fsk. p. 211). They also saw at once where the Wendish host approached.

But in Heimskringla it is Magnús who initiates the encounter by calling for the war trumpet:
Then King Magnús stood up and called for the war blast to be sounded.

This fulfils Óláfr's request in the dream vision:

Order the battle to begin...
when you hear my trumpet.

Only when Magnús has proclaimed war, do the Wends advance; they do not march up and instigate the battle themselves:

Then the Wendish army moved south over the river against them.

The battle action in Heimskringla resembles the Fsk. account in most respects, except where Snorri treats the miraculousness of Magnús' victory. He gives this a succinct tribute, not by laying out in catalogue the exact claims to miracle as in Fsk., or even by referring directly to the miracle at all, but merely by pointing to the unique place the victory occupies in Christian history:

It is the public opinion that no slaughter of men had been so great in Northernlands in Christendom as that which occurred on Hlyrskógsheiðr of the Wends.

Any clear explanation, with heavy emphasis on the numbers of heathen killed, as in Fsk. (pp. 211-12) and Msk. (p. 46), would in the Heimskringla insult the reader's intelligence, rob him of the mental satisfaction of inferring from implication, and ultimately strip the miracle itself of that dignity which Snorri preserves by delicate and discreet handling.
Because he leaves much of the meaning implicit, Snorri commands our close attention and demands that we exercise both imagination and capacity for logical inference. Snorri invites us to forget ourselves temporarily in the immediacy of his narrative.¹

C Snorri uses dramatisation to guide readers' interpretation of events

Snorri does not enter directly into his dramatic accounts of events as an interpreter. He does, however, carefully select, arrange, and often re-express his source material so that it offers a different view of events. Yet his presentation of such events in Heimskringla is so credible and immediate that it seems authentic, and the reader does not suspect, without critical analysis, that his responses are being manipulated.

Snorri's aloofness and the seemingly authentic quality of his accounts can be mistaken by the unwary for authorial objectivity. Hallvard Lie has identified this impression of objectivity² and suggests that it depends much upon Snorri's practice of letting the reader witness events as a spectator without being told the conclusion beforehand. This is certainly a marked feature of Snorri's aloofness.

¹. Extended comparison with the sources of many passages in the Heimskringla reveals similar literary adaptation by Snorri. Notable examples include the episode in which Jarl Hákon hides with his slave in a pig-sty in an attempt to escape Óláfr Tryggvason (Hkr. 1, pp. 293-98), and the sighting of Óláfr Tryggvason's ships by his enemies before Óláfr's last battle (Hkr. 1, pp. 353-54).

². Lie, op. cit., p. 37
but it is not entirely accurate to add to this, as Lie does, that Snorri's accounts are primarily reports which show the reader what happens and which allows him to interpret the phenomena for himself.\textsuperscript{1} This is what seems to be the case, but in fact, Snorri's control over what information is received, in what guise and in what order, determines to a pronounced extent the interpretation the reader is likely to make. Lie acknowledges this elsewhere\textsuperscript{2} when he points out that in some dramatic passages the point of view is entirely one-sided, so that the reader can scarcely be capable of an objective interpretation of events.

Comparing Snorri with his sources, the range of his alteration becomes evident: reducing source material where it seems to him unnecessarily leisurely or prolix for his purposes, adding details which make the account seem more natural and credible, and in many cases sharpening the dialogue for precise dramatic effects.

To illustrate this, Snorri's version of Magnúss Ólafsson's feast and subsequent visit with Kálfur Arnason to the battle field at Stiklarstaðir is compared here with the version of this happening in Morkinskinna (pp. 24-25). The Fagrskinna version is extremely brief:

\begin{itemize}
\item 1. Ibid., p. 37
\item 2. Ibid., p. 44
\end{itemize}
Ágríp¹ does not mention the quarrel at all. It seems, then that Snorri constructed his version on the basis of Msk., perhaps using other sources no longer known to us, written and/or traditional.

In adapting the Msk. material, Snorri has aimed at greater precision, concision, and implicit meaning than his original possesses. He thereby creates a much tenser atmosphere, heavily underlaid with opposing currents of feeling. This tension is apparent even at the feast prior to the exchange on the battle field, and arises out of details added to the Msk. feast account, details which set the dialogue in a specific spatial and temporal context and mark several pregnant silences.²

Snorri opens the feast with a disposition of the main participants, allowing the reader to visualise for a moment a static scene, as he might in a theatre for the instant after the curtain has gone up:

En er konungr sat at matbordi, þá sat á aðra hónum konungs reiði oc noccorer abrer gofgrí menn (Ís. p. 197) Kálfr then left the country because of the king's wrath, and other noblemen also.

¹ Ágríp af Noregs konunga sögum, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1929). Written about 1190.
² Lie, op. cit. p. 28, refers to Snorri's wide practice of noting precise time where his sources do not.
This careful balance seems to hint that diplomatic and emotional balance is about to be lost, but such a hint is exclusive to Snorri's rendering, since Msk. merely states that both men were present at the feast, saying nothing of their proximity to the king's chair:

Ok eitt sinn er Magnus konungr þa veizslu inn j Prandheimþ þa var þar með honum Einar fostri hans ok Kalfr Arnason (Msk. p. 24).

Snorri again goes beyond Msk. to suggest that Magnús slights Kálf deliberately, saying very little to him during the feast:

Pá var svá komit, at konungi gerði feð á við Kálf, en virði þá Einar mest (Hkr. 3, p. 24).

This detail implies the tension without facile explication and also indicates that the feast has already been going on for some time before the reader becomes a spectator, during which time the king's preference has revealed itself. The feast is therefore partly over when Magnús turns to Einarr in direct discourse. In Msk., however, the feast has gone on for several days and the king addresses Einarr only on one of these days:

Pa mæliti konungr eirnþvern dag til Einars (Msk., p. 24).

Here there are vast empty spaces of time during the feast of which nothing is told, not even in summary. In the Heimskringla, however, the feast appears to be one meal and the action and dialogue are in continuous unbroken sequence,¹ even though some periods are only

¹. Sigurður Nordal, op. cit., p. 246, has remarked that it is characteristic of Snorri to be less tangential than his sources, although he does not cite this passage as an example.
reported briefly, as is the time preceding this direct remark to Einarr by Magnús:

"Vit skulum ríða í dag á Stíklarstáði. Vil ek sjá þau merki, er þar hafa orðit." (Hkr. 3, p. 24).

The remark is reasonably polite, suggesting a companionship in the "vit skulum", and yet brief, encompassing in the "þau merki" a whole catalogue of specific things Magnús wants to observe and which Msk. has him list explicitly to Einarr:

Let us go today to Stíklarstaðr and you tell us exactly events as they took place where the king fell and in what place each standard-bearer stood, and tell me what happened.

This catalogue is too revealing in the narrative, while Snorri's briefer version in the Heimskringla shows what Magnús has been thinking about and marks the king with a taciturnity which is bred by his efforts to repress his anger, even while talking to Einarr, and which foreshadows the later eruption of his wrath on the battle field.¹

Einarr's reply is equally concise, again pared down from that in Msk.:

¹ Lie, op. cit. pp. 52-53, notes how Snorri in general edits prolixity in the dialogues in his sources.
I can't tell you about that. Let Kálf go, your foster father. He will be able to tell you there about those events.

Einarr says, "Lord, ask Kálf this; he will know. He was standing nearer when this event took place. There must be much more known to him about it and he must know in detail where the great incidents happened in every place."

There is a knowingness in the Heimskringla reply suggesting that if Magnús and Einarr are not actually in league against Kálf and have not planned this little conversation for Kálf's greater discomfort, at least Einarr appreciates the king's suspicions and enjoys playing along to the full.

In Msk. there is nothing on which we can base the assumption that Kálf has overheard Magnús and Einarr. It is true that directly after Einarr's reply the text says:

Þá melliti konungr til Kálfs. Then the king spoke to Kálf.

Yet there is nothing to indicate whether or not this exchange followed immediately after the conversation between Einarr and the king. Snorri, however, tells us exactly when Magnús speaks to Kálf. He waits, in fact, until the feast is over and the tables are being cleared, having given himself more time to brood upon his anger and Kálf time to consider in suspense his response should the king approach him:

Notice how this command differs from Magnús' more comradely request to Einarr, a distinction Msk. does not make, for there Magnús uses almost exactly the same words the second time:

farnu jnn a Stíklastade og seg oss jnneliga þar um at-burdi (Msk., p. 24).

go now to Stíklarstaðir and tell us exactly about events there.

Kálfr's reply in the Heimskringla again differs noticeably from the source. While Msk. gives him a rather long-winded and whining direct speech in which he protests his allegiance, Snorri records his reply briefly and indirectly:

Kálfr segir, at þat var ekki skylt (Hkr. 3, p. 24).

Kálfr said that that was not obligatory.

This accords with the terseness of the previous remarks between Magnús and Einarr and also implies that Kálfr is tight-lipped with anxiety. Magnús' reaction, of which Msk. records only his words - "Konungr segir fara skulum ver" (The king says, "We shall go") - Snorri presents much more dramatically, indicating that Magnús' anger has partly broken through his restraints already. His actions are explosive, his words snapped out like a military command:

1. Sigurður Nordal, op. cit., p. 234, remarks that it is characteristic of Snorri to adjust dialogue so that it reveals his characters' thoughts and feelings, although this passage is not cited by Nordal as an example.
Then the king stood up and said rather angrily: "You shall go, Kálfur!" Then the king went out.

(Hkr. 3, p. 24).

In Msk. the reader is not told that Magnus has left the room but is left to assume that Kálfur has some time alone in which he delivers instructions to his boy in considerable detail, arranging for his escape with his possessions after the battle field excursion. Snorri goes straight from the king's exit to Kálfur's preparation and instructions, which he gives briefly:

Kálfur klæddisk skjöt ok mælti til sveins síns: "Fú skalt ríða inn á Eggju ok biðja húskarla mína hafa hvert fat á skipi fyrir sólarfáll." (Hkr. 3, p. 24)

Notice that in this Heimskringla version Kálfur hurries to dress for the ride with Magnús, a detail which together with the hurried directive to the messenger, betrays Kálfur's nervousness and provides the emotional tone for the exchange that takes place at Stíklastaðir.

In Heimskringla the actual battle field events are more curtailed and yet more powerfully and precisely rendered than in Msk. The latter version mentions that a large number of men went on the excursion:

Og nu rída þeir Magnus konungr a Stíklestade og márt annara manna (Msk. p. 25). And now King Magnús and Kálfur ride to Stíklarstaðr and many other men.
Snorri, however, mentions no one else, holding the focus on the primary participants, Magnús and Kálfr:

Konungr reið á Stiklarstaðr ok Kálfr með honum (Hkr. 3, p. 24).

Then king rode to Stiklarstaðr and Kálfr with him.

Then, while Msk. describes them strolling about the field in general discussion, repeating some of what Magnús said during the feast about what he wanted to see at Stiklarstaðr Snorri does not dissipate the tension he has so carefully constructed and maintained up to this point. In the Heimskringla, therefore, there is nothing leisurely about Magnús' behaviour on the field, rather, he springs from his horse and confronts Kálfr with the critical question at once:

Konungr reið á Stiklarstaði ok Kálfr með honum, stigu af hestum ok gengu þar til, er bardaginn hafði verit. Pá mælti konungr til Kálfs: "Hvar er sá staðr, er konungrinn fell?" (Hkr. 3, p. 24).

The king rode to Stiklarstaðir and Kálfr with him, they jumped off their horses and went to the place where the battle had been. Then the king said to Kálfr: "Where is the spot where the king fell?"

It is significant here that Magnús says "konungrinn" instead of "Óláfr konungr faðir minn" as in Msk. The Heimskringla version keeps the inquiry at the official level - there is no undertone of the intimacy of father and son or of the personal grief felt by the son at his father's death. Magnús implies that he seeks to know the particulars of a king's death, not just a father's. The killer's deed thus wears the colours of a national offence rather than one personal to Magnús, and the killer himself is by implication an assassin, an enemy of the state.
Kálfr's response to this question differs in the two versions even more significantly. In Msk. we find this

Hier so segir hann. og stakk nidr oxarskaptuno. Here, he says and struck the ground with his axe handle.

But in Heimskringla, Snorri writes:

Kálfr svarar ok rétti frá sér spjótskaptit: "Hér lá hann fallinn," segir hann (Hkr. 3, p. 24) Kálfr answers and pointed his spear shaft away from himself: "Here he lay fallen," he says.

In the Msk. version, Kálfr seems to stand much nearer the place where Óláfr fell, since he can point it out by sticking his axe handle in the ground, while in the Heimskringla version he must reach out with his spear shaft to touch the spot. In Msk. he is also very hedgy about his answers to Magnús' questions, something Snorri does not mention:

en Kálfr segir konungi þat er hann spurde en hvergi leingra og fanzt þat þo aa at hann vissi giorla til (Msk., p. 25). and Kálfr tells the king what he asks, but nothing further, and yet it seemed that he knew precisely.

The king asks where he was during the battle:

Konungr mælti: huar varðu þa (Msk., p. 25). The king spoke: "Where were you then?"

Kálfr replies:

Ecke fiarre þvi vid stondum nu herra segir Kálfr (Msk., p. 25). "Not far from where we now stand, lord," says Kálfr.

After such an equivocal reply, Magnús' next accusation seems reasonable:
Magnús then turns away with anger mounting in his face - "dreyraudan yfirlizt" (with a blood-red countenance) - and Kálfr departs at once, leaving us the impression that his treachery during the battle is now revealed:

en Kálfr snyr þa til hestz
sins ok skilzt nu þar vid konungin (Msk., p. 25).
and Kálfr turns then to his horse and parts there with the king.

Snorri's account in the Heimskringla allows for Kálfr's innocence. I have mentioned that at Stiklarstaðir Snorri places him farther from the spot where Óláfr fell; he also has Kálfr use a spearshaft rather than an axe handle. Kálfr's reply to Magnús' first question further suggests that he was not directly involved in the killing, though a witness. He tells Magnús that the king lay dead on that particular spot; he avoids saying that he died there. This implies that he himself only came upon Óláfr after he had been struck down, or at least that he did not approach the king before the death-blow was struck. Magnús then asks him where he actually did stand, using Kálfr's name in the question, unlike the Msk. version. This use of the name makes the question more pointed and specific, more accusing. Kálfr's reply to it differs again from that in Msk. He is very particular here and seems more certain of himself, perhaps certain of his innocence as well:

He answers: "Here, where I stand now."
There is none of the uncomfortable hedging as in Msk's "Ecke fiarre þvi vid stóndum." Snorri then introduces the detail of Magnús' angry countenance at this point instead of at the end of the exchange as in Msk. This placing in the Heimskringla seems to indicate a moment of conviction in Magnús before he breaks into speech.

When Magnús does make his accusation it resembles the Msk. wording almost exactly, except that he uses "til hans" instead of "til foður mins." This alteration preserves the impersonal tone established by Magnús' earlier use of "konungrinn" in the Heimskringla version. Then, unlike the Msk. version, in Snorri's, Kálfr replies to the accusation with a certainty and self-assurance equal to his previous statement of his position:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Kálfr svarar: } & \text{"Ekki tók óx mfn til hans." (Hkr. 3, p. 24).} \\
\text{Kálfr answers: } & \text{"My axe did not reach him."}
\end{align*}
\]

Of course there is nothing in Snorri's account explicitly indicating Kálfr's innocence, but he allows for it by his alterations, as Msk. does not. Perhaps Snorri wants to imply that while Kálfr did not reach Óláfr with his axe, he did so with his spear, as he clearly might have from where he was standing. But why does Snorri present the incident in this way, so much more neutrally than Msk. as regards Kálfr? To understand this we must examine Snorri's account of Kálfr's behaviour at the battle itself as well as the source versions. Msk. does not include Óláfs s. helga, in which the battle takes place, but Fsk. does. There we find only the following account of Óláfr's death:
Par var orrasta horó oc mikil. Par fell Oláf hinn hægli konungr oc marg lið hans...
Mikill fioldi fell oc af bondom, oc marger goðer menn. Aftir fall Olafs konungr var lík hans flutt ut till Kaupangs... (Ísk., pp. 182-183).

There was an intense and large battle. There fell King Óláfr the saint and many of his troops... A great many of the Ímskr host fell also and many noble men. After the fall of King Óláfr his body was conveyed to Niðarósr.

Agrip gives only slightly more detail, but also fails to implicate Kálfr Árnason:

Þat var ok snemma orrosto, er Oláf konungr fell, hann hafði sverp í hendi, en hvárki hafði hálm né brynio, hann fekk sár af húskarið Kálfs á kné; þá hneig hann ok bazk fyrir ok skaut nípr sverðinó. 1

It was early in the battle when King Óláfr fell. He had a sword in his hand but neither helmet nor breast-plate. He was wounded in the knee by a servant of Kálfr's; then he fell forward and surrendered and dropped his sword.

Snorri, in his own early independent version of Óláfs s. helga, gives these details, at best ambiguous:

Þat var oc snimma er Olafr konungr fell oc frænde Kálfs arna sunar ungr at alldre hafðe gott ífirílete af Kalve. Hann særðe Olafr konung a fæte. 2

It was also early when King Óláfr fell and a young kinsman of Kálfr Árnason who had Kálfr's good favour. He wounded King Óláfr in the foot.

Yet it is clear from the Kálfsdráp, cited by Snorri in his Heimskringla account, that traditions about Kálfr's role in the death of Óláfr were uncertain. Following these verses, Snorri explicitly leaves the event open to interpretation, writing with a neutrality equal to that in the exchange later in Magnúss s. góða between Kálfr Árnason and Magnús Óláfsson which has just been examined:

1. Ágrip, op. cit., p. 32
2. Snorri Sturluson, Óláfs Saga helga, eds. O.A. Johnsen and Jón Helgason (Oslo, 1941), p. 85.
En því jafnskjótt snöri konungr í móti þeim Kálfi frendum ok veitti banasár Óláfi, frenda Kálfs...Póristeinn knarrarsmiðr hjó til Óláfs konungs með öxi...Pá lagóði Pórir hundr spjóti til hans (Ólafs) ...þá hjó Kálfr til hans. Kom þat högg inum vinstra megin útan á hálsinn. Menn greinask at því, hvárr Kálfr veitti konungi sár (Hkr. 2, pp. 384-85).

But immediately the king attacked Kálfr and his kinsman, and gave a death wound to Kálfr's kinsman Óláfr...Póristeinn knarrarsmiðr struck at Óláfr with his axe...Then Pórir hundr threw a spear at him...Then Kálfr struck him. That blow entered on the left-hand side of his neck. Men disagree which Kálfr gave Óláfr his wound. (i.e. Kálfr Arnason or Kálfr Arnfinnsson).

By showing that contemporary opinion about Kálfr is not clear, Snorri is able to give depth to the plot and to link the events of the battle in Ólafs s. helga with those of the later visit to the battle scene in Magnúss s. in a way in which the other versions do not.

Kálfr appears again in the Heimskringla in Haralds s. Sigurðssonar in an incident which does not appear in Msk., Fsk., or Ágríp. In this saga Kálfr finally returns to Norway and has restored to him all his estates and titles through an agreement with King Haraldr arranged by Kálfr's brother Finnr (Hkr. 3, pp. 133ff). Shortly after Kálfr's return, he accompanies Haraldr on a battle expedition in which Kálfr is made to go ashore on enemy soil leading the first offensive. Though he does this without complaint and deports himself valiantly, he and most of his men are killed. Only then does Haraldr go ashore and take the victory. It is clear that he deliberately sent Kálfr out to die, for Snorri tells us that Haraldr's pleasure at the results of this trickery was common knowledge:
The sympathy in this case is undoubtedly meant to go to Kálfr, and, because he has behaved honourably to Haraldr at the cost of his life, we are perhaps more inclined in retrospect to suppose he spoke the truth to Magnús at Stiklarstaðir.

From the Stiklarstaðir exchange it becomes evident that Snorri's alterations of his sources, while perhaps seeming individually unimportant, demonstrate a deliberate re-shaping of source material, providing an interpretation of events more generous to Kálfr, especially when we consider such changes in their full context and in relationship with earlier and later events. Moreover, the Heimskringla version is more lively and immediate, exploiting the dramatic potential of the facts with a minimum of means, and falling logically into a larger pattern of events extending from one saga into others. Such structural unity, not present in Snorri's sources to such a refined degree, establishes in the Heimskringla a tidiness of historical progression, a bond of cause and effect between events greatly removed from each other in both objective and narrative time. The existence of this pattern indicates the constant and self-conscious control of the author.
IV Snorri provides structural continuity in the *Heimskringla* by a variety of means

A Snorri traces political tensions

Snorri deliberately traces the political tension that develops around the figure of Kálf Arnason throughout several kings' reigns. This is not a unique instance of such tracing in the *Heimskringla* for the sake of continuity. In *Ólafs s. helga*, for instance, Snorri also presents several political conflicts between the king and individual prominent Norwegians in sequences of dramatised incident. The connections of cause and effect between these incidents give this very long saga a coherent, logical structure. One such sequence of incidents - in which Snorri traces the repercussive conflict between King Óláfr and the powerful lendr man, Dórir hundr - stretches, with some interruption, across half of the saga (*Hkr. 2*, pp. 199-387).

The following itemisation demonstrates briefly the relationship between the events in this far-reaching sequence:

The quarrels of King Óláfr helgi and Dórir hundr

1. Unless otherwise indicated, page numbers refer to *Hkr. 2* in this itemisation.

p. 194 1 Ásbjörn Sigurgeirsson is a nephew of Dórir Dórisson

p. 177 hundr, a wealthy lendr man of King Óláfr. Ásbjörn

pp. 197-98 has his cargo of grain confiscated by King Óláfr's bailiff, Dórir Selr, because the bailiff believes

p. 195 that Ásbjörn has violated a royal decree prohibiting the export of grain from the south to the north of Norway.
2 In revenge for this and provoked by Óðrir Selr's lies about him, Ásbjörn kills Óðrir Selr in King Öláfr's presence, having crept unnoticed and disguised into a feast Óðrir is holding in the king's honour. He is captured, but released through the intervention of his mother's brother, Erlingr Skjalðsson, on the condition that Ásbjörn takes over the office of bailiff held by Óðrir Selr.

3 Óðrir hundr advises his nephew Ásbjörn to stay on his own property after his release in fearless defiance of the king's condition. Óðrir promises to protect Ásbjörn from any trouble that ensues.

4 Ásmundr Grænkelsson, a new bailiff of the king's and anxious to increase his share of royal favour, kills Ásbjörn. Ásbjörn's mother incites Óðrir hundr to take revenge for her son because Óðrir had advised Ásbjörn to defy the king. She forces on the reluctant Óðrir the spear that killed Ásbjörn.

5 Óðrir hears from his friends how Ásmundr is bragging in Öláfr's court about having killed Ásbjörn.

6 Óðrir invites himself on an expedition to the north undertaken at King Öláfr's request by Karl, a protégé of Ásmundr Grænkelsson's. After creating a quarrel over
the division of booty, Þórir manages to get Karl alone and kills him with the spear that killed Ásbjörn, taking indirect revenge on Ásmundr for Ásbjörn's death.

pp. 252-53 Þórir is forced by Finnr Ærnason, on King Óláfr's behalf, to pay a fine for the killing of Karl. After gathering together one third of the money as slowly as possible with help from his friends, Þórir wins further delay by promising to pay the balance later. He then escapes to England without paying any more and joins the services of King Knútr.

pp. 300-02 Þórir Ólivsson, the son of Þórir hundr's sister, is killed on King Óláfr's orders for treacherous dealings with King Knútr. His brother Grjótagarðr is also killed for taking revenge on Óláfr's men and goods after his brother's execution.

p. 293 After winning Knútr's esteem in the form of a sheriffry, the rights to the Lapland fur trade, fiefs and money, Þórir is ready to fight against King Óláfr, desiring further revenge for Ásbjörn as well as for Þórir Ólivsson and his brother Grjótagarðr.
10 Þórir Þórisson hundr is active against St Óláfr and his men at the battle at Stíklarástaðir, leading his own troop, exchanging blows with the king himself and the king's marshall, Björn, and administering some of the death blows to Óláfr.

p. 386 11 Þórir Þórisson, after repelling Dagr Hringsson's attack, lays out the body of King Óláfr. He notices the beauty of the king's face in death and his own wounds are miraculously healed by contact with the king's blood. Þórir subsequently becomes one of the first of Óláfr's former opponents to uphold his sanctity.

Hkr. 3, 12 Þórir leaves the country for Jerusalem immediately after the battle at Stíklarástaðir and it is widely believed that he never returned. (Magnúss s. góða).

B Snorri sometimes dove-tails together several sequences of political tension

Into the sequence involving Þórir Þórisson hundr, Snorri has dove-tailed two separate lengthy sequences of political conflict involving the lendir men Erlingr Skjálッグsson and Hárek of Bjóttu. The events of Erlingr's career in Heimskringla are here traced to demonstrate where his career intersects with Þórir's (marked +):

1. Hans Kuhn, "Narrative Structures and Historicity in the Heimskringla" in Parergon XV (Canberra, 1976), pp. 30-42, makes the point (pp. 38-39) that in Óláfs s. helga "there is more crossing of narrative strands" than in the other shorter sagas in the Heimskringla, but he does not identify these narrative strands, nor does he trace them or show the points at which they cross.
The quarrels of King Óláfr helgi and Erlingr Skjálgsson

1 Erlingr Skjálgsson marries Óláfr Tryggvason's sister Astrapr and although he refuses to accept the title of jarl, receives control over considerable lands. He supports Óláfr Tryg. faithfully, accompanies him on the expedition to Vendland, and enters his ships in Óláfr's fleet at the king's last battle against Jarls Eiríkr and Sveinn and King Óláfr of Sweden.

2 After Óláfr Tryg.'s defeat, Erlingr loses all his districts to Jarl Eiríkr, but continues to collect tax from Rogaland unopposed by Eiríkr. Erlingr supplements this income and maintains a high standard of living by plundering.

3 After Jarl Eiríkr and his son have both gone back to England, Erlingr regains control of the lands Eiríkr had taken by forming an alliance with Jarl Sveinn through the marriage of Erlingr's son Áslákkr to Sveinn's daughter. Erlingr subsequently joins Jarl Sveinn against Óláfr Haraldsson at the battle at Nesjar and, with the jarl, is put to flight.
4 At his friends' advice, Erlingr settles with King Óláfr Haraldsson on the king's terms and keeps control of his lands.

5 King Óláfr settles a quarrel over the control of Hórdalaland between Erlingr and Áslákr Fitjaskalli, Erlingr's second cousin and a bailiff of the king's. Erlingr's son Skjaldr stays in King Óláfr's court as surety for the settlement and Erlingr keeps control of his lands.

6 When King Óláfr's bailiff, Þórir Selr, informs Æsbjörn Sigurðsson, the son of Erlingr Skjalgaason's sister, that he may not buy grain in the south for his farm in the north, Æsbjörn goes to Erlingr for help. Erlingr allows Æsbjörn to buy grain from Erlingr's slaves, who are not subject to the law.

7 After Þórir Selr confiscates this grain, Æsbjörn kills him in King Óláfr's presence and is sentenced to death as punishment. Skjaldr, Erlingr's son, has friends delay the execution while he fetches Erlingr to the scene, accompanied by a huge force of men. Óláfr, seriously outnumbered, is forced to free Æsbjörn and be reconciled with Erlingr.
After indicating his opposition to King Óláfr, Erlingr leaves Norway to join King Knútr in England, but later returns to Norway where he helps win support for Knútr. He renews his friendship with Knútr when the English king comes with a large army to take over Norway.

King Óláfr Haraldsson, in his attempt to flee Norway, is pursued by Erlingr and his fleet. Having deliberately enticed Erlingr to increase the speed of his ship in the eagerness of the chase and so out-distance his own fleet, King Óláfr lures Erlingr's ship into a sheltered bay, where he surrounds and defeats him.

At the moment when the captured Erlingr doffs his helmet in a gesture of submission to the king, he is given a fatal blow on the head by Áslákr Fitjaskalli, his second cousin and earlier rival.

The career of Hárekr also intersects with both Þórir Þórisson's and Erlingr Skjaldbriinn's. Hárekr quarrels with Æsmundr Grankeilsson (the man who kills Þórir's and Erlingr's nephew, Æsbjörn Selbeini (Hkr. 2, pp. 212-13)) because King Óláfr has given Æsmundr half-control over lands which originally all belonged to Hárekr (Hkr. 2, pp. 252-55).
Subsequently he deserts King Óláf’s service for king Knútr’s (Hkr. 2, pp. 290-91; 306) and is made Knútr’s lendr man along with Þórir hundr and Erlingr. Hárekkr helps in the gathering of forces against Óláf (Hkr. 2, p. 345) and fights against him at Stiklarstaðir (Hkr. 2, pp 372-76; 386; 388). When he comes to meet the new king, Magnús Óláfsson, Hárekkr is killed at Niðarós by Ásmundr Grankelsson, who remained loyal to King Óláf and is a supporter of Óláf’s son Magnús (Hkr. 3, pp. 22-23).

By dove-tailing sequences such as these, one into another, Snorri illustrates the fragile balance of principal loyalties upon which St Óláf’s power depends, while at the same time he strengthens the coherence of the saga.¹ But such complex structuring is not the norm throughout Heimskringla. It depends upon such detailed information as can rarely have been available to Snorri except from the abundant tradition about St Óláf and from surviving contemporary dræpur about prominent lendir men such as Kálfur.² Snorri might, of course, have invented details, but he must have considered that a more extensive use of such complex structuring would ultimately defeat the access of coherence and the clarity of connection which his cautious use provides. His work anticipates only on a small scale the intricacies of Sturla Dóðarson’s Islendinga Saga, so bewildering to the casual reader.

¹ Lars Lönnroth, "Ideology and Structure in Heimskringla" in Parergon XV (Canberra, 1976), pp. 16-29, sees (p. 29) the structure of the Heimskringla - incorporating political tensions surrounding figures who are not royal - as part of Snorri's attempt to exemplify "within a specific historical context, a variety of political attitudes and social relationships having to do with the imposition of feudal kingship on a traditional society." This interpretation, if one wishes to accept it, is easily accommodated together with my analysis of the architecture of these tensions.

² Kuhn, op. cit., pp. 30-31, makes a point similar to this that Snorri's narrative structures are only complex where source material was abundant.
C. Snorri uses dreams, prophecies and portents to provide links between events

Portents, prophecies, and dreams foretelling the future are additional means by which the parts of a saga may be linked. Like such ominous occurrences in Njáls Saga, those in Heimskringla are precisely fulfilled by subsequent events. In some instances, a specific event fulfills a single dream or portent. Sigríðr, for instance, prophesies Óláf Tryggvason's death when he breaks his betrothal to her and slaps her:

Dá mælti Sigríðr: "Petta metti verða vel þinn bani." Then said Sigríðr: "That might well be your death."
(Hkr. 1, p. 310)

Her prophecy is later fulfilled (Hkr. 1, p. 349) when she incites her husband, Jarl Sveinn of Denmark, to join forces with Jarl Eiríkr and the King of Sweden in order to overcome Óláf Tryggvason. Snorri makes explicit reference to Sigríðr's hatred for Óláf and suggests that it has inspired her advice to Sveinn:

Sigríðr var inn mæsti óvinr Óláf's konungs Tryggvasonar ok fann þat til saka, at Sigríðr was one of the greatest enemies of King Óláf Tryggvason and the reason for that was that Óláf konungr hafði slítit einkamálum við hana ok King Óláf had broken his promise of lostið hana í andlit, svá betrothal with her and had slapped sem fyrr var rítit. her in the face, as was written earlier.
(Hkr. 1, p. 349).

In other instances, a specific event is forecast by a wave of dreams and omens like the wave, containing recurring images, recorded in Njáls Saga before the battle of Clontarf. For instance, prior to

1. See below, Chapter Five, pp. 378 ff.
his account of the battle at Stamford Bridge, Snorri records that one of Haraldr's crew has a dream of vultures and a witch-wife on board Haraldr's ship (Hkr. 3, pp. 126-27); while a man on board another of the Norwegian ships dreams that the witch-wife rides on her wolf-steed before the host of the English enemy, devouring corpses; and Haraldr himself dreams that St Óláfr comes to him and foretells his death in the battle, again using the images of the witch-wife, her wolf, and the carrion bird. Supporting these ill-boding dreams is the bad omen which occurs when Haraldr falls from his stumbling horse as he reviews the Norwegian troops. He himself interprets it as a lucky omen:

Hestrinn fell undir honum ok konungr af fram. Stóð hann upp skjót ok mælti: "Fall er fararheill!" (Hkr. 3, p. 186).

The horse fell under him and the king came off. He stood up at once and said: "A fall is a good omen for a journey."

But in the mouth of the English Haraldr, who witnesses this, Snorri puts a different view which proves more accurate:

"Mikill maðr ok ríkmannligr ok er venna, at farinn sé at hamingju." (Hkr. 3, p. 186).

"A great man and noble in appearance, and yet it is more likely that his luck is gone."

Of course, Haraldr harðráði dies in the battle, struck by an arrow in the windpipe.

Certain other portents and dreams have distant fulfilment through several occurrences. The prophetic curse of the sorceress Huld has
already been mentioned in this connection. Later in Heimskringla, a dream with far-reaching significance is attributed to Sigurðr Magnússon (c. 1125) in which he sees a tree in the sea whose branches break upon the shore into many pieces and invade the land of Norway:

"En er tréit kom at landi, þá braut þat, ok rak brot trésins víða um landit, þeði um möginland ok úteyjar, sker ok strandir; ok þá gat mér sýn, sá at ek þóttumk sjá um allan Nóreg it ýtra með sjá ok sá ek í hverja vík, at rekin váru brot af þessu tré, ok váru flest smá, en sum størri." (Hkr. 3, p. 265).

Sigurðr, when questioned, interprets his dream as the portent of a new royal dynasty:

"Hvat þykki mér líkastr, at vera mani fyrir tilkvámu nökkurs manns í land þetta, ok mun hann hér staðfestask ok hans afspringi myndi víða dreifask um land þetta ok vera mjök misstórt." (Hkr. 3, p. 265):

"And when the tree came to land, it broke and the pieces of the tree drove all about the land, both the mainland and the outlying islands, rocks, and strands; and then it seemed to see over all Norway along the sea coast and I saw in every harbor that pieces of this tree were driven there, and most were small, but some great."

This prophecy is fulfilled in the arrival and establishment of Haraldr gilli, prolific in descendants of unequal power who rule Norway intermittently even beyond the scope of the Heimskringla and Snorri's own lifetime. Sverrir claimed to be a descendant of Haraldr's son Sigurðr, and through Sverrir the claim extends to his grandson Hákon Hákonarson (1217-1263).

1. See above, p. 149 Gustav Storm, op. cit., p. 93, also points out the structural significance of Ragnhildr's dream in the Heimskringla as well as Hálfðán's dream. See Hkr. 1, pp. 90-91
In the religious sphere, the counterpart of these dynastic dreams is St Óláfr's vision of his influence after his death:

"Ek sá nú yfir Nóreg, er ek leit vestr af fjallinu. Kom mér þá í hug, at ek hafða margan dag glaðr verit í því landi. Mér gaf þá sín, at ek sá um allan Prándheim ok því næst um allan Nóreg; ok svá lengi sem sú sín hafði verit fyrir augum mér, þá sá ek e því þóðara, allt þar til er ek sá um alla veröld, baði lönd ok sæ. Ek kennda góra þá staði, er ek hafða fyrir komit ok sett. Jafngreinliga sá ek þá staði er ek hefi eigi fyrir sett, suma þá, er ek hefi haft spurn af, en jáfnvel hina, er ek hefi engi fyrir heyr fgetit, baði byggða ok öbyggða, svá vitt sem veröldin er." (Hkr. 2, p. 351).

"I saw now over Norway when I looked west from the mountain. It then came to my mind that I had been in this land many happy days. I had a vision that I saw over all Prándheim and then over all Norway; and for all the long time this vision was before my eyes I saw constantly further and further until I saw over all the world, both land and sea; I recognised well the places which I had previously been in and seen; equally distinctly I saw those places which I had never seen before, some I had heard of and also those of which I had not heard mentioned before, both inhabited and uninhabited, as wide as the world is.

This vision is fulfilled in the remainder of the Heimskringla by the many miracles attributed to St Óláfr after his death, both within Norway and abroad. Each of these miracles implicitly refers back to the vision, connecting the king's saga in which the miracle occurs with Óláfs s. helga. This, together with other visions and dreams attributed to St Óláfr in the Heimskringla, form a noticeable pattern which has been compared with the pattern for Sverrir's dreams in Sverris Saga.1


2. See Appendix D to Chapter One, above, pp. 126 ff.
V Conclusions

Snorri's pervasive control of the narrative in Heimskringla depends upon the interdependence of style - reflecting his literary purpose - and structural design for the work - reflecting his intellectual purpose. From his adjustment of passages selected from his sources, Snorri produces the sequences of dramatised incident that give Heimskringla its logical and smoothly woven continuity. Such manipulation of material in turn depends upon the wealth of record and tradition only available to the writer of non-contemporary history. It also depends upon a perspective on events long past, shared by the saga writer and his audience and uninfluenced by the loyalties and antipathies of first-hand experience. This perspective frees Snorri from the obligation or personal desire, felt by the writers of contemporary royal biographies, to flatter the kings whose lives he records. His selection and presentation of events are not limited by diplomacy.

It is clear from analysis that the realism of Heimskringla is contrived. The immediacy of dramatised moments and the well-reasoned structure of events are the products of Snorri's art and not an indication that his accounts are based on fact. In this respect Heimskringla differs sharply from Sturla Þórarson's Íslendinga Saga. In that record of events in Iceland during the thirteenth century, immediacy has its ground in contemporary experience, while the structure of the work reproduces the almost overwhelming complexity of actual occurrence.

1. See above, Chapter One, pp. 120 ff. and below, Chapter Four, p. 277 ff.
2. See below, Chapter Six, p. 414 ff.
APPENDIX A: The proportions of *Heimskringla*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative space</th>
<th>King</th>
<th>Chronological period</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40 pages</td>
<td>Ynglinga saga</td>
<td>0 - 870</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mythical times to 870</td>
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<td></td>
<td>pp. 1-41</td>
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<td>Haraldr harfagrí 870-930</td>
<td>60 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>pp. 42-67</td>
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<td>16 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>930-946, pp. 67-69</td>
<td></td>
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<td>22 pages</td>
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<td>16 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>946-962, pp. 70-92</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>962-974, pp. 93-114</td>
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<td>21 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>974-995, pp. 115-120</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>61 pages</td>
<td>Óláfr Tryggvason 995-1000</td>
<td>5 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>pp. 120-181</td>
<td></td>
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<td>14 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1000-1014, p. 181</td>
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<td>pp. 421-446</td>
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<td>20 years</td>
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<td>1047-1066, pp. 447-513</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3 pages
Magnús (until 1069) and Óláfr Haraldsson kyrri
1067-1093, pp. 514-517

14 pages
Hákon Magnússon (until 1094)
and Magnús Ólafsson berfætr
1093-1103, pp. 518-532

21 pages
sons of Magnús berfætr
1103-1130, pp. 533-554

14 pages
Magnús Sigurðarson 1130-1135,
pp. 555-569

14 pages
Haraldr gilli Magnússon Ólafsson
kyrra 1135-1136, pp. 555-569

25 pages
sons of Haraldr gilli
1136-1161, pp. 570-595

17 pages
Hákon heróibræðr Sigurðarson
Haraldsson 1157-1162, pp. 596-613

25 pages
Magnús Erlingsson, grandson Sigurðr
Magnússon 1162-1174 (d. 1177),
pp. 614-641
Chapter Three

'Knytlinga Saga':

A Celebration of Danish Christian Sovereignty 940-1187

I Knytlinga Saga is unique in its theme

Knytlinga Saga, written about 1260, is declared by Stephan Einarsson to be a direct imitation of Snorri Sturluson's Heims-kringla:

With Snorri the sagas of the kings of Norway come to a brilliant end. What followed was mostly compilations with his works as the core. He was, however, directly imitated by the unknown author of Knytlinga Saga, a chronicle of Danish Kings covering the period c. 940-1187.

Sigurður Nordal has made a similar claim:

Paa dette omraade faar Snorri kun én virkelig efter­følger, Knytlinga sagas forfatter, der baade anvender Heimskr. som direkte kilde og forbillede for de danske kongers historie fra ca. 940-1187.

1. See Gustav Albeck, "Knytlinga Saga" in Kultur Historiskt Lexikon for Nordisk Medeltid, volume 8 (Malmö, 1963) pp. 615-17 and Kurt Schier, Sagalitteratur (Stuttgart, 1970), p. 30. The dating of Knyt. is somewhat controversial, though it is agreed that it must be put between 1240 and 1270. Those who believe that Snorri Sturluson's nephew, Óláfr hvítaskáld Póróarson, was the author of the saga must date it prior to his death in 1259, but as the saga itself speaks of Óláfr in the past tense, it seems he was dead by the time the saga was complete (See Knyt. p. 287). This assumes, of course, with Gustav Albeck, Knytlinga (Copenhagen, 1946), who demonstrates a consistently free use of sources, that there was only one author for the whole saga. On these grounds 1260 is given as a working compromise. The likelihood of Óláfr's author­ship has also been disputed by A. Campbell, "Knúts Saga" in Saga-Book of the Viking Society, 13 (London, 1946-53) pp. 238-48.

2. Stephan Einarsson, A History of Icelandic Literature (New York, 1957) p. 120.

The correspondences between *Knytlinga Saga* and *Heimskringla* are undeniable, but superficial:

1. *Knytlinga* traces the descendants of a royal dynasty in Denmark as does *Heimskringla* in Norway; both continue no later than c. 1180.

2. Early in its history each dynasty has its saint and his miracles.

3. Both authors used as sources:
   a) scaldic verse
   b) previous writings
   c) unwritten tradition

1. For example, in the narrative in *Knyt*. the reign of Eiríkr góði Sveinsson (pp. 166 ff.) is heavily dependent on the verses of Markús Skeggjason, while in *Hkr*. it is clear that Snorri has relied on verses about some of the lendir men prominent in the early eleventh century. See above, Chapter Two, p. 193.

2. It is clear from *Knyt*. that the author consulted some form of Norwegian history, probably *Hkr*. itself, since he makes many direct references:
   - *sem ritat er í aefi Nóregs konunga* (p. 29)
   - *sem sagt er í sögu Óláfs ens helga* (p. 49)
   - *sem ritat er í aefi Nóregs konungs* (p. 54)
   - *sem segir í aefi Nóregs konunga* (p. 55)
   - *sem segir í sögu Magnúss konungs ens göða* (p. 57)
   - *ok eru um þat langar frásagnir í sögu Haralds konungs* (p. 59)
   - *sem fyrir er ritat í bókinni* (p. 266)
   - *ok er sagt frá skiptum þeirra Valdimars konungs ok Nóregs-manna í sögum Nóregs konunga* (p. 278).

It also seems likely that the author knew Saxo, as he refers to learned Danish books: "*Pat finnz ritat í fróðum dónskum bókum*" (p. 218). Albeck, op. cit., pp. 82, 334, also includes Styrmir, *Jómsvikingsaga*, and ballads as sources for *Knyt*. and suggests, p. 109, that the author adopted practically unemended an earlier Knúts s. helga, written by a different author no later than 1200–20. Campbell, op. cit., has shown that this is not capable of proof, and it may be that the precise nature of the sources used by the author for his *Knúts s. helga* will never be determined unequivocally.
4 Within the limits of broadly accepted traditions of the past, both authors can exercise the freedom to select, shape, and unify their material as they wish.

There are differences, however, between the two works and their sources, which are more striking:

1 The author of *Knytlinga* does not appear to have had written vernacular sources for his Danish material as vigorous and imaginative as those available to Snorri for the *Heimskringla* (e.g. *Ágrip*, *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinnna*).

2 The author of *Knytlinga* has confined his work to the Christian kings of Denmark and traces a theme of Danish Christian sovereignty from the conversion of Haraldr Gormsson to the conquest and conversion of the Wends by Eiríkr eymundi and Valdimarr Knútsson and the assertion of Danish political independence by Valdimarr's son Knútr against the Saxon Keisar, Friðrekr.

3 Though this preoccupation is clearly evident, it is somewhat fitful and does not form the main basis of continuity in the work. It is demonstrable from the saga that the author of *Knytlinga* lacked the artistic control and vigilant aesthetic purpose of Snorri Sturluson.

In this chapter these points of difference are developed and supported with evidence.
II Evidence of the saga writer's preoccupation with Christian material

A The character and fated martyrdom of Knútr Sveinsson inn helgi are central to the saga theme

There is no formal description of Knútr in Knytlinga, but he is frequently described by other figures who most often attribute to him the qualities of a proven warrior and absolute monarch:

"...roskastr í skapi ok bezt at íþróttum búinn... reynr at herstjórn..." (p. 62, the praise of his father)

"...proven in battle and the government of troops and also of the land and laws; he has both the intelligence and the wisdom to be a leader, eloquent and well composed and yet harsh in just punishment, generous with money, because he (who) takes from many, shall for that reason give much.

...handsome and fine (looking) and becoming in the best attire." (p. 121, the conviction of one of Knútr's young supporters).

Even Knútr's opponents acknowledge the forcefulness of his character, which they often describe in terms of slyness and deceit:

1. This statement has the quality of prophecy, since Knútr will exact severe fines from the people, who ultimately rise up against him and take his life.
"...grimr ok skapstórr"
(p. 70, the words of Eyvindr bifra)

"...ríkr ok refsingamaðr"
(p. 99, the opinion of Danish chieftains)

"...órtrúr maðr ok ágjarn,
svá at hann kann eigi hóf
at, ok má hann réttu kalla
heldr viking en konung;...
maðr orðsnjallr ok brögð-
óttr ok undirhyggjumaðr mikill;
mun yðr hann verða slægvitr,
ok vandsét við honum, ef
þér hlýðið nökkut því,
er hann mælir." (pp. 112-13,
the condemnation of the
farmers' leader, Dórir
dórri)

Must of Knútr's behaviour supports these views and accounts for
the eventual uprising against him by farmers and noblemen alike:

1 On succeeding to the throne, he promises to make up for
his brother Haraldr's soft justice:

"...hann var yðr helzti hægr
ok linr...nú skal ek vera
yðr frekr harðsteinn." (p. 73).

2 He forces his yoke on the farmers by threatening to deprive
them of access to the royal forests and waters upon which
their livelihood depends (pp. 73-75) and he proves a harsh
and fiercely resented punisher of criminals, whether rich men
or poor:
Jafnan dom let hann hafa rikjan sem orikan; en þat varð mjök ofundsamt af þeim mönnun, er letu gösfa frenda sina at domi konungs, þó at sakar væri sannar til (pp. 76-77).

He always let the rich have judgment as the poor; and that became much the cause of malice from those men who lost their noble kinsmen at the kings' judgment, even though the charges were proven.

3 After appointing a meeting place for levies from Denmark and Norway, prior to an expedition against England, Knútr himself is several days late in arriving. Yet he exacts harsh fines from the Danes for dispersing before he arrives, thereby arousing widespread discontent:¹

...létu hér margir mikit fé fyrir, ok þótti mörgum þetta mikli afarkostir...hann lét þann dóm hvern hafa, sem honum þóttu sakar til falla, hvárt sem hann var ríkr eða óríkr, en þat þótti hóðingjum ofrausn (p. 109).

...many lost much wealth on this account and they seemed very hard conditions to many... he let each have judgment on as he thought powerful or not, whether he was rich or poor, and that seemed too great a trial to the chieftains.

Given this image of a severe judge, it is perhaps not surprising that Knútr's more saintly qualities are mentioned only rarely:

"...vitr ok guðhræddr" (p. 70).

"...trúan ok siðgóðan" (p. 121).

"...wise and God-fearing"

"...faithful and of good morals".

1. Further emphasis on Knútr's relentless justice can be found on p. 76 and on p. 98, where it is directed against the followers of Knútr's rival, Blóð-Egill.
And yet, although Knútr, like St Óláfr in Heimskringla, does not appear as a saint immediately, evidence of his righteousness gradually accumulates up to his martyrdom:

1 Early in Knútr's career, Eyvindr bifra sets up the ruse whereby Knútr is distracted at the bing while his brother Haraldr is chosen king unopposed. Eyvindr depends for the success of his plan on the knowledge that Knútr is too conscious of the religious impediments against fighting his brother:

"...mun hann sjá alla meinbugi, "...he will see all the religious impediments, 
þa sem á eru þessu máli, at those which are against berjaz við bróður sinn." this case, to fight against
(p. 70).

This assessment is accurate, as is clear from Knútr's own response to the situation:

"pat mun ek af kjósa, er "I will choose that which yór mun þykkja lítilmann- will seem more unmanly to you, 
lígra, at ek mun þann kost that I will take the hard upp taka at leifa konungs- choice to relinquish the name nafn heldr en berjaz við of king rather than fight against Harald, bróður minn til Haraldr, my brother, for power." ríkis." (p. 71)

Yet this righteous restraint is not an easy attitude for Knútr. As the writer allows us to see, it requires a huge effort from him to control his blood pressure, a reaction which lends immediacy to his predicament:
2 The writer makes the moral point that the king must set a righteous example to his men, by means of a specific instance. Knútr, exercising his right as absolute monarch, insists on taking to bed the wife of his host, a priest. The king is only prevented from sinning by the timely sermon the woman preaches to him while they lie together in the bed:

"Guð gatí yðar, herra! nú ok jafnan; gerið nú svá vel, sem yðarri tign byrjar; vinn mér eigi grand, en sjálfum yðr mein; ok svá vel ok fagrliga, sem þér síðið aðra mann í þessu landi, þá samir yðr þó at hafa fegrsta síðu, þvíat þér eruð fyrir óllum mónnum héir í landi. Nú vil ek þess biðja, þá er þér komið fyrir þann konung er alls á vald, at hann sé yðr svá boena, sem nú eru þér mér." (p. 78).

To this request Knútr readily acquiesces, but with a forced piece of reasoning, given his present circumstances:

"God preserve you, Lord, now and always; behave now as well as befits your rank; do not do me harm and yourself injury; for since you reform other men in this land so well and handsomely, so it befits you to have the finest moral life, because you are an example to all men here in the land. Now I will pray for this, that when you come before that king who has power over all, that he turns an ear to your prayer as you do now to mine."
"Veita vil ek þér þína bæn,
þviat ek sé, at þú biör þessa
af miklum göðvilja, ok svá
samir betr, sem þú vill vera
látu; ok þó er nú at sinni
nökktut athald í at gera eigi
sinn vilja, en þó er þetta
lítit hjá stórum hlutum, er
várr herra Jhesus Christus
hefir þolt fyrir várar sakir."  
(p. 78).

"I will grant your request, 
because I see that you ask 
this out of great good will, 
and it is so much more befitting 
as you wish it to be done; and 
now, though at present there 
is some restraint in not doing 
as one desires, yet it is little 
beside the great things which 
our Lord Jesus Christ has suffered 
for our sakes."

This incident is clearly meant to show once again that while 
Knútr is subject to normal human temptation, his will power 
is of super-human dimensions. What is humorous about the 
passage is the inappropriateness of the discourse to the 
setting and of the comparison of Knútr's restraint with 
Christ's suffering. It is not deliberate humour,1 but 
a consequence of the saga writer's sacrifice of credibility 
in order to make a moral point.

3 When Knútr dispatches his brother Ólafur off to prison 
in chains, popular opinion suspects political motives:

"...hyggju vér,...at hann
hræddiz þat, at hoföingjar
mundu heldr vilja hafa Óláf
at konungi en hann."  (pp.
105-6).

"...we think...that he is
afraid that the chieftains
would rather have Ólafur as
king than him."

But Knútr's declared motive is a premonition that Ólafur 
will eventually prove his inherent evil:

"...pat er atlan min," sagöi
konungr, "at eigi mun langt
líða, áór en Óláf fr mun sjálfr
bera sér vítí, hverr hann
er."  (p. 105).

"...it is my expectation," 
said the king, "that time will
not long pass before Ólafur
will himself bear witness to
what kind
of man he is."

1. By contrast, the presentation of Sverrir's foibles in Sverris Saga 
is intentionally humorous and realistic as well. See above, 
Chapter One, pp. 94-98.
This premonition is fulfilled in the saga after Knútr's
death when Óláfr resentfully refuses to acknowledge Knútr's
sainthood after a priest reports a strange light near Knútr's tomb:

Konungr svaroði, bað hann
eigi verða svá djarfan at
segja slikt fals..."hann
mundi aldregi heilagr
verða." (p. 155).

The king answered, told him
not to be so presumptuous as
to speak such a falsehood...
"he will never become sainted."

4 In dealing with his powerful rival, Egill Ragnarson, Knútr displays remarkable patience, expressing concern for Egill's religious transgressions and giving him repeated opportunities to reform. This confrontation between an essentially pagan hero and a Christian king is dramatised and deserves close attention as one of the finest pieces of writing in the saga.

The background to their conflict is briefly sketched (p. 83). Though Knútr has a premonition that trouble will come from Egill, he appoints him his agent in Borgundarhólm. When Egill then harries like a viking, in order to support an excessively large retinue, Knútr expresses his objection:

"Petta líkaði Knúti konungi
lítt, ok bað Egil minka fjölmenni sitt ok sagðiz af hafa
tekit hernað innanlands
(p. 84).

King Knútr was ill pleased with that and ordered Egill to decrease his large retinue and said he had forbidden harrying within Denmark.
But when Egill wins a victory over the heathen Wends, he is rewarded with Knútr's warm approval:

Konungr lofar, sem aðrir men, afrek Egils ok sigr (p. 86).

The king praised, as other men, Egill's daring deed and victory.

The battle itself is briefly presented with little distinctive detail or phrasing, except for Egill's super-human feat which secures the victory:

...þá hljóp Egill af skipi sinu ok á Víðarnekkjuna ok hjó til höfðingjans ok veitti honum banasár, ok þegar jafn-skjót hljóp Egill öfugr aprtr á sit skip (p. 85).

...then Egill leapt off his own ship and onto the Wends' ship and struck at the chieftain and gave him his deathwound, and then equally quickly Egill leapt backwards back onto his own ship.

More important to subsequent events are Egill's deeds after the battle is over. Here detail becomes denser and the narrative sharp with dialogue. Egill, after his heroic action in battle, is overcome with exhaustion and calls for drink:

Hann var svá móðr, at hann fell nær í ómútt; ok er hann sat upp í skipi sínu, þá bað hann gefa sér drykk (p. 85).

He was so exhausted, that he almost fell into a swoon; and when he sat up on his ship, he then asked to have a drink given him.

1. For instance: p. 84: verór þar bardagi mikill; gengr fram vel ok drengiliga; p. 85: brestr flótti á Vínóum; fær Egill þar ágætan sigr ok mikit fé.

2. This indicates the saga writer's understanding of battle physiology and fatigue. The sudden exhaustion is probably due to Egill's adrenalin subsiding. It should not be interpreted as melodramatic; any competitive athlete could also confirm the reaction.
Direct discourse punctuates the narrative here with the words of Egill's cabin boy, who explains that there is nothing fit to drink:

"Orðit hefð þat hark hér í dag á skipinu, at brotnat hafa verplar várir allir, ok er allr drykkr niðr hlaupinn í kjöl á skipinu." (p. 85)

"There has been such tumult here today on the ship that all our barrels are burst and all the drink is spilled into the hold of the ship."

There is a meek and child-like defensiveness in this explanation, in its length and the repetition of "á skipinu" and "allir - allr."

It captures concisely and yet perceptively the child's manner of excusing himself when he is innocent, yet fears accusation and punishment. But Egill is too thirsty and impetuous to consider the boy's fear of him or to worry about blaming anyone for the mishap:

"Eigi mun á síðr drekka mega!" (p. 85).

"Nonetheless, one must be able to drink!"

It then becomes clear that the child meant that the beer was mixed with more than just bilge water; it is over half blood as well:

"Eigi, herra!" sagði hann, "þvíat þat er meðri hluti manndreyri ok blóð." (p. 85).

"Not so, Lord!" he said, because the greater part is human gore and blood."

In the moment of crisis, the boy forgets his painstakingly learned etiquette and, picking up on Egill's "mega", he elides it and follows with the subordinate clause beginning "þvíat", instead of using a complete sentence. In this way the writer introduces the colloquial into a context in which it is appropriate and might well have been used.
The pace of the action is maintained by a quick shift of focus back to Egill who is too absorbed with his physical need to concern himself with the boy, or with further words. He replies only with a gruesome action:

Egill stendr þá upp ok tekr hjálminn af höfði sér ok sökkvir niðr í kjölinn ok drekkur þrjá drykki mikla (p. 85).

Egill stands up then and takes the helmet off his head and dips it into the hold and drinks three great draughts.

The conjunction of the actions with the three "ok"'s emphasise that no one even attempts to stop a man of his prowess and proven reputation, though they might well have tried between the doffing of the helmet and the third swig. Nor is any further dialogue reported. This silence must be due to shock, since at least one of those present must have been sufficiently moved to report the incident to the king, according to the saga writer's reconstruction of the episode.

In the following chapter, without any account of intervening events, we find Egill called before King Knútr, whose handling of the problem reveals much about his own character and Egill's and places the matter entirely within a Christian focus. The dramatisation relieves the writer of passing explicit judgment on Egill's deed himself and allows him to remain faceless and unobtrusive. This aspect is more consistently characteristic of Snorri Sturluson's treatment of the Heimskringla material.¹

¹. See above, Chapter Two, pp. 150 ff.
Parts of the dialogue are in indirect discourse. The king begins in this fashion by asking Egill if the report of the deed is true. Here the indirectness of his remark and the jerkiness of the succession of clauses suggest that Knútr is rather shy of the matter, self-conscious and therefore gentle:

Then the king summoned him to a private conversation and asked if it were true as he was told that he (Egill) had drunk human blood.

Egill admits that there is a great deal of talk to that effect:

"Mikit er til þess haft" (p. 85);

"Much is claimed about this."

but he adds that he has not previously given the matter much thought:

"Hví varð svá illa?" (p. 86).

"Why did you do such an evil thing?"

The indirectness of this part of the statement suggests Egill's indifference; had he possessed much of a Christian conscience, he would not have committed the deed at all.

We are further convinced of the king's gentleness and slowness to wrath by the easy opportunity he gives Egill to defend himself:

Egill's reply is again in indirect speech, perhaps this time to eliminate any suggestion of bluster. His words illustrate the great viking's total candour as he makes no attempt to hide the deed by cunning rationalisation:
Egill said that so great a thirst overcame him from exhaustion and the toil of fighting that he thought he could scarcely endure it, and there was no other drink available.

The king's reply is Christian in content and gesture of forgiveness, but the structure of it also presents us with a realistic man attempting to introduce the faith to a people whose concerns are worldly and heroic rather than spiritual and contemplative. The control and careful arrangement of his points show that he has not given up the task; they also demonstrate considerable understanding of the sort of human being Egill represents. Knútr begins by describing the crime in Christian terms, thereby making clear the centre of his argument:

"Þessi hlutr er harðla þungligr orðinn ok mikit kristnispell í." (p. 87).

"This matter is become very grave and there is a great breach of Christianity in it."

But Knútr adds a reminder of his potential power to punish, suggesting the Old Testament side of the Christian God:

"...ok þat er kallat, at vör sém refsingasamir um smærri hluti." (p. 87).

"...and it is said that we are a severe punisher of smaller deeds."

Nevertheless, the "harðla þungligr orðinn" has already indicated Knútr's awareness that the issue is serious and requires consideration. For there are good practical arguments against punishing a man as useful as Egill has proved himself:
There is one obvious reason why Knútr thinks well of Egill's service: his behaviour in the battle in chapter 35 was all a king could wish of a soldier. He may also recognise that to Egill his Christian scruples may seem pedantic in view of the circumstances. He therefore does not punish Egill, but rather, gives him advice (heilræði) regarding his religious infraction:

"...vil ek þat heilræði til gefa með þér, at þu betir við guð ok segir sem fyrir kennimönnum, ok tak skriptir fyrir." (p. 87).

Knutr willingly and generously pardons any offence to himself:

"...en þat sem várr rétr hefir brotinn verit í þessu málí, þá viljum vér þér upp gefa." (p. 87).

The two actions of giving advice and pardoning are connected by the verb "gefa", used in the two idioms "gefa með" and "gefa upp". There is no angry castigation. Yet Knútr does not let Egill escape without emphasising again the enormity of the deed in the sight of God and the disappointment it causes him personally, for he refers back to his initial remarks on this:
"...en eigi sýniz mér þetta minna verk, enn þú hafir etit mannahold soðit, er þú hafir drukkit mannahþóð." (p. 87).

"...but it does not seem to me any less a deed than to have eaten cooked human flesh, when you drank human blood."

Again Egill's reply is given indirectly, as he promises to abide by Knútr's advice:

Egill heitr konungi at hann skal svá gera (p. 87).

Egill promises the king that he would do it.

He is clearly subdued for the moment, though later in the saga his behaviour shows how little the king's words penetrated him. Twice the king asks Egill whether he has confessed as he was requested (pp. 88, 90) and when Egill insists on looking after his own soul (p. 90), Knútr is reminded of his earlier premonitions about Egill:

"...ek sagði þér et fyrsta sinn, er ek sá þik, at þú mundir eigi með öllu vera gefumaðr." (p. 90).

"...I said to you the first time I saw you that you would not be a lucky man in all respects."

Claiming to be answerable only to God (p. 96), and refusing to accept money for Egill's life (p. 98), he has Egill executed. This stubborn adherence to justice fits Knútr's political image in the saga, but more important to the saga theme in this conflict is the first long dialogue between the two men, the simple dramatic presentation of Christian discipline struggling to assert itself over an essentially heathen nation. Knútr and Egill are here representative of the poles of that struggle, but they are more than mere stereotypes. The dialogue demonstrates a specific humanity in each, though not a complex one, giving us a more immediate understanding of Denmark's conversion. The writer's imaginative reconstruction of Knútr's
speech to Egill attributes to the speaker a resolution and explicitness¹ appropriate to the Christian theme, but the writing here transcends the more transparent presentation of that theme characteristic of the author.

At the time of his martyrdom, when Knútr is threatened by the uprising of farmers led by Jarl Ásbjörn and Eyvindr bifra, he seems deliberately to draw his fate upon himself by a number of his actions:

1 He seems knowingly to ignore every indication of treachery when Jarl Ásbjörn comes to him posing as mediator (pp. 126-27). He does not mention Ásbjörn's earlier part in the ruse by which Knútr's brother Haraldr was elected king (pp. 65-68), even after Knútr's brother Benedikt expresses surprise at Knútr's apparent blindness:

"...ok víst er undarligt, herra! er þér hlýðið nökkur því, er hann segir, þvíat ek só glöggt, at hann er einn falsari ok dróttinsviki." 
(p. 128).

Knútr refuses to act on this, although his reply suggests he is conscious of the threat. He insists on accepting his fate:

"Petta ráð þitt munu vér hafa, Benedikt! at fylja eigi fund óvina várra; ráði guð, hverrar hann verar." (p. 128).

1. In this respect the speech differs sharply from those delivered by Sverrir in Sverris Saga, where the material is based on contemporary experience.
Ásbjörn's hypocrisy is, of course, plain to the reader, since the saga writer has already revealed through the jarl's speech to the farmer host that Ásbjörn seeks to meet with the king in order to assess the king's strength and plans before attacking him. Ásbjörn's treacherous nature is also suggested by his blatantly subservient gesture to Knútr, bowing to him as he departs ("laut hann konunginum" p. 128), and it is made plain when he reports back to the farmers, twisting Knútr's offer of a settlement into a threat of punishment for their opposition (pp. 130-31). It is significant that in this speech Ásbjörn describes Knútr as "feigr".

2 Only when the attack has become a fact does he admit to their threat, implying that up until now he has ignored it by design:

"Nu mun ekki þurfa at dyljaz við, at þandr munu ekki atla oss frið at bjóða." (p. 133).

"It will not be necessary now to deny that the farmers will not intend to ask us for peace."

His solution to their plight reveals that he is prepared for martyrdom, acknowledging his responsibility for the uprising:

"...vil ek mikli heldr gefaz upp einn fyrir alla oss, þvíat ek veit þat, ef þeir ná lifu mínu auðvelliga, at þá munu grið hafa menn mínir flestir." (p. 134).

"...I would much rather give myself up, one for all of us, because I know that if they take my life easily, that most of my men will have quarter."
He does not protest further when his men insist on defending him, nor does he offer to take arms alongside them, but takes unmistakable steps to prepare himself for death: he prostrates himself, weeping, before the altar of the church from which the defence is being made (p. 135); he is shriven by a priest (p. 135); he chants psalms (p. 136). Wounded by a stone thrown through a broken window, his reaction is to protect his clothing from blood, collecting it in a basin while he continues chanting:

Hann tók þá mundlaug ok setti í kné sér, at elgi bleðdi á kæðin, ok söng á psaltaramn sem dór (p. 139).

He took then a basin and set it on his knee so that he did not bleed onto his clothing, and he sang a psalm as before.

He refuses to act against the unmistakable treachery of Eyvindr bifra, who pretends to seek the king with an offer of peace from the farmers. Benedikt denounces this traitor as he did Ísbjörn:

"...vita allir, at þú ert hverjum manni útrúari." (p. 141).

"...all know that you are more unfaithful than every other man."

But again Knútr ignores the past. He says of Eyvindr:

"opt hefir Eyvindr mér enn vel gefiz" (p. 141),

"Eyvindr has often served me well",

not mentioning Eyvindr's ruse to win the throne for Haraldr. Yet plainly Knútr is aware of Eyvindr's intentions. When Eyvindr greets him in a typically servile fashion - "þá mælti hann ok hneigði honum:
"Heill herr!" (p. 141) - Knútr responds with coldly accusing, expectant silence:

Konungrinn leit við honum ok svaraði engu (p. 141).

The king looked at him and answered nothing.

The writer records no attempt by Knútr to avoid the sword Eyvindr draws from beneath his cloak. It is only recorded that he beseeched God's help, whether for body or soul is not made explicit:

Konungrinn hneig upp at þilinu ok bað guð gata sín (p. 141).

The king bowed up against the wainscot and beseeched God to protect him.

All these details combine to make the martyrdom seem inevitable, as if Knútr has consciously sought it. There is nothing comparable in the behaviour of Óláfr Haraldsson inn helgi in Heimskringla.

The writer includes both striking and traditional evidence of Knútr's sainthood and God's favour for him.

Immediately after the battle, the writer records the nasty deaths of Knútr's principal opponents. Eyvindr bifra is severed in two by one of Knútr's men as he attempts to escape through a window over the altar:

...hann tók í sundr í miðju, fell höfuðhlitrinn út ór glugginum, en föðahlitrinn inn í kirkjuna (p. 142).

...he fell apart in the middle; the upper body out of the window and the lower body into the church.

The other three deaths, however, are offered as instances of divine retribution. Jarl Ásbjörn is gruesomely killed by a horde of huge French mice who pursue him across water to his ship:
One of the farmer leaders, Pórór dorri, is drowned when his corn-fat horse throws him into a rushing stream after all Pórór's companions have crossed it safely:

One of the farmer leaders, Pórór dorri, is drowned when his corn-fat horse throws him into a rushing stream after all Pórór's companions have crossed it safely:

The other leader, Tólarr verpill, is rotted to death by maggots:

The writer openly declares these deaths to be signs of divine punishment, committing himself as Snorri Sturluson would never do:

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1. See above, Chapter Two, pp. 164.
For the most part, Knútr's miracles are not elaborated, as are St Óláfr's in the Heimskringla, but merely summarised (pp. 168 and 185). Only the principal miracle is presented at length, concerning the Borgunnusons, two brothers who are frequently mentioned as Knútr's supporters (pp. 92, 95, 110, 115-19, 134-36). After Knútr's death, these brothers are sent to bring Óláfr, Knútr's brother, out of the Flemish prison into which Knútr had previously sent him. Only able to secure Óláfr's release by giving themselves up as hostages, the brothers are then abandoned by Óláfr, even though he had promised to ransom them from their chains after his return to Denmark. This is the first indication that Knútr's premonition of Óláfr's inherent evilness (pp. 104-5) was correct. St Knútr then appears to Borgunnusons in the prison, loosing their chains and entrusting them to make known his intervention and powers of intercession:

"...vænti ek þess, at guð hefi mér þá miskunn, þar er menn kalla á mitt nafn með göðvílja, at menn fái bör meina sinna." (p. 158).

"...I believe this, that God does me this mercy, when men call upon my name with good will, that men receive cure for their hurts."

This miracle is readily accepted and celebrated by Knútr's wife, the daughter of the Flemish duke. She encourages the duke to favour the brothers, as does Knútr's son, the duke's nephew. This child

1. It is recorded that a crippled man is miraculously made whole when the saint's body is exhumed, but this is only briefly told (p. 183).

2. See above, p. 209.
has received from Sveinn Porgunnuson the belt which Knútr had given Sveinn shortly before his own death, prophesying that Sveinn would survive the farmers' attack (pp. 135-36). The duke therefore agrees to free the brothers on the condition that they return with the ransom money. They keep their promise by selling all their possessions and borrowing from friends, after Óláfr refuses to help them (p. 163). The duke, however, matches their good faith with magnanimity, refusing to accept any ransom money (p. 163).

The Porgunnusons now return to Denmark, but it is pointedly stated that they give Óláfr no service: "bjonuðu ekki Óláfi konungi". They have no other part in the events of the saga, but the son of Sveinn Porgunnuson becomes the first archbishop of Denmark during the reign of Knútr's brother Eiríkr góði and joins the king on his military campaigns. He is succeeded as archbishop by his nephew Askell, also a fighting bishop.¹ The miracle in the Flemish prison is thus well-suited to lengthy presentation in Knytlinga, since the figures involved contribute to the continuity of the work. But the miracle has none of the ironic force of St Óláfr's first miracle in the Heimskringla wrought on Bóðr Bórisson and converting him to one of the saint's most ardent supporters after a long history of defiance.²

¹. See below, pp. 231-33.
². See above, Chapter Two, p. 189.
The traditional evidence offered in the saga for Knútr's sainthood is the miraculous preservation of his body:

...var líkami hans með heilu líki, sem hann varí nýandaðr (p. 183). ...his body was as a sound body as if he was recently dead.

When his byre is burned, the body is preserved even more beautifully:

...en líkamr ens helga Knúts konungs var óbrunninn ok svá alheill, at enguhári var skatt, en þá var líkaminn miklu bjartari en áðr (p. 184). ...but the body of the holy King Knútr was unburned and completely sound and no hair was damaged and then the body was much brighter than before.

This element of the exhumation is not common, but many sagas contain figures with reputations for Christian righteousness who are well preserved in death, particularly saints and bishops, but including King Sverrir¹ and Njáll.

C Knútr Magnússon's death has saintly qualities.²

Knútr Magnússon has a much less significant role in Knytlinga than the central figure of St Knútr. He rules only a third of Denmark, sharing the kingdom with his son-in-law Valdimarr Knútsson and his second cousin Sveinn Eiríksson. Yet the writer has carefully structured the account of Knútr's death in order to suggest his saintliness. After the three kings reach a settlement for peace, Knútr and Valdimarr agree to invite Sveinn to a celebratory feast, although Knútr declares suspicions about Sveinn and his advisors:

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¹ See above, Chapter One, p. 24.
² Knútr lávarór is also killed by plain villains, Magnús Níkulásson and his men (pp. 211-16). This instance, too, is treated at length in the saga and Knútr lávarór's sainthood is manifest in miracles (pp. 215, 258, 277).
"...they are also there with him now his counsellors, who always persuade him to the worse,... I expect that the settlement suits him badly and he will not hold this one better than those which he has previously broken... King Sveinn will not dare to take the life of one of us while the other is alive to avenge it.

These suspicions prove founded and anticipate the treachery during the feast itself, as do further carefully dropped clues. At the outset of the feast account, the writer remarks ominously that Sveinn is accompanied by many men, including the evil counsellors. While the kings drink, these men sport outside and so attract from the hall nearly everyone but the kings themselves, clearly leaving Knútr and Valdimarr unprotected:

Var þá fátt manna í herberg- inu nema konungarnir. Few men were then in the room except the kings. (p. 252).

The counsellors' intentions are clear at once when one of them, Ættleifr, enters the hall and speaks secretly ("leyniliga") with Sveinn, apparently advising Sveinn to leave the hall and protect himself in a separate building ("Hann (Sveinn) gekk í hús eitt ok byrgói sik þar"). Just as the three counsellors and other favourites of Sveinn's ("virktamenn Sveinns") re-enter the hall, the writer shifts the focus to offer us a last glimpse of Knútr and Valdimarr peacefully engaged in harmless pastime before being attacked:
Valdimarr konungr lék at skaktaflí víð annan mann, en Knútr konungr sat í pallinum hjá honum (p. 253).

As soon as Knútr is aware of the intruders, he turns to Valdimarr, not in alarm, but to bid him a fond farewell with saintly calm in the face of death:

...laut Knútr konungr til Valdimars konungs ok kysti hann (p. 253).

In the moment before he realises their danger, Valdimarr is shown to be puzzled by the mildness which characterises Knútr's behaviour:

"Hví ertu nú svá blíðr, mágr?"
Knútr konungr svaraði: "Vita muntu þat brátt."
(p. 253).

"Why are you now so affectionate?"
King Knútr answered, "You will see shortly."

The pace now suddenly becomes swift and the action decisive. Valdimarr, unarmed but using his cloak for protection, charges at the drawn swords of the enemy, knocking down Þetleifr and receiving in the act wounds to his leg and thumb, though not serious ones:

...Valdimarr...vafði skikkjuni um hönd sér...hljóp upp ok fram...hann stíklaði svá hæt upp á Þetleif, at þeir fellu báðir utar fyrir dýrnar. Þá hjó Tóli Hemingsson til Valdimars konungs, ok kom þat högg á lærit, ok var þat svøðusár ok ekki hættligt; hann varð ok sárr á þumalfingri (p. 253).

Valdimarr...wrapped his cloak around his arm...leapt up and forward...he sprang so hard up against Þetleifr that they both fell outside in front of the door. Then Tóli Hemingsson struck Valdimarr and that blow hit his thigh and that was a wound glancing off the bone and not serious; he was also wounded on the thumb.
Valdimarr then escapes, sheltered by his men, but Knútr is struck down by several blows, it seems without resistance:

Pá komz Pétleifr á fætr ok hjó þegar öfugri hendi til Knúts konungs, ok varð þat hógg svá mikit, at hann klauf alt höfuðit til háls, ok var þat hans bana-sár. Annarr ðáor veitti ok Knúti konungi áverka, sá er Hjálmsvíðarr hét. Knútr konungr fell í einn skorstein (pp. 253-54).

Then Pétleifr got to his feet and struck then backhanded at King Knútr and that blow was so great that clove his head right to the neck and that was his death wound. Another man also gave King Knútr a blow, the one who was called Hjálmsvíðarr. King Knútr fell into a chimney.

Knútr's last moments are preserved with equally minute detail, suggesting that there was an abundant tradition about Knútr. He dies in the arms of Valdimarr's faithful friend, Absalón, later archbishop of Denmark (p. 284):

He (Absalón) then took his fur, which he had around his shoulders, and laid it under King Knútr's head, there where he lay on the floor, and asked if the king was with hope of recovery, and said that he might then get away; but he (Knútr) could not speak then and died on his (Absalón's) knees.

The swift action with which the writer surrounds this scene and the earlier glimpse of Valdimarr and Knútr before the attack, sets them in relief and indicates the centre of the writer's interest in the saintly qualities of Knútr's death. At the same time, his record of the action and of Valdimarr's escape anticipates the subsequent revenge for Knútr. As Knútr had predicted, there is a threat to Sveinn when one of them survives his attack.
Detailed account is given of the conversion of the pagan Wends. The writer traces the long series of wars between the Danish kings and the heathen Wends, including a record of their conversion to Christianity. These accounts are not entirely comparable in number or in detail to the conversion episodes in Óláfs s. Tryggvason in Heimskringla. There Snorri places the emphasis on Óláfr's superior force and cunning, converting the Norwegian heathens either by compulsion or persuasion, depending on the circumstances. In Knytlinga the initial unsuccessful conversion of the Wends by Eiríkr eymuni is only briefly mentioned:

...lét konungr kristna alt fólk í staðinum...En þegar konungr var í brottu þaðan, þá kóstuðu þeir aprt kristni ok efludu síðan blót ok heiðinn sið (p. 226). and then performed sacrifices and heathen rites.

The other episode records Valdimarr Knútsson's reconversion of these backsliders. The writer draws the connection explicitly:

þá bauð konungr þeim at taka við kristni, þvíat þar var jafnan heiðit, síðan þeir kóstuðu aprt kristni, þá er Eiríkr konungr eymuni lét skíra þá...sem fyrir var sagt (p. 273).

Then the king commanded them to adopt Christianity because it was always heathen there since they had thrown aside Christianity, with which King Eiríkr eymuni had baptised them...as was said before.

In the main part of his account the writer describes with evident
delight the destruction of pagan idols. The passage is too long to
cite in full here, but a selection of the more exaggerated details
demonstrates the writer’s relish for the destruction done and booty
confiscated, and his greedy curiosity in exotic practices:

In addition, extravagant boasts are made of the numbers of converts:

This exuberant approach differs sharply from Snorri’s. The author
of Heimskringla is characteristically aloof and rational.
The bishops are great military leaders and the source of confidence in battle.

In Knytlinga the bishops have a prominent political and military role during the reigns of Eiríkr eymundi, Valdimarr Ólafsson, and Knútr Valdimarsson. In their speeches, these bishops show none of the heated vehemence of Bishop Sigurðr in Heimskringla and make no exaggerated promises comparable to Archbishop Eysteinn's in Sverris Saga. Instead, their words reveal a cool confidence and practicality which they attempt to instil in their men.

The first of the two speeches in the work is delivered prior to Eiríkr eymundi's battle against King Níkulás Sveinsson in revenge for the murder of Eiríkr's brother, Knútr lávarðr. The speaker is Archbishop Ózurr, son of Sveinn Porgunnuson, who addresses a large troop of clerics in his command ("mikit fjóði kennimanna" p. 220). He commands them to accept confessions and absolve men, pointing out that for many soldiers this will be their last opportunity to confess to a priest. He betrays no sorrow, regret, or alarm in stating this, but proves himself coolly realistic:

"...eigi sé víst, at hann eigi kost hæðan frá at játa syndar sínar fyrir neinum kennimanni." (p. 220).

"...it is not clear that he will have the opportunity henceforth to acknowledge his sins before any priest."

1. See above, Chapter Two, pp. 141-43.

2. See above, Chapter One, p. 36, and below, Appendix A: Correspondences between Sverris Saga and Knytlinga Saga, p. 261 where an instance is offered from Knýt. of a Pope using the promise.

3. See above, p. 223.
As his second point, Özurr urges the clerics to fight as warriors, claiming that this is most pleasing to God:

"...ek býð yðr í guða nafni, at þér gangið fram karlmannliga ok beriz djafliga; hugsið þat, sem er, at guði pykkja ekki betri huglausir menn en róskvir drengir." (p. 221).

"...I bid you in God's name, that you advance boldly and fight daringly; consider, as is the case, that God does not think cowardly men better than brave, gallant men."

This sentiment echoes the speech of Benedikt, the brother of St Knútr, prior to the attack of the farmers:

"...hefi ek þat ok aldregi heyrð, at guði líki betr huglausir klakismenn en hugfullir drengir og hvatir." (p. 134).

"...and I have never heard it that God likes cowardly dastards better than gallant men full of courage and vigorous."

The correspondence suggests the speeches have been imaginatively reconstructed.

Özurr's final point demonstrates again his cool realism. He makes them no promises of heaven or threats of hell, but merely reminds them that a man can only die once:

"...skal ok eitt sinn hverr deyja." (p. 221).

"...each shall die one time."

The second speech by a bishop, equally unruffled, is delivered by Bishop Absalón. He replies to Valdimarr Knútsson's fleet, who, surrounded by enemy Wends in a small sound, have blamed the bishop's strategies for their predicament and challenged him to provide a solution. He accepts this responsibility with calm confidence and a cadence hauntingly Biblical:

1. See above, pp.218 ff. I am aware of no other instance in which priests are encouraged to take an aggressive part in battle; even the fighting bishops in other kings' sagas, though they provide leadership to laymen, are nowhere described as engaging directly in combat themselves.
"Med því at ek hefi komit yðr ívandan stað, þá skal ek ok frelsa yðr frá vandanum." (p. 279).

"Because I have brought you into a difficult pass, then shall I also free you from the difficulty."

He then castigates them for their lack of confidence, reminding them that they are men and should behave as such. By using the first person plural pronoun "þér" rather than the second person "þér", he acknowledges their common lot, while at the same time his superior tone implies that they should take him as their model of manly fortitude:

"...en slík ummaði vil ek eigi optar heyrar; þvíat þér skyldim hafa karlmennis hjarta, en eigi konu, ok eigum þér fyrir því at vera ókvíðir ok malaz eigi Ílla um, þött eigi þykkja jafnan blít eitt fyrir liggja." (p. 279).

"...but such accusations I will not hear more often; because we should have bold men's hearts rather than women's and we ought to be unconcerned and not complain although the prospect does not always seem pleasing."

Thus briefly dismissing their complaint and whipping them into a fighting spirit with his criticism, he uses the rest of his speech to explain his strategy: he is to lead the attack against the enemy ships while the others charge the land force with horses. This is speedily executed and achieves a resounding victory:

"...áltilli stundu drápú þeir lx hundraða manna, en annat flyði (p. 280).

"...in a short time they killed 7200 men and the rest fled."

Only the first of these two speeches clearly contains Christian sentiments, muscular though they are. Yet it cannot be denied that these portraits are meant to command respect for the bishops and to prove the power and influence of the officers of the Christian Church in Danish history.
Royal visits to Rome are recorded

Accounts of the pilgrimages to Rome made by Knútr Sveinsson inn gamli (pp. 50-51) and Eiríkr góði Sveinsson (pp. 170-73) appear to depend on verses, some of which are included. In both cases the writer places particular emphasis on the king's generosity and benefactions. Knútr is charitable to the poor:

Meðan Knútr var á Rómavegi, 
þá þyrfti engi máðr sér 
matar át biðja, sá er hans 
fundi mátti ná, svá gaf 
hann söllum nóga skot-
penninga (p. 50).

While Knútr was on a pilgrimage to Rome, no man who was able to gain an audience with him (Knútr) needed to beg for his food, as he (Knútr) gave sufficient subsistence money to all.

He also establishes a hospice of Danish pilgrims:

Knútr konungr setti spitala 
þann, er alla menn skyldi 
fæða um nótt, þá er þar 
kæmi af danskri tungu 
(p. 51).

King Knútr established a hospice where all men, those of Danish tongue who came there, should take sustenance for the night.

And he gives money to religious establishments:

...víða gaf hann ok til 
stórfé, þar sem váru 
klaustur eða aðrir stórir 
stæðir (p. 51).

...he also gave large donations widely where there were cloisters and other large establishments.

Eiríkr is similarly munificent, as is evident from the writer's repetitive phrasing. He also makes substantial donations to religious houses:
...Eiríkr...varði víða stórfé, þar sem váru klaustir eða aðrir helgir staðir (p. 171).

and establishes a hospice for Danes and gives money for its operation:

...þá setti hann spítala skamt frá borginni; en er hann kom norður til borgar þeirrar, er Lúka heittir, þá gaf hann þar fé til þess, at allir píla- grímar, er danska tungu mælti, skyldi nógt vín drekka ok heimila gisling eiga at þeim spítala, er hann hafði settan ok áður var frá sagt (p. 173).

In addition, Eiríkr requests that the Pope establish an archbishop's seat in Denmark:

Eiríkr konungr þá lof til þess af páfnum Páskális at erkibiskupsstöll skyldi vera í Danmörk, er áður var engi erkístöll norðar en í Brimum í Saxlandi (p. 172).

King Eiríkr then requested of Pope Páskális, that there should be an archbishop's seat in Denmark when before there was no archbishop's seat further north than Bremen in Saxony.

Özurr Sveinsson Porgunnusonar becomes the first archbishop of this new see, as the writer records (p. 190).

At the end of his life, Eiríkr góði makes a second pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but dies having only reached Greece (p. 194).

Nothing is said of benefactions on this journey.
Later in the saga, the joint kings Sveinn Eiríksson and Knútr Magnússon agree at the Pope's request to join the crusade in the Holy-land (pp. 234-35). But when all Sveinn's ships are wrecked soon after they set out, and Sveinn insists on going home, Knútr also abandons the journey, afraid to leave Denmark in the control of his rival.

Given all this evidence, the writer's preoccupation with the Christian aspects of the Danish kings' reigns is undeniable. Yet this theme, while predominant, is clearly not developed fully in all parts of the saga. Its fitfulness reveals that the writer lacked a consistent aesthetic purpose in presenting his material. The next section offers additional evidence for this.

1. Other less substantial evidence is abundant. For instance:

A The writer takes interest in Church organisation.

Twice in the saga, the writer records at length the number of churches in Danish territory. In the first passage, too long to cite here in full, he provides the locations of the bishops' sees and the number of ships each contributed to the royal levy:

\[
\text{... i Sjólands biskupsdomi } \\
\text{eru xi kirkjur ens fimta } \\
\text{hundraðs, en xx skip oc c konungi (pp. 80-81).}
\]

In the second instance, he records the number of churches in a Wendish district at the time of writing:

\[
\text{Moðan Valdimarr konungr lifði, } \\
\text{þá váru reistar xi kirkjur á Réing, ok vígði Absalón biskup. } \\
\text{Pá er nú biskupstóll í þeim stað, er Usna heitir, ok eru } \\
\text{nú í því biskupsfiki xxx kirkna ok c (p. 275).}
\]

While King Valdimarr lived there were then eleven churches raised in Réing and Bishop Absalón consecrated. There is now a bishop's seat in that place called Usna and there are now 150 churches in the bishop's control.

The disposition of churches and bishops in a Swedish district is also mentioned (p. 242).
B The Norwegian king Magnús Óláfsson's victory over the Wends is attributed to St Óláfr:

...þá baðóiz hann við Vinðr; þar sigraði Magnús konungr með heilagleik ok jartegna-gerð Óláfs konungs, fóður síns (p. 56).

...then he fought with the Wends; there King Magnús was victorious by the holiness and miracle working of King Óláfr, his father.

C The word "guðnóingr" - traitor to God - is used to describe the enemy:

Benedikt, konungs bróðir, ...vard margr mans bani ok bað þá at sækja fast guðnóingana... (p. 138-19).

Benedikt, the king's brother, was many a man's death and told them (his own men) to attack steadfastly the traitors to God.

D Details of the succession of bishops is provided:

Özurr erkibiskup í Lundi andaðiz einum vetri eptir fall Eiríks eymuna;...þá hafói hann erkibiskup verit xvii vetr ok xx. Áskell het bróðurson Özurar; hann var þar næst erkibiskup í Danmörk; hann var ok ríkr höfdingi ok vítr maðr ok sat lengi at stóli sínum í Danmörk (p. 232).

Archbishop Özurr in Lund died one winter after the fall of Eiríkr eymund; he had been archbishop 37 years. The nephew of Özurr was called Áskell; he was the next archbishop in Denmark; he was also a powerful chieftain and a wise man and sat long on his throne in Denmark.

E A peace oath is couched in ecclesiastical terms:

...en þeir svörðu allir konungarnir við guð ok allan helgan dóm, at þessi sætt skyldi haldaz, ok sá skyldi í banni af páfánunum ok öllum biskupum ok lærðum mónnum, er þessa sætt ryfi (p. 49).

...then all the kings swore by God and all the holy relics, that this settlement should hold, and he who broke this settlement should be in the ban of the Pope and all the bishops and learned men.
III Evidence that the writer of Knytlinga lacked consistent aesthetic purpose in selecting and presenting his material

A Repetition without discernible aesthetic purpose is a frequent feature of the narrative

1 The formal descriptions of the kings, where provided, seem to depend upon haphazard information

The character of St Knútr Sveinsson emerges not from formal description by the writer but from the words of other saga figures - supporters and enemies - in dramatised situations.1 Of the other sixteen Danish kings in the work, only six are described in physique and/or temperament: Haraldr Gormsson, Sveinn Haraldsson, Knútr Sveinsson inn gamli, Sveinn Ólfsson, Haraldr Sveinsson, and Eiríkr góði Sveinsson. Though neither figures large in the events in the saga, only Knútr inn gamli and Sveinn Ólfsson are described at any length. This disproportionate emphasis suggests that the writer lacked a sense of form. In addition, the very few distinctive features he attributes to the kings indicates that his information was haphazardly selected, probably for the most part from verses. Knútr is memorable for his nose:

...nef hans var þunt ok eigi ...his nose was thin and not lágt ok nökkut bjúgt (p. 54); low-set and somewhat hooked;

while Sveinn Ólfsson is uniquely2 described (p. 63) as righteous (réttlátr) and patient (þolinmóðr). There are no instances in Knytlinga of the discriminating and lengthy formal descriptions such as are found in Sverris Saga or Heimskringla.

1. See above, p. 204.

2. This is shown below in the index of terms used in formal descriptions, pp. 497 ff.
Battle accounts are brief and rarely contain distinctive elements.

There is nothing comparable in this Danish kings' history to the highly dramatised battle accounts in Sverris Saga or Heimskringla. Only a few memorable incidents spring to mind, all briefly told: the killing of the heathen chieftain by Blóð-Egill; the killing of St Knútr Sveinsson and the death of his murderer, Eyvindr bifra; Valdimarr Knútsson's escape, unarmed, from the attack by Sveinn Eiríksson's men; Valdimarr's encounter with the enemy during the battle against the Saxons, presented breathlessly by the writer by means of a series of "þá"s:

...þar var Valdimar kunnigt, ok vissi hann vað eitt ok reið þar til; þá runnu í mótt honum í íií Suðrmenn ok lögðu til hans allir senn; hestrinn viknaði við, er þeir lögðu í framan í bjröst í; þá lögðu adrir í í mótt aptan í lendina, ok réttiz þá upp hestrinn; þá kómu at menn Valdimars ok svá fleir Suðrmenn; þá hjo Valdimarr til Fólkráðs greifa, svá at hann fell af hestinum; kómu þá til menn Valdimars ok drápum greifann (pp. 238-39);

...Valdimarr was familiar with the place and knew a single ford and rode there; then four Saxon men ran at him and attacked him all at once; the horse gave way when two of them struck its breast; then the other two attacked from behind at the rump and then the horse reared up; then Valdimarr's men came up and more of the Saxons too; then Valdimarr struck at Count Fólkráð so that he fell off his horse; then Valdimarr's men came up and slew the count.

Or the unique ordering of troops by Eiríkr eymuni, given as an elaboration of a phrase in a cited stanza:

1. See above, Chapter One, pp. 95-112 and Chapter Two, pp. 150-71
2. See above, p. 211.
3. See above, pp. 211.
...he had drawn his troop into a wedge-shaped phalanx so that the point was at the front of the host's breast and it was altogether closed in from the outside with a shield wall.

Apart from these instances, the detail is not distinctive. In contrast with Sverris Saga, the writer rarely gives the physical features of the landscape as the setting for a battle and then only with the barest of facts. Most often, battles are briefly summarised, for example:

Knutr konungr átti ena fyrstu orrostu á Englandi í Lindisey, ok varð þar mikit mannfall; þá vann hann á Hemingborg á Englandi ok drap þar mikit fólk (p. 38).

King Knútr had the first battle in England on Lindisey, and there was much loss of life; then he attacked at Hemingborg in England and slew there many people.

The expressions used throughout the saga are both common and repetitive:

hörð orrosta (p. 239)
lágði til orrostu (p. 32)
lögðu þeir land alt undir sik (p. 50)
lögðu til hans (p. 238)
lögðu í framan (p. 238)
lögðu áfrir í í mótt (p. 238)
lögðuz á flotta (p. 178)
mikill mannfall (p. 38, p. 179)
drap þar mikit fólk (p. 38)
drap mannfólkkit (p. 36)

1. See the battles at Ílža, Sv. p. 49; Hattarhamar, Sv. pp. 30-32; and Norafjörðr, Sv. pp. 93 ff. for examples.

2. For example: bogs and ditches, p. 38; swamps, p. 238; rivers and bridges; pp. 296 ff.; a sluggish branching river (móða ein), p. 262; and forests, p. 213.

3. For other instances see pp. 42-44 where "orrosta" occurs five times and "leggja" four times; pp. 55-56 where "orrosta" appears again five times. Other instances of summary accounts may be found on pp. 218, 219, 221, 232-33, 239, 266-73, 283-84, 289.
Although the conversion of heathens is mentioned in connection with two battles (pp. 266, 273), and the bishops play a prominent role in military expeditions during the last parts of Knytlinga, the Christian theme is not otherwise developed in connection with battles.

3 Repetition appears to be used as a substitute for other detail about the setting of individual incidents.

Repetition of a single detail of the setting of an incident suggests that the writer had no further facts from his sources and has not attempted to invent any. An example is his treatment of St Knútr's feast at Sævarendi. The writer mentions this place name four times without any more distinguishing details (pp. 114, 115, 117, 122). Some dramatic encounters are characterised by similar repetition, for example, the writer's presentation of the merchant Viðgautr arriving at the court of Knútr lávarðr in Heiðaber (pp. 201-2):

...tök þat þó ráð at sigla á haf ok austan til Danmærkr (p. 201).

Dá raðr hann þat af, at hann sigldi til Heiðabæjar. En er han sigldi at sundunum... (p. 201).

...sagði, at hann vildi leggja inn skipi sínu í sundin (p. 201)

"Ekki byðr Knútr lávarðr oss at lúka upp hafnir." (p. 201).

Then they opened up the sound and Viðgautr and his men anchored his ship and then went to meet Knútr.

Such repetition suggests that the incident is based upon a traditional story shaped from a few details, which have been extended by making every step explicit.

B Some political issues are treated unevenly

1 The political force of the bændr is only acknowledged and developed in Knúts saga helga

In Knúts saga helga, the writer makes it plain that the farmers have a legitimate grievance against the king and are justified in their uprising. After being called up for an expedition against England and kept waiting for days with no sign of the king's arrival, they disperse in anger:

Bondamúgrinn hljóp upp allr með einu sambykki ok báða þann aldregi þrífaz er þar lagi lengr (p. 106).

The farmer crowd leapt up altogether with one accord and declared they should never thrive who waited longer.

When the king arrives, he makes no apology, but becomes furious with what he sees as the farmers' treachery:

...Knútr...veitr þeim stórar átöllur fyrir þá svívirðing, er hann kallar, at þeir hafi gört honum (p. 108).

Knútr...gave them severe reprimand for that treachery, as he called it, which they had done to him.
He remains stubborn in his resentment even when his brother Eiríkr (later King Eiríkr góði and described as "allra konungra vinsælastir" p. 169) pleads the farmers' case:

Talar jarl hér um langt ok drengiliga erendi fyrir hóna hónd. Konungr var heldr styggr ok var ekki hægt at koma orðum við hann; sagði þó at hændr skyldi ná sættum, en hann skyldi einn ráða þeirra í millum (p. 109).

Here the jarl presented the case on behalf of the farmers long and boldly. The king was angry and it was not easy to talk with him; yet he said that the farmers should obtain a settlement, but he alone should judge between them.

Knutr then imposes heavy fines in every district, insisting that the blame is entirely the bændr's (p. 110). It is therefore not surprising that one group of farmers in Jutland, led by the eloquent Þórir dórrí, resist with force (pp. 111-22) the king's agents, who come to collect the penalty money. With this taste of success in their mouths, Þórir and his men are followed in the narrative as they send word to the local chieftains, Jarl Ásbjörn and Eyvindr bifra, to gather for an attack against the king. These men respond to the suggestion, but the writer makes plain that there was considerable surprise at the audaciousness of the farmers:

It seemed a great wonder to all when these men, who were almost without distinction, set about such great undertakings.

The writer also shows us that, ultimately, the farmers' leaders are not equal to their ambitions. They slink off unnoticed before the attack on the king, leaving the final orchestration of the assault to the noblemen:
...ok gaf engi maðr at því
gaum; miklu var meiri þýss
ok kall um allan herinn
(p. 126).
...and no man paid any
attention; the roar and
shouting among the host
was greater by far.

Because the writer has presented the farmers as a significant
force in the events leading up to Knútr's martyrdom, building around
these commoners several dramatised incidents and attributing speeches to
their leaders, it is both noticeable and surprising that their political
force figures nowhere else in Knytlinga. Although the farmer class
may have been most volatile during Knútr's reign, it seems unlikely
that they were altogether unresisting to other Danish monarchs between
940 and 1187. The omission suggests that the writer, unlike Snorri
Sturluson in Heimskringla, had little interest in this aspect of
history except where it was critical to a king's fate, or he had no souces.

2 Among the few instances of opposition to a king by a nobleman,
justification is only offered once

In Knúts saga helga no rational motives are offered for the
treachery of Jarl Ásbjörn and Eyvindr bifra. There is no evidence in
the saga that Knútr punishes them for supporting his brother Haraldr
in his bid for the throne against Knútr, and indeed, Knútr refuses to
recognise that they are traitors until it is impossible to deny it.¹
Ásbjörn and Eyvindr are stereotypes of the tricky villain. Similarly,
the only apparent motive for Egill Ragnarson's opposition to Knútr
is Egill's greed for power and independence; he is shown to have no
just grievance.

¹ See above, pp. 218-19.
Justification is only offered for a lendr man’s opposition in Eiríks saga eymuni. As a prince, Eiríkr seems to be a good Christian, gaining the support of six bishops and an archbishop (p. 220) and with their help avenging the murder of his saintly brother Knútr lávarð (pp. 221-24). But once in power, public opinion turns against him because of his unjust tyranny:

Svá mikit óx grimð ok ofríki Eiríks konungs í Danmörku, at ríkismenn þóttuz varla þola mega, en þó þorði engi í móti at mala því, sem hann vildi vera láta; hét hann þeim jafnan afarkostum, ef nokkurir váru þeir, er eigi vildu þegar sambykkja þat, er hann vildi (p. 229).

The grimness and tyranny of King Eiríkr grew so great in Denmark that powerful men thought they might scarcely endure it, and yet none dared to speak against it as he wished to be permitted; he always promised them hard terms if there were any who would not consent to what he wanted.

A specific instance of this resentment forms the climax of Eiríks saga, in chapter 103. Eiríkr has had the father of a lendr man executed for speaking out against the king:

Eiríkr konungr lét drepa fóður hans, ok eigi fyrir meiri til-gerninga, en hann mælti í móti honum á einu þingi (p. 230).

King Eiríkr had his father killed and for no other provocation than that he spoke against him (Eiríkr) at an assembly.

The dead man’s son, Plógr svarti, though outraged, quietly bides his time. In the meantime, no compensation is offered to Plógr, although as the writer stresses, the king is at fault:

Plógr kunni þessu ílla, en så þó engan sinn kost annan en láta vera svá bútt ok kýrt....Eiríkr konungr lét hann eigi njöta þess, þótt hann hefði honum harm unnit (p. 230).

Plógr was ill-pleased with this, and yet saw no alternative other than to let matters stand as they were, undisturbed....King Eiríkr did not let him have compensation for this, although he had done him harm.
The revenge itself is sympathetically presented. Píョgr is clearly a Christian. He insists on being absolved by a priest before he kills Eiríkr, and even though he forces the priest to comply — "Ger sem ek mæli, ella man ek drepa þík" (p. 230) — he regains our warm approval by rewarding the priest and apologising for his expedient threat:

Đá tok hann fingrgull af hendi sér ok gaf prestininum ok bað hann fyrirgefa sér, er hann hafði heitað við hann (p. 230).

Then he took a gold finger ring from his hand and gave it to the priest and begged him to forgive him that he had threatened him.

Píョgr then kills Eiríkr with a spear in broad daylight at an assembly, but his identity is not discovered because of the crowds of people:

Đá varð þróung mikil, ok vissu menn óglöggt, hverr þetta verk hafði unnit, þvíat bráðan þar at (p. 231).

The throng was then great and men knew unclearly who had done that deed, because it happened so quickly.

Píョgr is able to continue his life as a man of some importance ("var mikill maðr fyrir sér" p. 232), apparently unopposed, until he is slain by one of Sveinn Eiríksson's evil counsellors. The writer does not explain how the identity of Eiríkr's killer came to be known, but he does make plain that the murder of Píｮgr is a nefarious deed:

...hann kölluð Danir Sveinn sviðanda, þvíat hann var við alt fólk harðr ok grimmr. Hann réð Píｮgr svarta, fóður-bana sinn, en Yngvarr kveisa dráp hann (p. 236).

...the Danes called him Sveinn the trickster because he was harsh and grim with all people. He punished Píｮgr svarti, his father's killer, but Yngvarr kveisa killed him.
The writer mentions again that Yngvarr was Plógr's killer to point out the justice of Yngvarr's death when he is killed in a battle which Valdimarr Knútsson wages against Sveinn:

I pessi orrostu fell Yngvarr kveisa, er drepti hafði Plóg svarta (p. 260). Yngvarr kveisa, who had killed Plógr svarti, fell in this battle.

Even though the writer has so carefully developed this instance of a lendr man's justified opposition to a king, he offers no other in the whole of the saga. This is a further indication that his interest in political issues is erratic.

C Some specific political incidents receive detailed presentation but have little or no issue of significance

1 St Knútr's expedition against England never takes place, although the writer records detailed preparations

The gathering and dispersal of the Danish levy for Knútr's English expedition is an essential episode in Knúts saga helga, since it ultimately leads to the bendr uprising. But no explanation is apparent for the extensive treatment of the Norwegian role. In chapter 41, the writer records a meeting between Knútr and the Norwegian King Óláfr kyrri at which Knútr attempts to persuade Óláfr to join him on his expedition against England. Each king gives a long speech. Knútr stresses the need to regain the former Danish and Norwegian control in England, reminding Óláfr that the English killed his father Haraldr:

1. Widespread dissatisfaction with St Knútr is repeatedly mentioned in Knúts saga helga - pp. 77, 98-99, 106 - but no specific instances of justified active opposition are offered.
"...hafa varir forellrar
haft þar mikít vald, sem
yör mun eigi vera ókunnign." (p. 99).

"...þvíat þér eigúð mikilla
harma at reka við þá
Englismenn." (p. 100).

"...because you have great
injury to avenge upon the
Englishmen."

In reply, Óláfr refuses to involve himself personally because of his
father's bad luck in England, but offers ships and men, provided
Knútr furthers Norwegian ends as well as his own:

"...með því...at þér leitið
eigi minnr eptir minuí samni
ok nauðsyn í slíku en þarri." (pp. 100-1).

"...on the condition...that
you look after my honour
and need in this no less than
your own."

The Norwegian force duly appears at the meeting place, and,
unlike the Danes, awaits Knútr's late arrival (pp. 106-7). Knútr,
though angry with his countrymen, treats his allies well:

...konungr...stilti þó vel
orðum sínum...svaraði, at
þeir hófðu vel haldit boð
síns herra ok höfðingja,
bæð þá fara heim til Nóregs
ok hafa mikla þókk fyrir
sína kvámu. (p. 107).

...yet the king arranged his
words well...he answered that
they had made good the promise
of their lord and chieftain (i.e.
Óláfr kyrri), told them to go home
to Norway and have great thanks
for coming.

Nothing is mentioned of the Norwegian king's reaction to this costly
waste of time. The Norwegians have no subsequent part in Knúts
saga helga and no subsequent expedition is planned. The writer seems
to have included the lengthy preliminaries indiscriminately.
The careful dramatisation of Knútr lávarðr's visit to the Saxon keisar is in disproportion to its significance in Knytlinga.

In his narrative about Knútr lávarðr, the writer introduces the figure of Viðgautr, a heathen merchant who becomes converted by Knútr and goes as envoy to Hólmgarðr to arrange the betrothal of Knútr and King Haraldr's daughter (pp. 203-5). Viðgautr first comes to Knútr's court at Heiðabær after fleeing from pirates (p. 201) and after encountering the toll Knútr has set up at the mouth of the harbour. The background to this toll is given in chapters 84 and 85 of Knytlinga in a dramatised passage, characteristic of the writer's unsophisticated style at its best and worthy of analysis.

After hearing that his uncle, the Keisar of Saxony, is dead, and that his son, also Heinrekr, has succeeded him, Knútr decides to pay the new ruler a visit, ostensibly to honour their kinship:

...gerðiz hann fúss at finna hann fyrir frændsemis sakir (p. 198).

However, in his speech to the Keisar in chapter 85, we discover that the excuse of kinship is really only an honourable cover for another aim: to gain financial assistance for the defence of Heiðabær.

In Knútr's speech to the Keisar, the writer implies this through clear, logical progression of thought and plain diction. Knútr acknowledges at once that he is making the visit for other than social purposes, but he is not so indiscreet as to introduce vulgar economic questions into the court setting; he uses instead the euphemistic language of honour:

1. See above, p. 241.
"Herra!" sagði hann, "ek hefi veitt yðr heimsökn í minni tilkvámu at saðja at yðr heil ráð fyrir frændsæmis sakir."

("Lord!") he said, "I have visited your home on my arrival in order to seek your sound advice, for sake of kinship."

Notice that he is respectful to Heinrekr, calling him "Herra" and thereby acknowledging the superiority of Heinrekr's power, and also referring to his counsel as "heil ráð", thereby introducing a compliment without any attendant suggestion of false, because excessive, flattery. But Knútr neither simpers nor fawns before his rich relative; he is careful to balance these marks of respect with a mark of his own worth when he says "fyrir frændsæmis sakir", the same phrase appearing at the end of chapter 84. (This repetition suggests that the speech is an imaginative reconstruction.) By mentioning their relationship in this way at the beginning of his speech, Knútr achieves two things: first, he establishes between them the shared pride which no other members of the court have a part in, a pride of family which determines that their individual reputations are not mutually exclusive, that they have an indissoluble bond which sets them in league together against the court and gives each certain responsibilities and rights over the other's fortunes - Knútr the right to claim advice and financial assistance, Heinrekr the right to give it. Second, the phrase "fyrir frændsæmis sakir", while marking their bond, also implies their separateness, the unshared portion of their lives on which self-pride depends. Thus, Knútr implies by the phrase: 'Here I am, your kinsman, come to pay you a visit out of respect, but worthy of respect myself for what I am in my own right!'
The implicit acknowledgement of these opposing attitudes, on the one hand their shared distinction, on the other their proud separateness as individuals, underlines the style of both men's speeches. Knútr has established both attitudes in his statement, and does so further in his next remark:

"...venti ek hér sæmðar, sem þér eru, ok at þér munið meira meta við mik frendsemi en viðrækti enna fyrri hófðingja (p. 198)."

"...I hope for honour here where you are, and that you will value more my kinship than relationships with former chieftains."

The logic is clear, the diction not distinctive - "frændsemi" is repeated. Knútr does not attempt to ingratiate himself with rhetoric, nor lower himself with colloquialisms.

Knútr now comes more explicitly to the point by explaining his difficulties, but at the same time preserving his own dignity with the reticence of his statement and an emphasis upon noble aspirations. His territory is threatened and he wishes to preserve it for the sake of honour, though he does not go into the specific details of the threat to that honour, nor does he lament the threat:

"...en réki várt stendr mjök til auðnar, en hugr minn fýsiz þó at halda sæmðinni, ok vilda ek eigi látast þat vald, er faðir minn fekk mér í hendr, ef svá mætti verða." (p. 198).

"...our power is much in risk of being desolated, but my heart is eager to maintain the honour and I would not give up that which my father placed in my hands, if it might be possible."

The straightforwardness of this statement and the repetition of "sæmðinni" assist our impression of Knútr's self-confident demeanour, made human by the slight edge of emotion in the phrase "hugr minn fýsiz". At the same time the phrase "ef svá mætti verða" marks his deference to Heinrekr, in that Knútr makes plain that he himself cannot with certainty achieve his aim.

"Knútr's father had abducted Heinrekr's sister (pp. 185-86) and had sent her home after Knútr's birth, keeping the child himself."

"Knútr's father had abducted Heinrekr's sister (pp. 185-86) and had sent her home after Knútr's birth, keeping the child himself."
That acknowledgement prepares us for his repeated request for Heinrekr's advice, a request which respects the Keisar's individuality as separate from Knútr's, since his assistance is not taken for granted, while the fact of the request proves Knútr's right as a kinsman to make it:

"...ok víldi vér þar til þíggja af yðr heilræði hversu með skal fara." (p. 198). "...and we would for that purpose accept your good counsel, how to do that."

Knútr's repetition here of "heilræði" introduces again the decorous compliment, while his use of "vér" instead of "eg" suggests that the request is in part the request of all Knútr's subjects. The image of them taking the Keisar's advice 'en masse', so to speak, as if Heinrekr were addressing the multitude, is a verbal bowing to his power; but Knútr is careful to limit the scope of that power by the words "þar til". In short, he would appreciate Heinrekr's advice in this matter, but is not offering him a free licence to meddle in all his affairs.

Knútr's final statement makes plain why he asks any advice at all. He is in difficult financial straits:

"...en fjárafli minn geriz nú ekki mikill." (p. 198). "...but my wealth is not at present increasing."

This is tacked on the end of his address, almost as if he says it under his breath, perhaps for Heinrekr's ears alone. And yet, even though it touches the more sordid side of the matter, the reticence of the statement and its position in the address mark Knútr's decorousness in the court and his concern to preserve not only his own dignity but the family's as well, in which Heinrekr shares.
It also acts as a clue to the threat ("stendir mjök til auðnar") which Knútr's people face, the threat of state poverty, and consequently is a cue to Heinrekr as to what sort of "advice" is really wanted.

The Keisar responds to that cue admirably, replying in a style much like Knútr's and preserving in his remarks the opposing attitudes of family pride and self-pride, distinguishing his own character from Knútr's by expressing his self-pride in small tokens of condescension and aloofness. He begins by acknowledging Knútr's reputation which must necessarily reflect upon the Keisar's own as belonging to his kinsman:

"Ek hefi spurt vinsæld yóra, ok at þér hafíð hvers manns lof." (p. 198-99).

This recognition is as restrained in its praise as Knútr's was of Heinrekr and thus preserves the distance between them. Heinrekr then adds that it is necessary to maintain the honour of his dukedom, though he is not explicit in this statement about what part he himself will play in that maintenance, just as Knútr did not disclose at once the economic nature of the threat:

"...ok er en mesta nauðsyn á at þér fáið ríki yóru holdit ok sæmð." (p. 199).

Notice that he uses Knútr's word "sæmð" here, implying that he recognises that it is a euphemism for financial stability, but perhaps implying too that the honour or dishonour attendant upon Heiðabær reflects upon Heinrekr's own reputation too, especially now that his aid has been sought. He cannot have his relatives living in rags.
Heinrekr's next remarks offer a practical suggestion for replenishing the coffers of Heiðabar, but he is careful to preserve the tone of honour, first by pointing out how widespread the practice of taking tolls is, implying the sanction of the majority:

"Pat er síðr," sagði keisarinn, "It is the custom," said the Keisar, "here in Saxony and even more widely in other places, to close the harbours of the land and take duty there and let no man place his ship in the harbour except the toll is paid for it."

This mention of its widespread use carries forward Heinrekr's condescending tone, since it suggests that Knút is a little behind the times. At the same time, the co-ordinate structure of the clauses and plain and partially repetitive vocabulary militate against any suggestion of underhandedness or lack of scruple, in the practice of this form of taxation.

Heinrekr is careful, however, to defend the practice more explicitly, though without seeming to protest its legality too much. He candidly acknowledges the possibility that accusations of unethicability may be made:

"Nú kann vera, at þetta þykki heldr hart, þar er menn eru áðr óvánir þeim pyndingum." (p. 199).

"Now it may be that this will seem rather hard when men are previously unaccustomed to these taxes."

By putting it in this way, he implies that Knút will make such a protest, so that the arguments he then gives in favour of the harbour toll make his own insight appear superior, suggesting that he can view the matter from a larger and clearer perspective. The points
of his argument carry the same undertones. He refers back to Knútr's popularity and says it will not diminish - as if Knútr had expressed a fear that it might - because many powerful men have adopted the toll scheme. These powerful men include, of course, Heinrekr himself, implying by extension that Knútr cannot be quite so powerful as yet because he had not joined them in this practice:

"...en svá mikin framgang hefir yður vinsæld áðr fengit, at hon mun ekkí við þetta minkaz, því þat er rikra manna síðr viða í löndum, at læsa hafnir fyrir landi sínu, ok taka menn þar stórfé eptir." (p. 199).

"...but as great as you were advanced in popularity before, it will not grow less for this, because it is a custom of powerful men in very many lands to lock the harbours of their own lands, and men take great sums from it."

Heinrekr's repetition here of the phrases "viða í löndum" and "at læsa hafnir fyrir landi" as in his opening remarks about the toll, again redeem his argument from associations of crafty greed. This seeming integrity of purpose is supported by his final point in favour of the practice, which has nothing to do with economic gain. This attention to the activity in the harbour will also be a great protection to the dukedom in time of war:

"...en þat er þó mikil gæzla ríkisins við ófriði." (p. 199). "...but that is moreover a great protection for the realm in time of war."

Though his speech up to this point has provided an economic solution to Knútr's problems, Heinrekr has not once stepped down from his dignified position to deal in coin with his own hands, and thus he has respected the court situation and protected his own and the family honour from too close an association with common activity
and with the grasping touch of the masses. He has kept the discussion to one of policy, in which only rulers themselves have a right to participate, even though he has continually indicated that his rulership is superior to Knútr's. But he knows as well as Knútr that this advice about setting up tolls is not quite what Knútr meant by "heilræði", though Knútr does adopt the practice, as is clear from the Viðgautr incident.¹ What Knútr really needs is ready cash, and Heinrekr is willing to supply it. In order to express that willingness, without lowering either himself or his family name in the eyes of the court, Heinrekr adds it almost as an afterthought to his speech, as if the advice about the tolls were his most important assistance to Knútr:

"...þar með skal ek ok styrkja yðr nökkt í fjárhlutum, at þér haldið söma yðrum fyrir þá sök." (p. 199).

"...therewith I shall also give you some support with respect to money, that you maintain your honour because of that."

The position of the remark as an afterthought and the absence of any specific indication of the size of the gift are marks of Heinrekr's continued condescension; he himself is above these petty matters of depleted coffers, since his own never give him any worry, and gifts can be dispensed from them with the wave of his hand. He never bothers with budgets and accountability - such is the impression the writer creates by giving him this speech. Yet Heinrekr makes clear that the gift, though nothing to him, will be

¹. See above, p. 241.
sufficient income for Knútr to live upon with honour ("sóma"). This distinguishes Heinrekr's honour from Knútr's with a polite and yet devastating precision. Nevertheless, he has not treated Knútr as a mere courtier; the two men are still kinsmen, no matter how wide the financial gulf between them.

The detailed treatment of this encounter is not necessary to provide the background either to the Viðgautr incident or to Knútr's second visit to the Keisar in chapter 90, in which Knútr receives from him clothing with special protective powers. Here again the writer of Knytlinga has developed an incident without regard for its limited historical or thematic significance. Yet the passage is important to any discussion of the work, as an instance of the writer's plain style at its best, and for the insight it offers into the writer's fascination with and conception of courtly life and diplomatic demeanour early in the th century.

1. The Keisar warns Knútr never to part with this gift and when Knútr later presents it to Magnús Mikulásson, his death at Magnús' hands follows swiftly.
Continuity arises primarily from the historical connections between events recorded and not from theme or structural design.

The theme of Danish Christians sovereignty in Knytlinga, though it provides some continuity in the work, especially in Knúts saga helga, does not inform all parts of the saga equally. Instead, the continuity of the work as a whole depends primarily upon the historical facts of the saga material. The heirs to the throne are all descendants of the first Christian king, Haraldr Gormsson, so that the line of succession is not broken by usurpers as in Heimskringla. In addition to the strong genealogical bonds between them, the reigns are also closely interwoven for most of the saga by the rivalry for the throne among the sons of Sveinn Ólafsson - Haraldr, Knútr, Óláf, Eiríkr, Níkulás - and their descendants. The writer also traces any relationships by blood and by marriage which account for the relations between the Danish kings and foreign leaders who appear in the work. For instance, St Knútr asks Óláf kyrri to support him in his plan to attack England, in part because Óláf is Knútr's brother-in-law (p. 91). Similarly, it is clear that Knútr chooses the Flemish prison as the place in which to incarcerate his brother Óláf because the Flemish Duke Baldwin is Knútr's father-in-law (p. 104); and Eiríkr eymuni is evidently influenced in his choice of Malmfríðr as his bride by the fact that his brother Knútr lávarðr had married Malmfríðr's sister (p. 224).
The repeated presentation of political conflicts also helps to connect events in some parts of the work. For instance, in Níkúlas saga, the writer makes frequent explicit reference to Níkúlas' and Magnús' jealousy of Knútr lávarðr's popularity:

...funduðu þeir feðgar mýjök vinsæld hans ok þótti þeim hann görr ekki síðr at athvarfi en þeir (p. 197).

...þeim feðgum óx fund á vinsaldum hans, ok þótti þeim hans vinir hólztí margir (p. 207).

...þeir feðgar kunnu því svá ílla fyrir þfundar sakir, at fyrir þat sama lögðu þeir ópekt til hertogans ok marga hans vina (p. 209).

...father and son became very jealous of his popularity and they thought he did not receive less courteous attention than they did.

...the father and son's jealousy of his popularity grew and his friends seemed far too many to them.

...the father and son were so displeased because of jealousy that for that same reason they exhibited dislike for the duke and for many of his friends.

Clearly this jealousy is being offered by the writer as the simple motive for the murder of Knútr (pp. 212-15).

In addition, the writer presents with the utmost simplicity 1 the treacherous truce-breakings of Sveinn Eiríksson (pp. 236-56) which lead up to the murder of Knútr Magnússon. 2 The writer also traces the repeated role of the Þorgunnusons and other followers in the affairs of St Knútr (pp. 110, 134, 137, 142-43, 144). But there is nothing comparable to the pattern of complexly interwoven political conflict constructed by Snorri in Heimskringla.

1. In each of these cases the interpretation is offered with disarming straightforwardness; there is no attempt here, as in Heimskringla, to lead readers by subtle artifice, so that we seem to interpret events for ourselves. See above, Chapter Two, pp. 171-85.

V Conclusions

1 Though predominant, the Christian theme in Knytlinga Saga is fitful and not brightly polished. It has not been used consistently as a basis on which to structure the saga material.

2 There is an absence of vigilant artistic purpose in Knytlinga. The writer lacks the judgment and artistic skill of Snorri Sturluson in selecting significant incidents and presenting them in dramatised form.

3 There is no indication, as there is in Islendinga Saga, that the writer of Knytlinga was capable of an unflagging control over a huge mass of complexly interwoven material. Rather, he seems to have smoothed away many complexities by simplification.

4 At its best, the style of the dramatised incidents in Knytlinga has qualities not unlike Sturla Dóðarson's: plain and often monosyllabic diction, and rhythmic co-ordinate clauses used to slow the pace of the narrative and focus it. But the writer of Knytlinga has not been able to capture with his imaginative reconstructions the same degree of immediacy which Sturla achieves in Islendinga Saga, where dramatised passages are based upon actual experience.
APPENDIX A. Correspondences between Knytlinga Saga and Sverris Saga

There is evidence that the writer of Knytlinga Saga knew Sverris Saga, in certain correspondences between the two works in rare diction and imagery. These have not been specifically remarked on before, as far as I know. They are as follows:

1 Sv., p. 103:
Sverrir konungr hefir nu beygt halsana a meirum storbuccum en ber erut bondr eða kaupmenn.
Knyt., p. 121:
"...mun yór þó verða mikill hamingjuskurtr við Knútr konung, þvíat svá hefir þeim orðit, er meiri storbokkar ok ríkari hafa verit en þer." 
Knyt., p. 91:
Konungr svaradi: "Ekki þarf þu, Egill! at gera þik svá stóran," segir hann, "beýgt hefi ek svíra á feitari bökum, en þú ert..."

2 Sv., p. 153:
...illa mun þeir kunna hoggum er heiman hafa laupið fra kirnuskinum oc set allari fyrri hverso Birkibeinar eru vanir at fara með vapnum þa er þeir berlaz.
Sv., p. 41:
Annan veg er at berlaz vid Erling Jarl en brískia corn.
Knyt., p. 136:
"...betra skal honum þykkja þorparanum, er heiman hefir hlaupið fra kirnuskinum, at vera þenna dag heima ok beýsta korn en skipta höggum við oss konungsmenn."

King Sverrir has now bent the necks of greater bucks than you are, farmers or merchants.
"...you will yet be very short of luck with King Knútr because it has so happened to them who have been greater bucks and more powerful than you."
The king answered: "You do not need, Egill, to make yourself so great," he says, "I have bent the necks of fatter bucks than you are..."

"...they will take little pleasure in blows who have run from home from milk pails and have never before seen how the Birkibeinar are accustomed to wield weapons when they fight. It is another thing to fight with Jarl Erlingr than to thresh corn.
"...it will seem better to him of the village, who has run from home from the milk pail, to be this day at home and threshing corn, rather than exchanging blows with us king's men."

Let us respond well. They cannot be less toothsore than we are.

"...and now, when they have become toothsore from the exchange with you king's men."

Archbishop Eysteinn and many lendir men have always said that all those men who fought along with King Magnús and defended his land and lost their lives at it, that the souls of all those men would be sooner in Paradise than the blood would be cold on the earth.

Since this Pope (Eugénius) would have made such a promise slightly before the archbishop, it may be that Eysteinn knew of the Pope's crusade promise in these terms and used them himself when addressing Magnús' supporters. It is more likely that the Knytlinga writer

1. Pope Eugenius III held the office from 1145-1154.

2. The crusade appeal is made in Knytlinga at the beginning of Sveinn's reign as joint king with Knútr Magnússon, probably about 1150. Archbishop Eysteinn might have made the promise any time during Magnús Erlingsson's reign before Erlingr skakki's death, that is, between 1162 and 1179. Sverrir, in his speech over Erlingr skakki's grave in 1179, refers to the promise having been made.

3. Henry Treece, The Crusades (London, 1978) mentions that in 1045 both Archbishop Turpin (p. 71) and Pope Urban II (p. 98) promised the first crusaders a martyr's crown if any of them died on the crusade.
expresses here a conventional idea, having borrowed the phrasing from *Sverris Saga*. We cannot be certain, but there is nevertheless sufficiently strong evidence in the other examples to indicate that the *Knytlinga* writer knew *Sverris Saga* well. The words and phrases which the two works have in common in these passages are rarely recorded\(^1\) and no such parallels are found in other texts.

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   *stórbokkar*, vol. 3, p. 562.  
   *tannsárr*, vol. 3, p. 568.
APPENDIX B: The Proportions of Knytlinga Saga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative space</th>
<th>King</th>
<th>Chronological period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 pages</td>
<td>Haraldr Gormsson (940-985), pp. 29-32</td>
<td>45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pages</td>
<td>Sveinn tjúgu-skegg Haraldsson (985-1014), pp. 32-34</td>
<td>29 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 pages</td>
<td>Knútr Sveinsson inn gamli (1014-1035), pp. 34-54</td>
<td>21 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pages</td>
<td>Hörða-Knútr Knútsson (1035-1042), pp. 54-55</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 pages</td>
<td>Sveinn Ólafsson (1042-1076), pp. 55-64</td>
<td>34 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 pages</td>
<td>Haraldr hein Sveinsson (1076-1080), pp. 65-72</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 pages</td>
<td>Knútr Sveinsson inn helgi (1080-1086), pp. 72-149</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 pages</td>
<td>Óláfr hungr Sveinsson (1086-1094), pp. 149-164</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 pages</td>
<td>Eiríkr góði Sveinsson (1094-1103), pp. 164-195</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The page can be taken only as a rough guide to the length of narrative content, since in this edition the critical apparatus varies slightly in amount on each page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Author and Years</th>
<th>Name and Years</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Níkulás Sweinsson</td>
<td>(1103-1130), 31 years</td>
<td>pp. 196-224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Knútr lávarør Eiríksson</td>
<td>(1103-1130), pp. 196-216</td>
<td></td>
<td>27 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Eiríkr eymuni Eiríksson</td>
<td>(1134-1139), pp. 217-233</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eiríkr spaki Hákonarson</td>
<td>(1139-1147), pp. 231-233</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Knútr Magnússon</td>
<td>(1139-1155), pp. 233-255</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Sveinn Eiríksson svíandi</td>
<td>(1147-1156), pp. 233-260</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Valdimarr Knútsson</td>
<td>(1147-1182), pp. 245-287</td>
<td></td>
<td>35 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Knútr Valdimarsson</td>
<td>(1182-1202), pp. 287-294</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The saga ends at 1187)
APPENDIX C: The Genealogy of the kings of Denmark (940-1187)
(years of reign)

Haraldr Gormsson (940-985)

Sveinn tjúgu-skegg Haraldsson (985-1014)

Sveinn Ölfsson (1047-1076)

Haraldr Knútsson d. 1040
(king in England only)

Haraldr hein Sveinsson (1076-1080)

Knútr Sveinsson (1080-1086)

Hörða-Knútr Knútsson (1035-1042)

Sveinn Ólafsson (1047-1076)

Óláfr hungr Sveinsson (1086-1094)

Hákonarson

Haraldr Knútrsson

d. 1040

Sveinn sviðandi
Eiríksson

(joint-king 1147-1156)

Eiríkr spaki
Hákonarson

(joint-king 1139-1147)

Knútr lávarðr
Eiríksson
d. 1130
never king

Eiríkr gróði
Eiríksson

(1094-1103)

Níkulás Sveinsson

(1103-1134)

Magnús Nikulásson

(joint-king 1134)

Knútr Knútrsson

(1035-1042)

Knútr Sveinsson

(1076-1086)

Eiríkr eymuni
Eiríksson

(1134-1139)

Eiríksdóttir

Ragnhildr

Knútr lógarðr

Eiríksson

Knútr Iavarðr

Eiríksson
d. 1130
never king

Sveinn Sveinsson

(1014-1035)

Ástríðr Sveinsdóttir

Valdimarr Knútrsson

(joint-king 1147-1156;
sole king 1156-1187)

Knútr Valdimarsson

(1182-1202; saga ends 1187)

Knutr Magnusson

(joint-king 1139-1155)

Magnús Nikulásson

(joint-king 1134)
Hákonar Saga Hákonarson: Portrait of an Ideal King

I Introduction

Scholars have suggested that the relationship between Hákonar Saga and Sverris Saga is simple: either one of contrast:

I Sverris Saga, den andre store samtidssagaen i norrøn kongesagalitt, oppveies komposisjonelle mangler av dramatisk og livfull fortelling. H.s.H. fengsler sjelden på samme måte; fremstillingen er mekanisk-redigerende, ofte tørr og direkte kjedelig.  

The quaint racy style of Sverris Saga...is entirely distinct from that of the other kings' lives, and has a marked individuality of its own... Sverris Saga is remarkable, alike for subject and style, standing alone among the Kings' lives, as indeed it was most meet it should.

or one of correspondence:

This official biography of King Hákon...is modelled on or inspired by Sverris Saga.

2. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, Prolegomena to Sturlunga Saga, volume 1, (Oxford, 1883) p. lxx
3. Ibid., p. lxxi
While there is some substance to each of these remarks, none is exact or supported with evidence and all fail to consider that both, as contemporary sagas, are intended to provide the authoritative record of a king's life for future members of his dynasty. Both Knut Helle and Hermann Pálsson appear to appreciate this as a purpose of Håkonar Saga:

Sagaen ble satt sammen med Kong Magnús' råd (Sturl. s.) og er i mangt et talerør for Sverraættens ideologi, saerlig i understrekingen av Håkons kongsett og a kongedømmets glans og overordnede stilling i forhold til andre samfunnsmakter.

King Magnús... Perhaps he not only wished to have a permanent record of his father's achievements to immortalise his name; it was also politically expedient for King Magnús to possess such a document which described the power struggle during the reign of his predecessor.

But only Gunnar Benediktsson has recognised it as the common purpose of both Sverris Saga and Håkonar Saga:

Håkonar saga þykir um sumt hlístæð Sverris sögu, sem Karl Jónsson ábóti á bingeyrum haföi þá ritað. Þær eiga sammert í því, at þær eru ritaðar af samtíma-mönnum íslenskum sem heilsteyptar ævisögur, hin fyrri um afa, hin síðari um sonarson, og konungsferill beggja er það viðburðaríkur og afdrifaríkur fyrir samtíð þeirra og framtíð.

1. Helle, loc. cit.
2. Pálsson, opt. cit., p. 51
Certainly Hákonar Saga is less lively and engaging in style and substance than Sverris Saga, in part because Sturla Þórðarson was more constrained by his patron than Abbot Karl and less interested in his subject, of whom he had no personal knowledge and for whom he possessed a family antipathy. But the differences between the sagas are determined more by the different natures and careers of the two kings themselves than by their respective biographers, as Sigurður Nordal has noted:

... Hákon var fjarrí því að vera svo frumlegur afburða-
maður sem afi hans og övi hans flatneskjulegri.

Such a contrast in presentation reflects the different circumstances of each king as well as the change in the public conception and expectation of an ideal king between the late twelfth and mid-thirteenth centuries, as Norway grew from a collection of loosely bound districts into a sovereign state. While Sverrir was able to win his throne largely by military means and independent charismatic leadership, Hákon had to be more cautious. He courted both ecclesiastical and legal support in so far as he could without surrendering autonomy and he attempted to win popular backing by presenting himself as a model of royal dignity rather than by attempting the subtle forms of persuasion Sverrir employed. ³

1. For evidence of this, see Sturl. 1, pp. 409, 444; Sturl. 2, pp. 12, 231-232. Hákon had ordered Snorri Sturluson's death, while the Sturlungs had long been friends of Jarl Skúli, who had attempted to usurp Hákon's throne. See below, pp. 286 ff.

2. Sigurður Nordal, Flateyjarbók (Akranes, 1944-45) Introduction

3. See above, Chapter One, pp. 35 ff.
These differences determine the range of subject matter in each saga. Whereas in Sverris Saga the political and military are almost inseparable, in Hákonar Saga significant attention is given to colonial and international affairs and to formal court scenes, often involving lengthy meditative speeches. Less space is given to battle accounts, simply because Hákon fought fewer battles and, of those he did fight, fewer were large or critical.

In the following chart, the most important years of Hákon's reign are listed with the most significant event in each period and ranged in descending order according to the amount of information given. This provides an index of the wide scope of material in the saga and the proportion of non-military events (marked +):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1263</td>
<td>Hákon's last year, in Orkneys</td>
<td>29 pp./yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1238-40</td>
<td>Jarl Skúli's opposition to Hákon</td>
<td>63 pp.; 31 ½ pp./yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1223-25</td>
<td>Expedition into Vermaland</td>
<td>36 pp.; 18 pp./yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1246-47</td>
<td>Hákon's coronation +</td>
<td>13 pp.; 13 pp./yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1260-61</td>
<td>Magnús Hákonarson's marriage + and coronation +</td>
<td>13 pp.; 13 pp./yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1256-57</td>
<td>Dispute with Denmark and the marriage + of Hákon's daughter into Spain</td>
<td>13 pp.; 13 pp./yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1217-18</td>
<td>First year of Hákon's reign, + including speculation about his paternity</td>
<td>11 pp.; 11 pp./yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1220-23</td>
<td>Skirmishes with the Ribbungar</td>
<td>31 pp.; 10 pp./yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1255-56</td>
<td>Death of Hákon's son Hákon +</td>
<td>9 pp.; 9 pp./yr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared with Sverris Saga, the compass of Hákonar Saga is clearly wider and this has several consequences:

1. Many figures other than Hákon are introduced into the saga and demand the attention and often the sympathy of the audience.

2. Although Hákon is involved in the majority of events, his direct participation is less significant than Sverrir's in his saga; events do not revolve round Hákon in the same way as Sverrir.

3. Although told in chronological order, as is Sverris Saga, the variety of events recorded often necessitates that several sequences of related events be interspersed, one interrupting the other. For instance, chapter 177 presents a tense confrontation between Jarl Skúli and King Hákon at the bing at Bergen; chapter 178 tells of a quarrel between Hákon and the Bishop of Hamr; chapter 179 reports the building of the ship Óláfsfjörr and the death of Hákon's mother; chapter 180 is concerned with Icelandic affairs; chapter 181 continues with the developing friction between Jarl Skúli and Hákon. Sometimes interruptions occur in the middle of a chapter, as in chapter 79, where an account of an expedition against the enemy Ribbungar is divided in the middle by news from Iceland. Sturla has avoided here a more selective and tightly interwoven account, such as is characteristic of much of Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla, presumably because it would not then be history.

In Hákonar Saga the major unifying principle is the chronology, time itself. This feature is marked more frequently and more variously than in Sverris Saga:

1. By the successive recording of the years of Hákon's reign, tolling like a bell through the saga. Not a single year is missed from the first year of his reign in 1217 until his death in 1262.

1. See above, Chapter Two, pp. 186 ff.

2. By the mention of external events contemporary with the Norwegian action.

3. By precise dates, provided at various places throughout the saga to mark important events, from the death of King Ingi in the year Hákon became king of Norway (p. 18) to Hákon's burial in Norway after his death in the Orkneys (p. 357).

4. By references to high days in the church calendar.

5. By measuring the passage of time in relation to events.

In this connection, Sturla often uses the phrase "sem fyrir var ritað". Less frequent variations include:

nu er segja fram (pp. 299, 337); now there is to tell...
o ok mun verða frá sagt (p. 258); and it must be told...
o ok mun enn verða sagt frá
þeim síðarr (pp. 175, 237)
Munu vér þar létta at sinni
at segja frá þeirra ferðum (p. 292)
We will there stop talking about their journey for a while.

From this heavy emphasis on the chronological progression of events, the proportions of the saga may be determined. This can be seen to some extent from the chart given above on page as well as from Appendix B, below, page 332.

1. See pp. 1, 141, 169, 236, 237, 251, 258, for a sample.

2. For other precise dates, see pp. 200, 217, 234, 271, 328.

3. For a sample of similar references, see pp. 86, 94, 98, 103, 108, 110, 138, 141, 164, 177, 205, 217, 313, 351.

4. These references occur with a remarkable frequency, too numerous to list for the whole saga, ranging as follows: pp. 17, 18, 33, 36, 38, 43, 50, 51, 55, 105, 140, 160, 202, 209, 236, 252, 269, 303, 323, 355.
II Evidence of Selection

Undeniably, attention to detail is very uneven in Hâkonar Saga. Some minor facts are included almost casually, without any discernible function. In most cases such facts, which seem to be reliable, appear to have come direct from contemporary accounts without adjustment to the new context. ¹ Twice in the middle of siege accounts Sturla includes details, concerning the availability of provisions in foreign territories under Norwegian attack, which are specific out of proportion to the rest of the account:

En ekkar var at drekka nema blanda; ok hvergi fengu þeir mungat í Vermalandi; en slatr-vist skorti þar eigi, þvit búit var hvergi undan rekit. (p. 102)

But there was not anything to drink but sour whey mixed with water; and they could get ale nowhere in Vermaland; but there was not a shortage of meat because livestock was nowhere driven away.

þeir lögðu gjald á Manverja, þrijá penninga Enska af hverri kú, ok fæða allan herinn um vetrinn. (p. 148)

They laid a ransom on the men of Man, three English pennies for every cow and the feeding of all the host during the winter.

Earlier in the saga, in chapter 111 (p. 96), Sturla lists and enumerates in full the men in the king’s expedition to Vermaland, using simple, repetitive phrases to distinguish each section of the troop as the mind’s eye reviews it from first to last:

konungs-merkit skyldi fyrst fara, ok þar með áttat tigir manna... ok fylgði hverjum hestí hlauðandi sveinn... Hér næst föruru tvau hundruð manna. En eptir þat sleða-menn... ok vóru þat sex hundruð manna. En þar næst relða Níkulás... ok hófðu þrjú hundruð ríðandi manna. the king’s standard should go first and with it eighty men... and following each horse a boy running... next went two hundred men... And after that sledge-men ... and that amounted to six hundred men... and next rode Nikulás... and had three hundred horse-men. Next there went all the sledge-men up from the sea, more than eight

¹. Helle, opt. cit., p. 52 and Vigfússon, Prolegomena, opt. cit., p. cvi
Having precisely established the extent and formation of the army, Sturla outlines equally plainly the strategy for defence during the expedition. This is clearly marked off from the travelling order, not only by the word "síðast" beginning the last sentence, but by the introductory statement to the strategy:

 diffé var þessi skipan á góð

which resembles the introduction to the marching order:

þessi skipan var á góð ferðinni.

Each section of the troop is again catalogued:

ríðandi-menn fóru fyrst, ok þá sleða-menn. Ef ófriðr kam í móti þeim, þá skyldi ríðandi-menn verjask meðan sleða-menn takí vápn sín; skyldu hvárírtveggju sleða-menn hjálpa, ef á aðra yrði hlaupit, þeir sem fyrir fæði ok eptir.

horsemen went first and then sledge-men. If an attack came against them then the horsemen were to defend themselves while the sledge-men got their weapons. Those sledge-men who came in the van and those in the rear should help each other if the attack was made against one of them.

The explicitness of these remarks suggests that there may be direct discourse underlying them, recalling the precise strategy in the words of either Hákon or one of his commanders.
Up to this point the material is logically arranged, presenting a detailed and unconfused picture of the troops and capturing with the simple structure and diction the predominant tone of the military discipline. However, Sturla undermines the success of this arrangement by going on immediately to tell of the total number of choice men (vildis-liðs) and armed men (vápnaðra manna) and something more of the different troops within the army, the grooms (reiðskjóta-manna) and sledges (sleðanna), material which seems to belong to the travelling order at the opening of the account. Sturla then sums up with a view of the whole host in motion:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{En þó at íss varri tveggja} & \quad \text{And though the ice was two} \\
\text{rasta langr á einhverju vatni,} & \quad \text{rasts long on one lake, yet} \\
\text{þá var fyrri annarr endir} & \quad \text{one end of the army was off} \\
\text{hersins af ísinum en annarr kom} & \quad \text{the ice before the other end} \\
\text{á. (p. 97)} & \quad \text{came onto it.}
\end{align*}
\]

As it stands, the passage lacks a logical arrangement of its individual parts, a marching order of its own so to speak, for there is a jumble of general and specific instead of a controlled movement from one to the other. A simple re-arrangement, without altering the details themselves, would supply this movement and lend that grace which is wanting. That Sturla does not adopt any more effective structure indicates a singular inattentiveness here to the aesthetic potential of carefully arranged information. It must also be pointed out that no subsequent action makes the review significant or justifies its length in the saga. Some eye-witness must have described the troops and he used the version without thorough refinement or editing.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Sturla uses a description of troop formation for deliberate aesthetic effect in Íslendinga Saga, when presenting the attack on Flugumyr. See below, Chapter Six, pp. 475-76.
Even less integral to the narrative thread is the passage about the king's bailiff, Andrés skjaldar-band, and his unfortunate expedition to Bjarmaland with Ívar útvík (Chapter 81, pp. 70-71). Their journey in 1222 has no significance for the rest of the saga and the close focus on their misfortune makes the incident loom ineptly large in the narrative.

Yet even though selection has not been practised consistently in the saga, there is evidence for it. Instances can be divided into three groups, depending on the reasons behind them.

A Omissions made to avoid Monotony:
In some instances, Sturla has clearly summarised material whenever a fuller account would have been uninteresting:

```
Hér eptir urðu margir þeir hlutir milli Birkibeina ok Ribbunga at ýmsir urðu brögðum fegnir. (p. 66)
```
Hereafter occurred many incidents between the Birkibeinar and the Ribbungrar, the strategems of which each in turn rejoiced in.

1. Andrés is only mentioned again in the saga in chapter 164 when his disappearance in the Holy Land is reported. This is briefly told and important because it becomes clear after the disappearance that Pétr, the son of Andrés's wife Ingibjörg, is also the son of Jarl Skúli. Pétr appears later in the saga when he supports his father against Hákon and dies at the hands of the king's men during the battle at Oslo in 1240 (p. 230).

2. Other instances of casually included facts may be found on pp. 29, 54, 126, 183, 327.

3. For other examples see pp. 72, 140, 178-79, 203. That Sturla sometimes tired of his task is evident from the monotony of his diction in places where no aesthetic effect can be intended by the repetition: the use of leynilíga on pp. 3-4; drengilíga on pp. 64, 103, 107, 108, 220; it beinsta or beinsta veg on pp. 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 112, 136, 183, 195, 212; and ákafligast on pp. 120-128, 198, 203, 217, 218, 233. For confirmation of this feature, see also Helle, op. cit., p. 53; and Benediktsson, op. cit., p. 173.
B Diplomatic selection:

Central to the purpose of the saga is the material selected or rejected for diplomatic reasons, in order to present Hákon as an ideal king without mocking him by exaggerated flattery or alteration of well-known facts. Sturla’s attempts at such partisan presentation are uniformly serious and much more transparent than Abbot Karl’s in Sverris Saga. Hákon is never treated with the irony or the warm, fond wit frequently applied to Sverrir. Yet much of the partisan material corresponds superficially to that used in Sverris Saga and evidence occurs in many forms throughout the saga:

1 Legendary origins.

In Hákonar Saga there are no fantastic dreams about Hákon’s birth or omens of his future power; rather there is a lengthy account of the secret journeys of mother and small child through Norway in flight from the enemies of the Birkibeinar (chapter 3, pp. 3-7). Sturla relies on literary parallel, making an explicit comparison with the story of Óláfr Tryggvason’s infant flight:

Svá hafa vitrir menn sagt, at þat hafi líðast verit, vás þat ok erviði er Birkibeinar höfðu í þessari ferð, með ótta þeim er þeir höfðu af sínum óvinum áðr en þeir kómu með konungs son norðr í Pröndheim, því vásí ok erviði er Óláfr Tryggvason ok Ástríðr móðir hans fengu í sínum ferðum þá er þau flyðu ór Noregi austr til Svíþjóðar fyrir ríki Gunnhilðar konunga-móður ok sona hennar. (p. 5)

So wise men have said, that the physical hardship and difficulty which the Birkibeinar had on this journey together with that fear which they had of their enemies before they came with the king’s son north into Pröndheim, had been most like the hardship and difficulty which Óláfr Tryggvason and his mother Ástríðr suffered on their journey when they fled from Norway east into Sweden before the power of Gunnhildr the queen-mother and her sons

1. Abbot Karl clearly recognised and recorded Sverrir’s foibles, balancing the saga presentation of Sverrir’s sophisticated intellect with an appealing human dimension, no doubt with the king’s encouragement. See above, Chapter One, pp. 94-98.
Sturla also takes the opportunity to compare the two kings' Christian endeavours:

Eigi megu menn undrask þó at alls-valdandi Guð hafi framarr veitt sína miskunn þessum konunga-sonum, Óláfr Tryggvasoni ok Hákon, er hér er nú af sagt, ok frelsta þá af valdi sína óvina, til svá mikillar frægoðar sem hann hafði hvárn-tveggja skipat, annan til þess at hefja at uppkafti Kristnina í Noregskonungs ríki, en annan til þess at styrrka hana framarr enn engi annarr Noregs-konungr með inum helga Óláfi í kirknagarðum ok laga-skipan ok mörgu öðru uppheldi Guðs Kristni, sem þeim mónum var kunnigt er samtíða þó vor við hann, ok görla vissu hans háttu ok atferðir. (pp. 6-7)

Men must not be astonished though Almighty God has granted his mercy more to these kings' sons, Óláfr Tryggvason and Hákon, who is here now told about, and delivered them from the power of their enemies, to such great fame as he had assigned both, the one to raise up Christianity for the first time in the Norwegian king's realm and the other to strengthen it more than any other Norwegian king by the help of Holy Saint Óláfr, in the building of churches and the shaping of the law and many other supports of God's Christianity, as was known to those men who were contemporary with him and knew fully his conduct and undertakings.

There is nothing so blunt in Sverris Saga.

2 Popularity and acceptance of Hákon when a child

The child king's popularity and acceptance of his paternity are continually protested in the saga in terms almost Biblical, with constant reference to Birkibeinar loyalty:

Allir fornir Birkibeinar elskuðu því meirr sveininn sem þeir sá at hónum óx meirr vit ok afl. (p. 13)

All the old Birkibeinar loved the boy the more as they saw his intelligence and strength developing.

1. Though Sverrir himself frequently defends his paternity claim in Sverris Saga and the writer assumes its veracity in the narrative, there is no incident in the saga where any other figure explicitly supports Sverrir's claim or makes plain his popularity by showing personal regard, with the exception of Svína-Petr, who does so with a witty and biting sarcasm (see Chapter One, pp. 79-83). Sverrir himself mentions in a speech the enmity some of his alleged supporters bear him (Chapter One, p. 47).
Allir fornir Birkibeinar urðu mjökk fagnar sveininum, ok
gengu hvers-dagliga at finna
sveininn fyrir ástrar sakir
við fóðurinn, ok eigi sígr
fóður fóðurinn. (pp. 7-8)

All the old Birkibeinar were
very fond of the boy and went
each day to meet the boy on
account of their love for his
father and no less for his
grandfather.

Other indications of Hákon's childhood popularity and acceptance are
so heavily and repetitively stressed that they seem forced and arouse
the suspicion that the emphasis may be artificial.

3 Miracles

Like the accounts of miracles in other kings' sagas, the three
in Hákonar Saga are necessarily explicit expressions of partisanship,
since the miracle makes plain that the subject is favoured by God.

To one of these miracle accounts Sturla adds the authority of public
opinion:

... var á stórt veðr, ok létu
nökkurir menn stýrri sín. Ok
er þeir kómu á Hvíní, þá brast
stýrri á konungs-skipi, ok gékk
af allt blaðit náliga...
Ok er þeir kómu til hafnar, var
upp lagt þat er íptir var af
stýrinu. Ok þóttir mánnum miklar
jartegnir, er med síðu skyldi
stýrt verða á miklu skipi.
(p. 210)

... there was heavy weather
and some men lost their
rudders and when they came to
Hvín, then the rudder on the
king's ship broke and the
blade fell off almost entirely...
And when they came to the
harbour, what was left of the
rudder was brought up. And men
thought it a great miracle that
a great ship should have been
steered with such a fragment.

Such mention of public opinion is often made in the miracle accounts in
Sverris Saga. The recording of contemporary testimony authenticates the

1. See the saga text, p. 14, when Jarl Hákon keeps the boy by him in his
last illness (Vigfússon thinks the boy was really Jarl Hákon's son);
p. 17, when King Ingi finds Hákon entertaining during his sickness;
p. 21, when Hákon's supporters remind Skúli of King Ingi's and Jarl
Hákon's ready acceptance of Hákon; p. 41, when Hákon himself recalls
their favour; and p. 74, when support is given the young king
because of his paternity, which is accepted.

2. See p. 43, when Hákon's mother carries the hot iron to prove his
paternity and she is not marked by it; p. 121, when Hákon is
protected by God from being killed by a falling mast; and p. 210,
as given above.
miracle and insures that the audience does not miss the significance of events or misinterpret them, but it does not require the author himself to intrude directly into the narrative.

4 God’s support for Hákon

Apart from the miracles, other claims to divine intervention on Hákon’s behalf occur regularly throughout the saga in the narrative, and less explicitly in Hákon’s speeches:

"Guð ok inn helgi Óláfr konungr, þeim hefir ek fengit mitt máli í hendr, ok þeir skulu sjá hlut til handa mör um landa skipti ok hamingju." (p. 12)

"God and the holy King Óláfr, to them I have entrusted my case, and they shall look after the division of the land and of luck on my behalf."

Sverrir, too, claims God’s support in his saga, but such claims in his speeches are so frequently involved in his ironies or set within a dramatisation that it is never certain how far he believes them himself and how far they are used against his gullible audience. This makes Sverrir a hidden and elusive character, more interesting and provocative than the rather wooden figure of Hákon. Whether or not their saga portraits are true reflections of the men themselves, it nevertheless remains that Sturla was content to present Hákon in this monotonously accessible fashion.

1. See pp. 86, 135, 208, 211, 222, 318, 355
Direct compliments to Hákon or Magnús Hákonarson

Sturla's compliments to Hákon or to his patron, Magnús, are frequent and, in their obvious attempts to flatter and ingratiate, rather tasteless. Such compliments cover a variety of features of Hákon's reign, from the quality of his assemblies to his practice of keeping his word. Magnús is the recipient of a corresponding diversity of compliments ranging from his resourcefulness in quenching fires to the magnificence of his wedding. Such compliments are more direct than those in Sverris Saga, where accounts of events or Sverrir's speeches draw praise and respect for Sverrir by their very nature and substance, without explicit solicitation. There the author guides judgement but seems to allow the reader to decide to like Sverrir, whereas in Hákonar Saga, support seems to be begged for and therefore is never warmly offered.

The eulogy

As in Sverris Saga, a eulogy on the king is set at the end of Hákonar Saga, though it is much longer. Hákon's physical appearance is described, and while many of the terms are not distinctive, a few mark unusual features, some of which are meant to demonstrate his blood relationship with Sverrir:

1. See p. 75
2. See p. 307
3. See p. 274
4. See p. 317
5. For other instances of flattery to these two kings see pp. 74, 110, 322, 324, 329-335, 350, 357. The greatness of Hákon's fleet is praised on pp. 331-332
These features are not all handsome ones and presumably must be accurate, since Sturla could not otherwise have included them without censure.

Personal qualities mentioned are all positive, but there is little supporting evidence for them in the saga itself:

Hann var hverjum manni kátari, ok vakrari, ok léttari á sér; blífur maðr var hann við fáta ekkir bæði til laga ok rúða-gjörða. Pat mæltu þeir vitir menn, er sendir vóru til hans af öðrum höfðingjum, at þeir hafði all-dregi höfðingja sét, þann er þeim þatti heldr vera bæði konungr, ok herra, ok félagi. (pp. 357-58)

He was more merry than any man and more alert, and more gladsome in himself; a kindly man he was with poor and needy men, so that he was never in so heavy a mood that he did not answer them gently. He was princely and courteous when he sat with other chieftains, engaging and high-minded, an eloquent man, and spoke well at assemblies. Of men he was one of the wisest, both in law and counsel. Those wise men said, who were sent to him from other chieftains, that they had never seen a chieftain who seemed to them to be more king, lord, and comrade.

1. See Sv. p. 194; Chapter One, p. 90.
2. Ibid.
There is some attempt here to convey the man as genial, but this cannot outweigh the formal and impersonal nature attributed to him by most of the saga events. He remains distant and featureless. He is never seen on comradely terms with anyone, as Sverrir is.

The remainder of the eulogy fills two full pages in Vigfússon's text and is comprised entirely of a catalogue of Hákon's legal reforms, and, in greater detail, his benefactions and building projects. The style is heavily repetitive, with the phrase "lét göra", or either of these two words separately, appearing no less than thirty-five times. The catalogue is clearly a convenient means of expanding the eulogy without Sturla having to speak explicitly of his subject. But it does not extend proportionately the reader's knowledge of Hákon's character, private or public, and perhaps is meant to suggest his determination to keep his nature to himself and appear as a figurehead with a controlled inner life. As it stands, the eulogy reveals more about Sturla's attitude to his subject and relationship with his patron, task, and original audience, than about the man whose life he purports to celebrate.

1. In Sverris Saga the description of Sverrir balances such features with the closely focused fondness in details such as Sverrir's habit of trimming his beard and his attention to personal finery. Other details in the description are supported by evidence in the saga, of his eloquence, his voice projection, his cleverness, as well as his ability to speak with common men as fellows, binding Sverrir's eulogy more strongly to the rest of the narrative than Hákon's is to his saga.

2. Pálsson, opt. cit., p. 56 has observed this also: "the king's personality remains curiously enigmatic and elusive, despite all the detailed descriptions of his words and actions." Pálsson also notes that "this failure to characterise the various personalities is very untypical of the saga" (p. 53) but he does not draw the contrast with Sverris Saga.
The presentation of one of Hákon's minor opponents, Híði
 Hákon's only enemy, other than Jarl Skúli (see below, section II:C), who delivers a speech in the saga is Híði, a man who had served Sverrir but had since deserted to the Baglar. He finds his way into the court of Jarl Hákon, where the young Hákon is staying, and suggests to the jarl that he dispose of the heir to protect the interest of his own son. Híði's over-conscious style, his deliberate leading from suggestion to suggestion, so that the possible is made to seem probable as well as threatening, point him out as a slippery character, the stereotype arch-villian. Behind the presentation of such a figure lies Sturla the storyteller.

Híði's argument progresses insidiously:

a) The young Hákon may grow up and receive support because of his father and grandfather:

"...ok kann þat vera, at hann vaxi hér upp, at margir menn elski hann, þæsi fyrir sakir fóður ok fóður-fóður"(p. 13)

b) Jarl Hákon's son will then not find it easy to oppose the young Hákon in order to retain his inheritance:

"ok man yórum syni eigi auðvellir at stíga til ríkis eptir yóð, ef hann stendr í móti."(p. 13)

"and it may not be easy for your son to step into your power after you, if he stands in opposition."

c) In other lands chieftains do not fear for their offspring, rather, they make the way clear for them by removing any obstacles:

1. This man is mentioned in Sverris Saga, p. 187, ll. 35-36, as the man Sverrir put in charge of the Ribbaldr in Uppland. These were men sent to Sverrir by King John of England.
"...ef svá væri útan-lands við vaxit, þá mundi þar ráð fyrir gört, at eigi þyrfti lands-höföngi að öttask um sitt afspringi; ok mundi þessi vera sendr í önnur lönd til þeirra höföngja er öngu vináttu ætti hónum at gjalda; ok mundi hann þá vera annat-hvárt meiddr eðr inn settr, at eigi þyrfti hræðask hann optarr." (p. 13)

"...if such had arisen in foreign lands, then would the plan be adopted that the chieftain of the land need not fear for his offspring; and this boy would be sent into other lands to those chieftains who had no friendship to repay him, and he would then be either maimed or imprisoned, that there should be no need to fear him any longer."

d) Híði offers to take the boy away for the purpose:

"Ok ef þér vilit, þá bjóðumsk ek til þessarar ferðar; ok mun ek svá sýst fá at yór líki."

"And if you wish, then I offer myself for this journey; and I will have it accomplished in a way that will please you."

It is clear that such a man would apply the knife quite willingly to the boy himself, should Hákon commission him.

Sturla makes the most of the suspense created by our curiosity to know how the jarl will respond:

Jarl hafði fyrst fatt um; En síðan er jarl hafði þagat nökura stund tók hann svá til orðs. (p. 13)

The jarl at first made little response to this...But when the jarl had been silent for some time he began to speak thus...

When he finally speaks, his remarks are direct, brief, and final:

"Vili eigi Guð þat," sagði hann, "at ek kaupa með því móti ríki mínun syni, at ek fyrir koma þess mansyni eðr sonar-syni er ek ættu best at gjalda." Þessu réðu sagði jarl fám mönnnum. En aldri var hónum jafn-vel við Híða sem ánr. (pp. 13-14)

"God does not wish," he said, "that I buy in such a manner power for my son that I overthrow this man's son or grandson whom I ought best to repay." This conversation the jarl told to few men. But he was never again as well disposed toward Híði as before.
This exchange does more than stereotype the enemy figure Híði. It implies by the jarl’s response Hákon’s popularity and it sets the moral tone against all opponents of Hákon. Sturla has selected this exemplary incident to stand for all insidious attempts at treachery aimed at the young heir to the throne.

C The Portrait of Skúli Bárðarson:

Related to instances of diplomatic selection, but sufficiently important to constitute a category of its own, is Sturla’s presentation of Skúli Bárðarson. The demands of this task were particularly complicated. On the one hand, Skúli was a traitor, but on the other he had an undisputed royal ancestry going back to St Óláfr and, through the marriage of his daughter to King Hákon, was grandfather to King Magnús Hákonarson, Sturla’s patron. The author of Hákonar Saga had therefore to make clear the treachery without discrediting the man altogether. This was made even more difficult for Sturla Pórðarson because he had also to suppress his personal sympathies for Skúli. Knut Helle believes that Sturla failed in the attempt:

Som Kgl. historiograf måtte han dessuten trå varlig på mange felter, saerlig i fremstillingen av forholdet mellom Hákon og Skule Bârdsson, den ene far, den andre morfar til hans oppdragsgiver. Resultatet er blitt en Vag og utilfredsstillende skildring av motsetningene mellom de to, uten klargjøring av årsakene til striden. Her ligger forklaringen til de temmelig motstridende tolkningene historikerne har gitt av Hákon og Skules personligheter og livsverk.

1. Helle, opt. cit., p. 53
Yet close examination of the presentation of Skúli's career in Hákunar Saga refutes Helle's judgment and reveals the ways in which Sturla has achieved by selection a fragile balance in his portrait of Skúli between the faults and merits of the man.

1 In a speech before the battle at Oslo, Hákon himself reveals the alleged roots of his quarrel with Jarl Skúli by making a statement of specific grievances against him. Sturla has probably selected this form of presentation as a convenient means of revealing the official royal attitude without having to associate himself with it or pass judgment on it. The grievances are these:

**Skúli has taken the title of king:**

"...þá lét hann gefa sér konungs-nafn at ósögðum griðum (sundr) milli vár," (p. 214)

"...then he let himself be given the name of king when the peace was not declared broken between us."

**Skúli has killed those who had sworn oaths to both king and jarl:**

"...ok lét drepa eisv analysis sar ok sverð-takara beggja okkar" (p. 214)

"...and had killed the oath-swearers and those who had carried swords for both of us."

**Skúli would have killed Hákon and his son if he had been able:**

"...göði hann súr at oss fjörtán skip, at láta drepa oss, eðr inni brenna, ef því kæmi heldr við, oss edr sonu vára, ef Guð hefði þat lofat." (p. 214)

"...he sent south against us fourteen ships to have us slain or burned indoors, if that proved more opportune, us and our sons, if God had permitted it."
Skúli has abused the power that Hákon has given him:

"Nú hefir hann fengit mikinn framgang síðan, svá at varla finnask dæmi til, at nökkurr maðr hafi þvílíkan fengit með jammum rangindum." (p. 214)

"Now he has achieved great advancement since, so that scarcely is example to be found that any man has achieved the like with so much iniquity."

Skúli is responsible for the deaths of many of the friends and the relatives of Hákon's men who have died fighting him:

"...því at þar fellu margir góðir drengir, þeir sem frændr ok vinir munu seint bætr bíða." (p. 215)

"...because there fell many good warriors, those for whom relatives and friends must long await redress."

Skúli's men have also been responsible for much destruction:

"ok minnisk menn á frænda-lát ok fjár ok þann skaða er Várbelgir hafa oss gört" (p. 215)

"and let men remind themselves of the loss of relatives and property and that harm which the Várbelgir have done to us."

Skúli's opposition threatens freedom and possessions together:

"Birtið nú...hversu einarðíla vér eigum at verja frelsi vart ok fé." (p. 215)

"Make clear now...how single-mindedly we ought to defend our privilege and property."

Though it is mentioned that Skúli listed his own grievances at the time he took the title of king, this list is not given directly, but only summarised. We are not allowed to appreciate the force of his feeling:

1. This is a reference to the title "hertogi" or duke, which Hákon gave to Skúli in 1237, p. 169. It was the first time such a title was given in Norway.
2 During the same assembly at which this speech is delivered another incident is recorded in a fashion designed to deflect the reader's sympathy from Skúli's cause, that is, the taking of the shrine of St Óláfr from the cloister. Dramatisation is deliberately avoided and the account is kept flat as if to hold the reader at a distance from the actual tension of the scene:

And when the Gospel was read, the duke came into the church and a large troop with him. He went straight up to the choir and had the canons called to him. The Mass then stopped while they talked together and they did not come to one accord...The duke asked the canons to grant leave for the shrine of the saint, King Óláfr, to be carried out...Then they went to the south of the choir; and they could scarcely agree. We are able to say little about their talk other than that they ordered the Mass to be chanted.

The words attributed to Skúli, both indirect and direct, are repetitive and conventionally indignant, making him appear blunt in his approach to the monks:
The duke asked why they gave such a slow reply to his request...

The duke asked why they gave such a slow answer to this petition...

The duke asked Eystein: "Why will you always stand against my endeavours and our honour and the wishes of your other fellow canons?"

Skúli himself is not directly involved in the forceful removal of the shrine, but Sturla makes no attempt to disguise the crudity of his men's behaviour:

They grasped it and it was fixed. Peter jumped up onto the altar and shoved it with his knees and so shifted the shrine from its base.

The shrine is used at the assembly to support Skúli's oath once he has taken the title of king, and it is meant to symbolise his right as a descendant of St Óláfr. But in his account of the incident and the speeches at the þing, Sturla repeatedly mentions that the original audience was uneasy and sceptical:

Then Arnfinnr Thiefsson delivered his speech, and it seemed to men that what he said was not very true.

...and afterwards came more of their speeches and they seemed credible to few except the duke's men.
The same disapproval of Skúli is implicit in the mute fashion in which the canons receive the shrine back into the cloister, although Sturla notes that a stronger protest was anticipated:

Eingi processia var móti gör, ok ekki hringt. Tveir körsbræðr kómu í mot skríninu jafn-gengt Óláfskirkju, ok leiddu þeir Skúla. Minna öþokka þóttusk þeir finna á Körs-bræðum en ván þótti á vera. (p. 179)

No procession was formed to meet it and bells were not rung. Two of the canons came to meet the shrine opposite St Óláfr's Church and they escorted Skúli. It was thought that they found less opposition from the canons than was expected.

These selected features tilt the balance against Skúli and emphasise the ludicrousness of his struggle. It is notable that when Hákon takes the title of king in 1217 (p. 23), the monks also refuse him permission to remove the shrine, but here Sturla records no protest. Instead, Hákon takes the title without the aid of the shrine.

3 There are several indications in Hákonar Saga that Skúli was not entirely to blame for the conflict between himself and Hákon. The first of these comes in Hákon's own words in the speech, already cited, which he delivered before the battle at Oslo. Couching his admission in the obliquity of a proverb, Hákon indicates that he himself is not entirely blameless in their dispute:

"Mun hér þó vera, sem viðast, at 'Sjaldan veldr einn ef tveir deila' (p. 214) "Yet it must apply here, as most often, that 'Seldom is one responsible when two quarrel.'"
Though any objective arbiter would no doubt agree with this, it is a remarkable statement for a king in a Norse saga and a clear mark of this saga's contemporaneity. In more traditional accounts the kings are not regularly noted for their honest self-assessment.

Sturla has chosen to give further indication of Skúli's partial innocence by including an incident during a meeting of reconciliation between Skúli and Hákon at Bróndheim. After a settlement is reached, one of Hákon's bailiffs, a kinsman, quarrels with guests of Skúli's, and when he leaves Bróndheim for his district, it is specifically reported to the king that the jarl has sent his guests to kill the bailiff. A potential confrontation between king and jarl is avoided and it is quickly discovered that the news of the death was only a false rumour, deliberately spread:

Var þá ok víst orðit, at þetta var ekki nema lygð ok upplöst vándra manna. (p. 169)

Then it became evident that it was nothing but the lying and false rumour of wicked men.

Several other references emphasise the part played by others in aggravating the conflict between the king and the jarl, for instance:

Fóru þann vetr öll skipti vel milli þeirra, sem jafnan er þeir vóru báðir saman, þvíat þá vóru fari lygðir milli bornar, er svá skamt var at reka, at þeir máttu þegar prófa sjálfir. (p. 167)

That winter all the dealings between them went well, as always when they were both together, because then few lies were carried between them when they met so short a space in which to prove or disprove that they could test them themselves at once.

1. See below, p. 326.
2. See also pp. 152, 159, 171
4 Skúli's skill as an orator is evident in at least two places in the saga, where this does not reflect badly on Hákon. The first instance consists in a diplomatic triumph over the upstart Sigurðr, the leader of the Ribbungar. Sigurðr, having suffered several defeats at the hands of Hákon's and Skúli's forces, has offered in 1222 to end his opposition to the king provided he receives a third of Norway and the hand of Skúli's daughter in marriage. The jarl's response is cleverly presented. He begins by shielding himself conveniently behind the figure of King Hákon:

"Hákon konungr á vald á því hvat hann vill miðla Sigurði af landi." (p. 73)  
"King Hákon has the power over what he will share of the land with Sigurðr."

Having declared his deference and at the same time shifted the responsibility for the final decision, Skúli makes plain his own independence from that decision as well as his disdain at the pretentiousness of Sigurðr's demands:

"en ekki væntir mik, at ek gipta döttur mín út í skóga eðr markir; ok ekki mun ek miðla mínn þríðjung af landi." (p. 73)  
"but I see no expectation that I shall marry my daughter out into the woods or forests; and I will not share my third of the land."

After these well-aimed verbal blows, Skúli adopts the smooth and now somewhat empty courtesy of the diplomat, offering Sigurðr a great deal less than he had requested, with an inexpensive generosity of words and phrases prefaced by a conditional:

"En hinu vil ek heita Sigurði, ef hann ferr á mítt vald, at hann skal hafa gríð ok allir hans menn. Ek skal ok

"On the other hand, I promise Sigurðr, if he goes into my power, that he and all his men shall have quarter. I shall also guarantee that
The wit and the lordly disdain of this brief speech are also features of Skúli's speech at Bróndheim in 1223, after Hákon and a flood of accusers on his behilf confront Skúli with their grievances and suspicions of treachery. Hákon's own speech is not given directly, nor is most of Skúli's, and while Sturla says that both men spoke eloquently, he may be deliberately removing here the opportunity for comparison between them, since Skúli has clearly been more trenchant.

Yet the author cannot resist including in his record the opening of Skúli's speech, containing what appears to be the refrain of a verse, possibly from a children's game, mocking the repetitive monotony of his accusers and implying that he is a scapegoat, always blamed for everything:

...ok hóf á þessa leið ræðu sína: ...and began his speech in this way:
"Eina kann ek vísu:
'Ari sat á steini,' ok ina aðra:
'Ari sat á steini,' öll er sem ein sé:
'Ari sat á steini,' hér er svá í dag," segir hann, "at á sína leið hefr hverr örendi; en lúka einn veg, at berð sakir á mik." (p. 155)

"I know a verse:
'An eagle sat on a stone,' and another one:
'An eagle sat on a stone,' all are as one:
'An eagle sat on a stone,' So it is here today," he said, "that each speech goes its road; but they end in one way, to blame me."

In summarising the remainder of the speech, Sturla mentions that Skúli opted for a diplomatic but undermeaning reply, exonerating himself from the charges made against him and submitting to Hákon, but not without castigating his accusers for their part in fostering the conflict between himself and the king:

Hann veik svá til í ræðunni, at hann var í skýldr at vagja til við konung. En þess kvað hann vísa-ván, at hann kunni lendum mónnum fullum óþökk fyrir sitt róg ok vánða meðal-göngu milli konungs ok hans. (p. 155)

He indicated in his speech that he was under obligation to the king. But this he said was certain, that he felt utter disgust towards the lendir men for their slander and wicked interference between the king and himself.

Sturla has supported this remark with several statements in the narrative (see above, p.292)

Skúli is answered in the saga by Gunnarr, the king's kinsman.

He uses involved grammar to put across a humiliating point:

1. It is not clear whether Skúli knew three poems containing such a line or three verses with such a refrain, or whether he has invented the line as an implicit reference to his isolation as scapegoat. Though eagles and stones appear in some extant poems, this line does not. Skúli may know it from a song or ditty, however, which has not survived. Vigfússon makes no comment here, nor can I find any elsewhere.
...talaði Gunnarr konungs-fremdi; "Oss þykkir þú því at eins skyldugliga hlýðni veita konunginum, at þú leggir af þér yfir-klaðin, ok fallir til fóta konungi, ok gefir þik ok allt þitt mál í konungs vald ok miskum." (p. 156) ...Gunnarr the king's kinsman spoke: "We think that you will only offer dutiful obedience to the king if you take off your robes and fall at the king's feet and put yourself and your entire case into the king's power and mercy."

Skúli's reply is haughty and suggests that Gunnarr is a low-born upstart, more accustomed to farm labour than courtly protocol:

Þann svarar jarl: "Há kunna ek hofðingjum þjóna, Gunnarr, er þú vannt annat." (p. 156) Then the jarl answers: "I knew how to serve a chieftain, Gunnarr, at a time when you were doing different work."

Skúli is implicitly casting disdain here on Gunnarr's ancestry. He is a relative of Hákon's through his mother, eðer who was concubine to King Hákon Sverrisson and not of aristocratic birth (see Chapter One of the saga). Such a jibe therefore touches the king as well and he rises to show he has felt it.

It is evident from what is given of the speech that Skúli had the upper hand that day and took the last word. As presented, the encounter does nothing to increase Hákon's stature, though it offers no direct criticism of him. King Magnús Hákonarson must have realised that the incident could not be omitted from the saga entirely without an uneasy want of historicity, but his potential censure has undoubtedly restrained Sturla's hand here.
At the battle at Oslo, when the two men are opposed in violent confrontation, the contrast in their behaviour favours Hákon. Skúli is presented in a panic, hurrying through the streets of Oslo in the dead of night, gathering his men and dispersing them in units. The sentences are short and unsubordinated, suggesting a breathless pace and abrupt action. At the same time, Sturla's continual references to Skúli himself hold the passage together and prevent the panic of the action from invading the style:

And when he was told that it must be war, he dressed himself at once and armed himself; then he turned up the street. And when he came up to Hallvarör's Church yard, many of his men came there to him. It was then discussed what troop that must be. Most said that it must be Jarl Knutr and lendir men. They did not make any other plan than to turn up to Mörtu-stokkar. All the host came to them there. Then they discussed what plan should be followed. The duke wanted to form a troop there and attack the Birkibeinar... The duke then divided the host and directed Ólafr of Vígdeild and some men with him to the western street; but the duke and his standard and the most part of the host turned down towards Hallvarör's Church yard.

Later on in the battle (p. 222) Sturla focuses on Skúli again as he confronts Hákon at a moment when Hákon could have been annihilated but for God's grace. No doubt seeing his advantage, Skúli urges his men to attack:
Ok er hann så þessi tíöendi hét hann á sina menn, at þeir skyldu fram sékja. (p. 222)

And when he saw this situation he called to his men that they should press forward.

Even after one of his own men expresses second thoughts about attacking the king, Skúli's reckless zeal does not flag, as is made evident by his terse reply and action:

"Eigi skal fram at síór." "Advance nevertheless."

The same man, named as Sóni, restrains Skúli's horse and soon after Skúli turns away in flight:

Sóni tók í taumana, ok hélt aptir hestinum. Birkibeinar skutu þa at hertoga nókkurum spjótum, ok flugu nær hónum. ...Ok brátt eptir þetta sneri hertoginn undan ok allir þeir er honum fylgðu. (pp. 222-223)

Sóni took the reins and held back the horse. The Birkibeinar shot then some spears at the duke and they flew near him. And soon after that the duke turned away from the fighting and all those who were accompanying him.

Sturla implants by this account the supposition that Skúli retreats in anger and despair.

Hákon, on the other hand, manifests a controlled determination from before the battle until it is over. This is evident from a number of passages:

a) Chapter 228, p. 213: Hákon arranges that his son and heir be protected during the battle and taken quickly away should misfortune befall Hákon himself. This precaution illustrates his careful readiness for all eventualities. He is completely and explicitly realistic about the possibility of defeat:

"ok verði þér þess varir til sanns, at vör fáim nókkurn ósigr, it for a truth that we are suffering any defeat, then do not remain here."
b) During the battle, Hákon restrains his man Æorsteinn from leading the host to battle in a rush and ignoring those incapable of the pace:

Konungr kallar á Æorstein, ok bað hann eigi fara svá ákafliga; sagði, at þeim eirði þat eigi, er minnr voru færir í líðinu. (p. 217)

The king called to Æorsteinn and asked him not to go so fiercely; he said it did not spare those who were less capable in the host.

c) A little later, Æorsteinn suggests rather long-windedly that they attack a certain bridge ahead of them. Hákon's negative reply, given here indirectly, suggests a stern urgency:

Konungr kallaði þat ekki ráð. The king called it unadvisable. (p. 217)

He supports this cryptic registration of annoyance with action rather than explanation, in contrast to Æorsteinn's verbosity. He leads his men back to another vital bridge just in time to save it from destruction by Skúli's men.

d) A similar grave concentration is marked by Hákon's pithy criticism of his trumpeter when the man fails to sound the horn properly:

"Betr blæss bikkju-hvalprinn þínn á Björgynjar-bryggjum er þú tekr silfr af móðnum." "Your bitch's whelp howls better at Bergen quay when you win silver from men." (p. 219)

e) After the battle, when Sturla's account presents Hákon pursuing Skúli, it appears that the king is almost demonically possessed with the desire to capture the treacherous fugitive:

þá snerisk konungr ór kirkju-garðinum, ok hljóp á hest einn svartan. Þeir menn leituðu at hestum er hónum fylgðu, en sumir runnu. Réið konungr órðum, ok var gýrór sverði, en hafði blóðugt sverð í hendi, er Várbelgir hófðu átt. (p. 226)

then the king left the church-yard and jumped on a black horse. These men sought horses who followed him, but some ran. The king rode from the town, and was girt with a sword and held a bloody sword in his hand which the Várbelgir had had.

1. This reference to the winning of silver rings very much like a passage in Sverris Saga in which one of Sverrir's archers is chided for not performing in battle as well as he did with his bow when there was money to be won. See Sv. Chapter 55, or Chapter Two, above, p. 155 where this same incident is discussed in connection with Einarr Pambarskelfir in Hkr.
But even here the role of rational authority asserts itself. Hákon makes sure, before leaving the town, that any men who have not received quarter are in the church, and safe from the enthusiasms of the victors; during the pursuit of Skúli, he gives quarter to any he meets who ask it; and as soon as it is clear he will not capture the prey he seeks, he turns back. His decision to abandon the chase is perfectly self-controlled and reasonable:

"Ef Skúli, mágr mín, hefir hér undan rióit, þá mun hann svá hafa fyrir hugat, at oss mun verða ekki gótt til hesta; ...en ek vil fyrir öngvan mun kirkju-friðinn brjóta láta."  
(p. 226)

"If Skúli my father-in-law has ridden away here, then he will have thoughtfully provided that we shall find it hard to get horses...and I will on no account let the sanctuary of the church be broken."

6 Skúli is not a foil for Hákon in the same way that Magnús Erlingsson is for Sverrir in Sverris Saga. Magnús' weaknesses are made clear, but he is never presented dishonourably, he never behaves in the saga in a fashion morally culpable. Skúli, on the other hand, does much in the saga that must raise eyebrows, such as sending suspicious letters, using the King's seal without leave, making terms with the Baglar, the Birkibeinar's enemies, without the king's consent, and insisting together with the archbishop that Hákon's mother bear the iron to prove Hákon's paternity, even though they had earlier declined Hákon's offer that the ordeal take place. Sturla also implies that Skúli sends a man from his own retinue to try and fix the outcome of the iron-bearing by offering the queen mother some suspicious ointment, but the man is intercepted and turned away by the faithful Dagfinnr, the lawman. There are many other indications of Skúli's underhand behaviour.

1. See p. 25
2. See p. 25
3. See p. 30
4. See p. 40
5. See p. 42
And yet, from the instances given above, it is clear that Skúli's actions are interpreted from Hákon's or Hákon's supporters' points of view. Skúli's personal thoughts or intentions or explanations are never revealed, as are Magnús' in Sverris Saga, mainly in his speeches. Skúli seldom speaks (see above, pp. 287ff.) and is nearly always close about his true views. Thus, while his behaviour may have been capable of a more honourable interpretation when viewed from a wider perspective, there is no opportunity to explore it. The interpretation is made for the reader and perspective is obstructed by the restriction and bias of the facts given. But when he can do so without violating his responsibilities as Hákon's biographer, Sturla presents Skúli as sympathetically as Magnús is presented in Sverris Saga. This is particularly true of the passage describing Skúli's death.

Skúli has been pursued from the battle at Oslo and is finally cornered in the cloister at Eyr. In spite of the bishop's attempt to intervene, Hákon's men decide to set fire to the cloister. The focus shifts to Skúli as soon as the fire begins and does not leave him until the end of the chapter. Very little is said of his companions throughout, while Sturla's spare style lends an austere dignity to Skúli's last actions. We discover the most noble motives in him, first, in his wish to save the cloister from destruction:

![Ok er hertoginn sá, at þeir vildu brenna klaustrið, reddi hann við sína menn, at þeir skyldu út ganga. (p. 233)](image)

And when the duke saw that they intended to burn the cloister, he suggested to his men that they should go out.
and second, in his wish to preserve in death the rights due to his
title, not out of personal vanity, but from a larger respect for
noble lineage and demeanour:

Hann málti þá: "Höggvit
eigi í andlit mér, þvíat
þat er eigi síðr at göra
við hofsingja" (p. 234)

Then he said: "Don't strike me
in the face, because it is not
the custom to do so to chieftains."

Sturla distances himself and his personal sympathies from the portrait
by refusing to interpret these acts and words, while his respect for the
victim is implicit in the discreet omission of any details of the
wounds inflicted. The image of a handsome and aristocratic
warrior is preserved, rather than that of a mutilated corpse:

Eptir þat þáru þeir vápn á
hertogann ok þá alla er út
gengu með honum. (p. 234)

After that they struck the duke
with their weapons and then all
who had gone out with him.

To end the scene, Sturla turns the reader's gaze back to the cloister
as it burns out of control, a powerful instance of pathetic fallacy
and a symbol of the waste and futility of the quarrel between king
and duke:

Pegar sem hertogi var fallin,
fóru menn ok vildu slökkva
eldinn; en því varð ekki á
leið komit, ok brann upp allt
klaustrið. (p. 234)

When the duke was slain,
men went and tried to put
out the fire; but they did
not succeed and the cloister
burned down completely.

7 The treatment of Skúli in the eulogy on him (chapter 242)
is less gentle than that of Magnús Erlingsson in Sverris Saga and
it is clear that a comparison in Hákon's favour is intended. The
terms used to describe Skúli are general and vague and not altogether positive. He was mourned by his friends, a most unilluminating and conventional statement, applicable almost to anyone:

Duke Skúli was mourned by many men and especially by his friends.

Reasons for his popularity with his friends are common ones: kindness (blíða), good fellowship (góðr viðr-vistir), mildness (með mildi), and generosity (örleikr). Sturla elaborates the last quality, but in such a way that Skúli appears to have bought and bribed his friends:

He gave many men titles, or got them good marriages, or brought about other prosperities for those who cultivated his friendship; and he became from such deeds very popular.

Skúli's generosity to religion is also mentioned, but only one specific instance is recorded. The rest are summarised to avoid any emphasis upon Skúli's acts of sincere magnanimity:

There are many other remarkable things to say about his deeds though they are not written here.

None of the features of his appearance or personality are distinctive or unusual:
...he was a rather tall man, slender of stature, with light chestnut hair, and the finest hair of any man, of regular features, fair complexion, with remarkably handsome eyes.

As Sturla himself admits, he was much like any good chieftain:

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As Sturla himself admits, he was much like any good chieftain:

Flesta hluti hafði hann þá með sér er fríða skyldu góðan hófðingja. (p. 235)
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Such a statement avoids explicit praise, which in this case would be an indirect slight to King Hákon if it were generous.

The remainder of the eulogy is composed of statements that turn the focus flatteringly upon Hákon and Magnús. Skúli, men say, would have been the best man in Norway but for his unlucky experience in the year of his death:

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Ok þat mundi menn hafa mált, ef eigi hefði þat ógiiptu-ár yfir that unlucky year had not komit, er hann lifði síðast, at eigi hafi så maðr verit fæðr í Noregi, er betr hafi mannaðr verit...
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He would have been the best man, that is, who was not of direct royal descent:

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beirra sem eigi vóru komnir af sjálfrí langfeðga-tölu konunganna. (p. 235)
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This stresses Skúli's treachery in assuming the title of king and also implies that the royal line are in fact better men than Skúli. Sturla also mentions that he had no surviving son, a caution to pretenders;
yet the hope is expressed that his descendants, notably Magnús Hákonarson, Skúli's grandson and Sturla's patron, will long adorn Norway:

En þess er at vanta, með guðs
miskunn, at lengi mun Noregr
prýðask af hans afkvæmi. (p. 235)

But it is to be hoped, with
God's mercy, that Norway will
long be adorned with his
descendants.

It is noticeable here that Sturla attributes all these statements to
others, quietly abstaining from personal commitment on the subject,
while lending authority to his statements. In this way, the force of
the comparison between this eulogy and the one on Hákon (see above,
pp. 281-83) has the appearance of being based upon fact rather than contrived.

8 The record of people's reactions to Skúli's death is couched
in ambiguity. When he first hears the news, King Hákon is explicitly
non-committal, leaving it open whether it is to be considered bad news
or not, but with a clear hint that it is not:

"Á bréfi þessu eru mikil tíðindi
tvenn; ok eru þat ill tíðendi er
klaustrið er brunnit á Elgi-setri; it is bad news that the cloister
en þau eru ónnur er Skúli hertogi,
mágr mín, er dauðr." (p. 236)

"In this letter are two very
important pieces of news; and
at Elga-setr is burned down; and
the second piece of news is that
Duke Skúli, my father-in-law, is
dead."

Sturla does not report the king's words as he announces the news
to the court at large, only that he does so personally:

sagði konungr sjálfur allri
hirðinni tíðendin. (p. 236)

The king himself told the news
to all the court.
But the mixed response to this news is implied by the verb "fannsk til" which does not necessarily mean joy or sorrow, but rather an emotional reaction which the reader must interpret by the context:

Ok fannsk mönnum mikit til And men were greatly moved by it.

Of course, the context here is doubly charged. The burning of the cloister is decidedly bad news, but Skúli's death is a problem. It represents the conquest over a traitor, which is good news, but is also represents a death in the royal family, bad news. Perhaps what move the court most are their torn feelings as the whole past is brought before them by Hákon's announcement. It is clear, however, that the element of sorrow is present, for Sturla adds that the queen was moved most of all and hardly by joy:

ok dróttningunni eima mest and the queen the most.

This remark ends the scene, which rounds Sturla's portrait of the jarl perfectly.
III King Hákon's speeches project the image of the ideal king

Hákon speaks more often than Sverrir does in his saga, but his style is much less varied, characterised by a serious and heavy logical formality, a blatant self-righteousness, and an absence of subtle argument, wit, irony, or humour. He always maintains a moral distance from his audience; he never dramatises. Ironically enough, these features also distinguish him from Skúli's rhetorical skills and help to produce and sustain the image of Hákon as an ideal king, a man of probity.

This image is established early in the saga. In chapter 10, when Hákon is only ten years old, some of the Birkibeinar approach him and ask him to become their king and leader in opposition to King Ingi Barðason. Hákon's reply is simple in structure. He gives a catalogue of the points against his accepting their offer:

1 He is but a child:

"Mjök em ek bernskr undir slik stórræði at ganga." (p. 17) "I am too much a child to undertake such great plans."

2 It is not right to fight against any Birkibeinar who remain with Ingi, since they are the men who supported his own father and grandfather:

"...væri þat ok eigi sann-ligt, at ek berðimst í móti Birkibeinum; því at þat veit ek sannliga, at þat er mikill fjöldi af Birkibeinum, at eigi skilsk frá Inga konungi, ok er þat óráðlighet at etja þeim saman er allir átti eins skjaldar at vera." (p. 17) 

"...and it would not be fitting that I fight against the Birkibeinar, because I know truly that there is a great group of Birkibeinar who will not part from King Ingi; and it is unwise to make them fight each other who ought all to be under one shield."
3 Hákon then states his decision, at once self-righteous and pragmatic; he leaves the matter to God, realising that nothing can be achieved at present:

"Vil ek heldr þess bídja, at Guð gefi mér sílkt af mínun fóður-afri sem hans er mildi til, hvern tíma sem þat kemr fram; ok er þess engi ván, at ek reisa nókkurn herflokki í Noregi at svá skipuðu sem nú er." (p. 17)

"I wish rather to ask this, that God give me such of my paternal inheritance as His munificence finds fitting at whatever time it comes about, and there is no hope of this, that I shall raise any war-host in Norway in present circumstances."

The sentence structure throughout is uncomplicated, with little subordination and no striking or colloquial diction. At the same time, this child speaks with a gravity of political and moral awareness that belies his youth and attributes to him the conventional precocity of the saintly child.

Later in his life, in chapter 247, Hákon discusses the terms of his coronation with a papal delegate. He has been asked to swear an oath of submission to the Pope, as did Magnús Erlingsson, and he refuses, presenting a reasoned argument against it in which he carefully weighs the honour to be gained or lost:

1 He cannot increase the archbishop's honour by swearing the oath:

"Svá hafa konungar dór játað yór réttar-bótum, at varla veit ek at vaer megim á þat auka." (p. 240)

"Kings have previously allowed you such legal privilege, that I scarcely know how we may increase it."

2 If he swears the oath he will decrease his own honour, because such a step would indicate, as it did in the case of Magnús Erlingsson, that Hákon had no lawful claim to the throne but had to win support by making concessions:

1. According to Snorri's account Hkr. 3, pp. 395-398, Magnús did swear an oath concerning ecclesiastical legal powers in order to be consecrated. The details of the oath are not given, but the matter of Magnús' non-kingly descent is brought up in the negotiations.
"...then we think that as such our honour would be decreased rather than increased; for King Magnús did not care what he swore to, if he got that which he was not born to by inheritance."

3 Hákon will not need to buy the honour God has already given him:

"En med Guðs miskunn þá þíkkjumsk vé þat eigi af yór þurfa at þiggja eða kaupa, er Guð hefir oss réttliga til kosið eptir várn fóður ok forelli." (p. 240)

4 Hákon will not take the crown at all, rather than limit his autonomy in order to do so:

"Ok þat skulu þér vita, at með Guðs miskunn skal ek svá frjálsliga at kórunu komask, ok án allra afar-kosta, at vér síðan megim hana frjálsliga bera sem góðir konungar; ella skal hon aldri á várt hófuð koma, ef Guð vil á svá sé." (p. 240)

This speech shows that Hákon is no fool. But it does not possess the concision of Sverrir's, the liveliness of diction, the speed and counterpoint of movement from one point in his argument to the next. All the force of Hákon's speech lies in his logic and the sheer weightiness of his words and his determination. His authoritative attitude is evident in the phrases "at varla veit ek" and "ok þat skulu þér vita". Yet at the age of forty-one, the style Sturla has attributed to him has not changed from that of his boyhood speech.

It is characteristic of his political speeches throughout the saga.

1. See Chapter One, pp. 35-49.
Hákon is shown to adopt no less formal style for his few battle speeches in the saga. Representative is his speech in chapter 111, delivered before an attack on Vermaland, the district at the northern border with Sweden. Here his men are likely to encounter both the Ribbungar and the Vermar, who have been supporting the Ribbungar raids on Norway. The speech is very brief, comprising four points loosely connected, but forming an authoritative record of Hákon's declaration of right:

1. Their attack is not one of unprovoked aggression:

"Engi ofkæti dregr oss til þessar ferðar." (p. 96)  
"No frivolity drives us out on this expedition."

2. They will not fear the opposition even of two enemies because they seek what is justly theirs:

"En þó at Ribbungar ok Vermar standi í móti oss, þá öttumst ek ekki þeirra móttöðu; þvíat vér mælum eptir vóru fé ok frelsi." (p. 96)  
"And though Ribbungar and Vermar oppose us, yet I do not fear their opposition, because we are claiming our property and privilege."

3. Even if they are opposed by the Swedish king himself, they will stand up to him and accept the outcome as God ordains:

"Kemr ok sjálfr Svía-konungr í móti oss, þá verðr annat-hvárt, at vér sattumsk skjótt, ella skulu vár skipti fara sem Guð vill." (p. 96)  
"And if the Swedish king comes against us, then it will happen either that we settle for peace between us quickly or our dealings shall go as God wills it."

4. It is only certain that they will avenge the wrongs they have suffered at these enemies' hands:

"En at vissu skulu vár hefna þeirra skaða er oss hafa gørvrið þér ít Svíaeveldi útan várrar tilgörðar." (p. 96)  
"But we shall certainly avenge those wrongs which have been done to us out of the Swedish domain without our provocation."
Hákon's habitual tone of authority ("En at vissu") and self-righteousness ("sem Guð vill") is again present, as in the political speeches. There is no encouragement offered to the men, no personal rewards of honour or material goods. Hákon provides, according to Sturla, only the example of his confidence, determination, and moral superiority.

In his speech before the battle at Oslo, Hákon adopts some of Sverrir's devices, perhaps in an attempt to bolster the spirits of his troops in the face of a more substantial enemy than the Vermar, that is, Jarl Skúli. That this is deliberate the narrative makes explicit:

King Hákon talked before the host, and had a similar fashion to his speech as King Sverrir was accustomed to have before he did battle.

Some of these features common to both kings' speeches have already been cited - Hákon's use of a proverb (see above, p. 291) and his catalogue of personal and public grievances against Skúli (see above, pp. 287-88). In addition, Hákon declares his host to be superior to Skúli's and even uses two colloquialisms in his enthusiasm:

"...Skúli hertogi hafi góða drengi með sér, þá höfu vér it bezt manna-vél er til’er, ...ok er því meirí vanvirðing, at várir øvinir fái nókkurn bug á oss eðr aprtr-hnekkings, at vör eigu at vera yfir-menn þeirra í öllum stöðum." (p. 215)

"...Duke Skúli has good warriors with him, yet we have the best force of men possible, and it is therefore more disgrace if our enemies make any dint or bending in our lines, since we ought to be their superiors in all respects."

1. For corresponding features in Sverrir's speeches, see Chapter One, pp. 42-44.
Hákon also borrows Sverrir's anecdote about the farmer advising his warrior son, though it is evident from the parallel texts given below, that Hákon's version is not an accurate retelling and loses much of the force of the original. The important alterations are under-scored:

So said a farmer who he accompanied his son to the battle ship and gave him counsel. He told him to be stalwart and hardy in trial, and "Reputation lives longest after a man," he said. "And how would you behave if you came into battle and you knew beforehand that you would die there?" He answered: "What good would it do to spare myself from striking with both hands?" The farmer said: "Now if some man could tell you with certainty that you would not die?" He answered:

...and told them a parable which King Sverrir was accustomed to tell of a certain farmer's son who had to go to the army, leaving his father: "Now the farmer asked his son before they part," said the king, "'What would happen,' said the farmer, 'if you came into battle and knew for certain that you would die there?' The farmer's son answers, 'What good would it do except to fight as valiantly as possible and fall with honour?' 'Now it may be,' says the farmer, 'that you know for certain that you will come away?' He answers: 'Must not then the chief need be to do one's manliest?' - Now we may see," says the king, "that these two things are before us and there is none as a third."
"What good would it do to refrain from pressing forward as best I could?" The farmer said: "In every battle you are in it must turn out either that you die or come away (alive)...

A man does not go to hell unfated, nor the fated saved. In flight is the worst fall.

In the Sverris Saga version, the speaker's axiomatic advice is made memorable, at the beginning and the end, by a flood of alliteration. In keeping with his proverbial tone is the idealised common sense of the basic man, conveyed in this version by the plain diction and straightforward parallels of the argument. The emphasis throughout is concrete, kept upon the vigour of the fighting and the victory. By contrast, there is little alliteration and the force and variation of proverb are lacking in the Hākonar Saga version, while the phrasing is much more ornate, conventionally heroic, and rather stale: "berjask sem fraeknligast", "falla með saemð", "hofuð-nauðsyn at duga sem drengilígast". In addition, the emphasis has become personal and abstract, concerned with fame and death but with no concern for the outcome of the battle. Whether or not this second version represents Hákon's actual words or those of Sturla's informant, it is significant that Sturla himself has made no effort to make it conform more strictly to the Sverris Saga version. His sense of duty as Hákon's official biographer clearly has limits.
Finally, Hákon follows Sverrir by giving his men St Óláfr's war-cry:

"Kennisk sem bezt, ok hafi þat ákall sem Birkibeinar vàru vanir: 'Framm Kristz-menn ok Kross-menn; ins hêlga Óláfs konungs menn!'" (p. 215)  
"Know each other as best you can and have that cry to which the Birkibeinar were accustomed: "Forward Christ's men and Cross-men, the Holy King Óláfr's men."

Because the correspondences with Sverrir's speeches are only superficial, this speech in Hákonar Saga does not possess their vitality and force. Other features of Hákon's speech contrast it with Sverrir's style. First, the diction is monotonous without aesthetic effect and is sometimes reminiscent of Hákon's earlier speech in chapter 111, for instance:

p. 215:

"...skaða er Várbelgir hafa oss gört"  
"...the wrongs which the Várbelgir have done to us."

"...vér eigum at verja frelsi várt ok fê."  
"...we ought to defend our privilege and property."

p. 96:

"...skulu vér hefna þeirra skaða er oss hafa görvir verit."  
"...we shall avenge on them the wrongs which have been done us."

"...vér melum eptir vóru fê ok frelsi."  
"...we claim our property and privilege."

Such monotony is greatly exaggerated by the sentence structure, regularly lengthened out with co-ordinate clauses. Finally, Hákon practically undoes all the good of his speech, when, after the anecdote, he cautions them not to fight each other:

1. See Sv. chapter 163, p. 175, ll. 32-33.
Siðan sagði hann þeim hversu... þeir kamí til orrostu, at þeir geti sem bezt at eigi berizk þeir sjálfir vápn á, ok at menn gefi gaum at. (p. 215)

Then he told them how when they came into battle that they do their best not to wield their weapons against each other and that men take care.

This scarcely demonstrates confidence in his troops. Its negative emphasis is more characteristic of Magnús Erlingsson's approach than Sverrir's. ¹

Out of context, Hákon's speeches seem by comparison to Sverrir's less forceful, yet their restrained quality and the absence of any Sverrian exuberance help to project the formal image of the royal figure which is appropriate to a more established Norwegian monarchy than Sverrir knew. Protocol and convention have taken the place of Sverrir's bold, political adventurism.

¹. See Chapter One, p. 75.
IV The flat documentation of action

It has been pointed out that there are fewer battle accounts in Håkonar Saga than in Sverris Saga. In those cited, the reader will have noticed that Sturla's style is much more flat and serious, much less vigorous than Abbot Karl's in recording Sverrir's battles. Close focuses, such as those on Skúli and on Hákon in the Oslo battle account (see above, pp.297 ff.), are brief and isolated unlike the continuous series of related anecdotes which form the records of Sverris Saga. Passages of general battle action in Håkonar Saga are characterised by monotonous and repetitive diction (see above, p. 276 note 3). These features are characteristic of Sturla's documentation of action scenes throughout the saga. A lengthy passage of such bare, untextured reporting can be found in the saga on pages 132 to 136, chapters 151 to the end of 153. The passage is too long to be cited entirely, but consider this extract from the beginning:

Ribbungar létu þá eptir öll skip í Mjörs; ok voru flestir farnir ör vatninu ok austr á Markir til móts við Knút. Konungr fór ör Oslo upp til Eiðs-vallar ok átti þing við bændr. Gengu þeir þá í sam- heldi við konung á nýja-leik. Konungr snöri þá þaðan út á Raumaríki ok austr yfir Elfi; þvíat hónum var sagt, at Knútr léti draga skip ör Hellisfjörð, ok atlæði upp á Markir ok þaðan í Elfin. Ok er konungr kom í bygðina þá er Heggin heitir, var hónum sagt, at þat varri lygð, Snöri konungr þá aptr, ok fór út á Follu...Knútr...lét hann draga skip ör Hellisfjörð, þar sem aldri höfðu skip dregin verit, ok kom þeim upp á Markir ok

The Ribbungar then left all their ships behind on Lake Mjors; and most were gone from the lake and east to Markir to meet Knútr. The king went from Oslo up to Eiða-válfr and held an assembly with the farmers. They then joined together with the king in a new compact. The king turned from there out to Raumaríki and east over to Elfri, because he was told that Knútr had had ships drawn from Hellisfjörð and intended to go to Markir and from there to Elfri. And when the king came to the settlement called Heggin, he was told that it was a lie. Then the king turned back and went out to Follu...Knútr...had ships dragged from the Hellisfjörð where ships had never been dragged

1. See Chapter One, pp. 102 ff.
síðan norðr í Elfr; ok kom á óvart at þeim Ívri, ok eltu þá af skipum; ok föru þeir síðan út til Osloár á fund Hákonar konungs. (pp. 132-133)

before and brought them up to Markir and then north to Elfr and came upon Ívarr and his men by surprise and drove them from their ships; and they went from there out to Oslo to meet with King Hákon.

Pace is scarcely varied; detail consists in general troop movements; and there is an absence of dramatic connection between events so that the facts seem loosely hung together. The verbs are commonplace and lack vividness - fara, snúa, láta, draga, koma, spyrja, segja - while most of the phrases specify directions. The same or similar verbs and phrases appear repeatedly throughout the account.

Some attempt is made to provide local interest a little later when Sturla records (p. 134) the direct discourse of two opposing captains as they cast taunts at each other in the conventional manner:


Then Haraldr from Lautyn leapt out on the river bank and asked who led the troop. Haraldr filly-goad answered: "We should recognise each other, kinsmen; but we over here are calves and district men of Uppland." The other answers: "Seldom do you have such a great company or so well outfitted; and where is King Hákon?" "He is here," says Haraldr. The other answers: "Why does he take upon himself such misery for his pains that he drives all the way east into Markir against us Ribbungar?" "I expect that the reason for it is more necessity than caprice," says Haraldr, "to drive such rascally troops from the land as you have here."

1. See for instance, exchanges between Hrútr and Atli in chapter 5 of Njáls Saga; one of Sverrir's men and Magnús Erlingsson in Sverris Saga at the battle at Ílía, p. 51; and Óláfr Tryggvason and Ólfr Hkr. 1, pp. 356-57
These remarks are too long and their content too abstract to possess the spice and epigramatic punch characteristic of such exchanges in other sagas. It is also notable that Hákon's captain echoes a statement of royal right made by the king himself earlier in the saga (see above, pp. 310). The captains' exchange is nevertheless a rare instance in the saga of what seems to be a conversation told to Sturla by an eye-witness, perhaps one of the captains himself.

These representative passages show a dry, humdrum documentation which seems to be kept flat deliberately. It lends to the narrative the authority of apparent factualness and it is also consistent with the restrained, serious, and formal presentation of the king himself.
One of the most distinctive positive features of many of Sturla’s accounts in Hákonar Saga is their actuality. Sturla captures this by documenting events with an historian’s thorough and serious attention to facts, by including details which convey precisely and immediately a specific human predicament, and by recording moments of intense personal emotion among the saga figures with solemn and delicate dramatisation.

A The authority of facts

Some mention has been made of the wide range of subject matter in the saga, but range and variety do not in themselves convey actuality. This depends upon the specific factual nature of the individual details Sturla records about events, details which suggest eye-witness sources and which have a role primarily informative rather than aesthetic. Such details most frequently occur as catalogues of participants in an event, for instance:

...Guðólfr var höfuð-rúðgjafi hans, en Erlingr rúmstafr merkismæðr hans. En þessir kömu fyrstir sveitar-höfingjar til þeirra, Söndúlfur Hauksson, Þorleifr brúðr, Erlingr hringr, Helgi á Sólbjörgum, Gauti gott-smjör, Gassi undan Fjallinu, Grímarr svangi. (p. 51)

Guðólfr was his principal strategist, but Erlingr bedpost his standard bearer. But these captains of companies came first to them: Söndúlfur Hauksson, Þorleifr bride, Erlingr ring, Helgi from Sólbergr, Gautr good-butter, Gassi from below Fjall, Grímarr the hungry.

or information about the weather conditions, especially where these affect the outcome of a specific event, even if the event is not a significant one in the saga as a whole, for instance:

1. For other examples, see pp. 74, 96, 146, 161, 162, 175, 176, 245, 275, 331-332. This naming occurs frequently in the Íslendinga Saga accounts sometimes with great aesthetic effect, as in the record of the Flugu-mýrarbrenna. See Chapter Six, pp. 473-74.
Var Birkibeinum óhæg atgangan, því at snjór var mikill, ok lilt at fara, en Várbelgir íóku harðfengiliga víó. (p. 201)³ It was a difficult offensive for the Birkibeinar because there was much snow and it was hard to advance, but the Várbelgir stood up to it valiantly.

B Luminous details

There are certain details in the narrative which are described here as luminous because they capture precisely and with a powerful immediacy the impression of a specific moment or a specific condition associated with a larger event. Such details convey not only the facts of a particular moment but also a participant's response to them. The style does not differ from the rest of the narrative except that the details appear to be included with greater deliberation than usual and with greater control. In all cases the details are few and plainly presented, so that there is never any effusiveness, but rather reservation and restraint.

A brief sketch is given, for instance, in chapter 112, of the hardships Hákon's men undergo during the winter expedition into Vermaland. In Sverris Saga, such hardships are also mentioned, but with so much more detail that they seem almost a boast, suggesting that the sufferings were a fair price for the pleasure afforded in the telling of them afterwards.² Here in Hákonar Saga, the brevity and plain diction present a more grimly realistic picture:

1. For other examples, see pp. 57, 61, 64, 57, 90, 106, 107, 108, 110, 121, 130, 195, 208, 209, 210, 212, 213, 238, 255, 285, 316, 331, 334, 340

2. See, for instance Sv. Chapter 20
Veðr var vindligt ok mjökl kallt. Í möt degi gjörð konungrinn fram á skóginn miðjan (menn). Þar var mikil sælu-húss-stofa við kirkjuna. Hann bað þar göra elda stóra í garðinum. Þat var allt senn, at dagr rann upp, ok konungr kom til eldanna, ok vermbú menn sú þar um hrfíð; þvíat flestir voru nökkut frosnir á höndum eðr fótum eðr andliti. (p. 97)

The weather was windy and very cold. Just before day the king sent his men forward to the middle of the woods. There was a great hostelry beside the church. He commanded large fires to be made in the enclosure. All of a sudden day broke and the king came to the fires and his men warmed themselves there for a while because most were somewhat frozen in the hands or the feet or the face.

There is no glory in this aspect of the expedition. The short sentences and co-ordinate clause, as well as the catalogue of frozen parts - höndum eðr fótum eðr andliti - conveys the spareness and monotony of the soldier's life with a grim specificity.

Even more visual than the scene around the winter fires is Hákon's arrival with his men at Oslo, just before the battle with Skúli. Here the simplicity of sentence structure and the unobtrusiveness of the diction help to capture the dark stillness of the night, as well as the immobility of Hákon's troops as he hesitates before attacking, uncertain for a moment whether his enemy is still in the town:

Þá er Hákon konungr kom fram á brekkuna í sýn við bæinn, þá tók at lýsa svá at þeir fengu skilt hvat er títt var í bænum. Var allt tvist ok hljótt til at sjá. Þá mælti konungr, svá at þeir heyrðu er næstir voru, "Pat öttumk ek nú, at Vårbelgjum muni hafa komit njósn um ferðir várar, ok sá þeir í brottu ór bænum." (p. 216)

When King Hákon came forward on the hillside within sight of the town, then it began to grow light so that they could distinguish what was happening in the town. It was altogether silent and still to see. Then the king said, so that they heard who were nearest him, "Now I am afraid that news of our journey must have reached the Vårbelgir and they are gone from the town."
The luminous detail here is in the shortest sentence: "Var allt tvist ok hjótt til at sjá". The reader shares their hilltop perspective, their gaze running down over the silent and motionless town. The whole troop seems to halt and gaze with them, and in the soft hiss of Sturla's word 'tvist' lies his recognition of the inclination to whisper, as the king evidently does, while they stand above the sleeping enemy. The focus here is perfectly precise and controlled, instantly recognised by anyone who has ever watched from a hillside the slumber of town or farm or cottage. The actuality lies in the community of experience upon which the detail draws.

C Dramatisation

The above examples illustrate how single details can function to present individual moments with visual and psychological vividness. When Sturla selects and consistently controls his facts in this fashion and incorporates dialogue, he creates a rare narrative tension. Sturla's dramatisations are moments of intense inner emotion rather than moments of critical and fast-moving action, which is kept subordinate in the Hákonar Saga passages.

One of the most striking of such moments, and characteristic of Sturla's style at its best, is King Hákon's meeting with his queen in chapter 207 (p. 190). He has just learned that Skúli, the queen's father, has taken the title of king, and so he goes at once in the night to her bedchamber to tell her. Sturla conveys here the king's tension and concern for his wife, the night atmosphere, and the queen's welling sorrow, all with the plainest of syntactic
structures and diction. The solemnity of the occasion is captured
in the ceremonial step-by-step approach of the king to the chamber:

Siðan gékk hann til herbergis
dróttningar, ok bað upp láta.
Var svá gört; gékk konungr í
herbergit. (p. 190)

Then he went to the queen's
chamber and asked for the door
to be opened. It was done. The
king went into the chamber.

Here there is a pause in the action, slow and heavy as it is, where
it seems that Hákon himself has paused just inside the door, as if
to determine whether the queen has any companions other than the
servants of her chamber. These are all asleep, as Hákon could discern
by the light burning there. Sturla does not explain all this; he
gives us only what we need to determine these things for ourselves:

brann þar ljós. Þar sváfu
sveinar nökkurir, ok þjón-
ustu-meyjar króttningar.
(p. 190)

A light burned there. There
slept a few boys and serving
maidens of the queen.

We have gazed round the room with Hákon; now he moves forward into
the light himself:

Konungr gékk at rekkjuni
(p. 190)

The king went to the bed
closet.

The verb "gékk" repeated from above, suggests the same solemn pace
he used before. The queen is there, awake, but clad only in her
nightdress, over which she casts a red robe. The shyness and
nervous formality of this action make her the picture of vulnerability:

en dóttning stóð í silki-
serk, ok kastaði yfir sik
tugla-mótli rauðum. (p. 190)

and the queen stood in a silk
nightdress and cast over herself
a red robe, bound at the waist
with a thong.
The dialogue is divided between direct and indirect discourse, with the most distinctive remarks rendered directly. At first, however, their remarks are mere formalities, a tense see-saw exchange punctuated by periods, which imply embarrassing silences. Notice too, how Hákon is called the king throughout, emphasising his courtly presence rather than that of lover or husband:

Hón fagnaði konunginum. She welcomed the king.
Hann tók því blíföliga. He received this cheerfully.
Hón tók einn silki-kodda, She took a silk pillow and
ok bað konunginn sitja. invited the king to sit
down. He said he did not wish
to. She asked if the king had
Hann kvezk þat eigi vilja. heard any recent news.
Hon spurði, ef konungrinn
hefði fretti núkkur ny
tíðendin. (p. 190)

This last piece of small talk demands Hákon's errand, and suggests she must suspect what has preceded his visit. In answering he cannot be explicit, whether through tension or in an attempt to be gentle and protective of her, and instead he gives an elliptical understatement. It is the first direct statement in the passage and also marks the crisis of the tension which will now begin to unwind itself between the speakers:

"Smá eru tíðendin," segir "The news is insignificant,"
hann, "tveir eru konungar he says, "there are two kings
í Noregi í senn." (p. 190) in Norway at once."

For a moment she does not or will not understand what he means:

Hón sagði: "Einn mun vera She said, "Only one will be
rétt konungr, ok erut þér the lawful king and that is
þar; ok svá látí Guð vera you; and him may God maintain
ok inn helgi Óláfr konungr." and the holy King Óláfr."
So he must tell her what her father has done, but this time in indirect speech, suggesting an even greater restraint in his voice:

*bá sagði konungr, at faðir þennar hefði látið gefa sér konungs-nafn á Eyra-bingi.* (p. 190)

Then the king said that her father had given himself the title of king at the Eyra-bing.

Now she knows for certain, but even as she refused to acknowledge any but an explicit statement, so she now appeals to Hákon not to believe the news until events insist he must. Her elaborate expression of desperation is emotional rather than logical, implying the fear that she, too, will be broken by the sundering of the Hákon-Skúli alliance, for her marriage to Hákon was an early pledge of that alliance:

"Betr mun vera," segir hón, "ok gør í fyrir Guðs sakir, trút þessu eigi, meðan þér megr við dyljask." (p. 190) *"It will be better," she said, "and do it—for God's sake—not trust this as long as you are able to remain in ignorance."*

That marks the end of the direct discourse; the crisis is over; the tension breaks and floods out through her tears:

*Kemr bá uppr grátr fyrir henni, ok mátti hón ekk fleira um tala.* (p. 190) *Then her tears overcame her and she could not speak any more of it.*

Hákon's initial attempts to comfort her, though gentle, are perhaps a little crude, a little insensitive in offering her the conventional consolation "vera kátr". This failure to find the best words indicates that his self-control is being overcome by his own tension:
The king begged her to be cheerful, saying that she would not suffer through him for the designs of her father.

Sturla does not record how they resolve the matter, or whether they are able to comfort each other in the end, but he mentions that the king does not leave abruptly:

A little later the king went away.

This incompleteness may not be Sturla's doing, but it is in excellent taste. The passage has a subdued purity about it preserved by the spareness of the style and the careful placing of the pauses.¹

Indication of the queen's affection for her father, her complete recognition of her difficult position as Hákon's wife and Skúli's daughter, is provided in chapter 189, a passage already referred to above (see p. 292). When Hákon hears the rumour that his bailiff has been killed, he calls out his men and sets up his standard against Skúli:

The king's men went out into the enclosure and set up their standard.

The promptness and control of Skúli's reaction is conveyed by the brief co-ordinate clauses Sturla uses. He remains succinct throughout the passage to aid the intensity:

¹. Because of this private atmosphere and because of certain details in the passage, I am led to suspect that Sturla's source here is the queen herself. The account suggests that the couple were, for all intents and purposes, alone, provided the servants really were asleep, as we are told. The queen was still alive as Sturla wrote.
Hann vaknaði við gnyinn ok hljóp upp, ok gekk út í svalirnar. (p. 168)

He woke with the din and jumped up and went out onto the balcony.

The focus now moves at once to the figure of his daughter in the yard, the first indication that she has come on this occasion:

Hann sá at dróttning stóð þar út í garðinum (p. 168)

He saw that the queen stood there out in the enclosure.

The conversation between them is given indirectly and without anything excessive, suggesting its private and circumspect nature, as well as the queen's anxiety to warn her father of the trouble.

His attempt to reassure her marks their bond of affection:

Jarl spurði hana hverju gegndi þetta. Hón segir hónum hvat titt var. Jarl bað hana vera káta, ok sagði at ekki muni saka. (p. 168)

He asked her why she was standing outside. She told him what was happening. The jarl told her to be of good cheer and said that no harm would come of it.

Skúli then dresses and is met by an illegitimate son of the king, who accompanies him out. The matter is settled peacefully, having been caused by a false rumour, deliberately spread.¹

¹ Other notable dramatic scenes in the saga are the account of Skúli's death and the record of its announcement in the court of Hákon, both of which have been discussed in connection with Sturla's portrait of the jarl in the saga. (See above, pp. 302, 305-6).
VI Conclusions

Several of the distinctive features of the style and structure of Hákonar Saga contrast with Sturla's later work, Íslingenda Saga:

1. The diplomatic considerations which account for Sturla's constrained and often laboured approach to his subject are not applicable to the writing of Íslingenda Saga, so that a much more balanced view of events is offered.

2. The Icelandic events which are mentioned only in passing in Hákonar Saga are given much fuller attention in Íslingenda Saga. The Flugumyrarbreinn, for instance, merits but one sentence in Hákonar Saga:

   Ok er þeir komu til Islands, spuruðu þeir at þar hófðu orðit mikil tíðindi um haustið ár, at þeir Eyjólfr Forsteinnson, ok Hrani Kóvaransson, ok Kolbeinn grön, haðu brennt inni sönun Gizurar þrá ok marga menn aðra á Flugu-mýri. (p. 278)

   And when they arrived at Iceland, they learned that much news had happened the autumn before, that Eyjólfr Forsteinnson, and Hrani Kóvaransson, and Kolbeinn grön, had burned in the three sons of Gizurr and many other men at Flugu-mýr.

   In Íslingenda Saga, the account of this burning forms the climax of the saga and fills ten pages of intense dramatic action, both on the ground of battle and in the hearts of several participants. Other instances include Snorri's journey to Norway and his relations with Skúli and Hákon in 1218 (Hákonar Saga p. 49; Íslingenda Saga p. 321); and Snorri's death in 1241 (Hákonar Saga, p. 237; Íslingenda Saga pp. 453-454). Of course the majority of events in Íslingenda Saga are not mentioned in Hákonar Saga at all.

3. The overt connectedness of events in Hákonar Saga is abandoned for the structuring of Íslingenda Saga; phrases such as "sem fyrir var ritað" are rare. And yet Sturla practices selection and controls his material more consistently in the later work. There the factual detail is never excessive and often has an aesthetic as well as an informative function.

4. Whereas Hákon is represented as a formal, distant, and rather cold figure, in Íslingenda Saga Sturla makes the full warmth and individuality of many people's inner natures emerge, principally through more extensive dramatic presentation than he uses in Hákonar Saga.

1. See Chapter Six, pp. 473 ff.
2. See Chapter Six, pp. 414 ff.
Other features of Hákonar Saga show it to be a working ground for Sturla and anticipate his mature style. His serious approach is equally characteristic of Islendinga Saga, in which he no more glorifies the violent confrontations of his own countrymen than he did Hákon's battles. In addition, his style remains distinctly spare, though somewhat refined by the experience of writing Hákonar Saga. He has overcome monotony in his later work and distilled the practice of succinct narration for the sake of dramatic intensity.¹ These features of Islendinga Saga are discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

¹ Helle, opt. cit., p. 53: "Det fortellertalent Sturla legger for dagen i sin Islendinga saga, ropper seg bare her og der i H.s.H."
APPENDIX A: The Provenance of Hákonar Saga

Hákonar Saga, like Sverris Saga, was written by an Icelander under the direction of a Norse king, but here the similarity in the provenances of the two sagas ends. For Sturla Þórðarson, in writing Hákonar Saga, laboured under much different circumstances than did his fellow countryman, Abbot Karl Jónsson. Sturla had been forced to leave Iceland in 1263 because of a quarrel arising out of his opposition to Norwegian rule in Iceland, and he fled to Norway as out of the frying pan into the fire, finding there no friends and lacking financial means to win them. The only circumstance in his favour was that King Hákon, who considered most of the Sturlungs his bitterest enemies, was absent on an expedition to Scotland and the Western Isles. His son, King Magnús, still a young man, was only slightly less indisposed to the Icelander than his father, but nevertheless allowed Sturla his life and a position on board his ship as a crew member, postponing judgment in the matter until his father's return.

Hákon did not return alive; he died of illness in the Orkneys in December of 1263. By the time this news reached Norway in March 1264, Sturla had managed to ingratiate himself with the new king by his poetry and story-telling. Thus, Magnús, perhaps directly following the precedent set by his great-grandfather, King Sverrir, commissioned the Icelander to write a saga of King Hákon. Magnús supervised the work himself and gave Sturla
access to letters in the Royal Archives, 1 some of which appear in
the saga itself, and to eye-witnesses among loyal court retainers
who had served under Hákon. Poems about King Hákon were also
extant, composed for the most part by Sturla and his brother
Óláfr Hvítaskáld, some of which appear in the saga in support
of the narrative, but add little factual information.

We must keep in mind, then, that Sturla did not write the
gaga as a free artist. He himself bore no love for the old
king and yet his delicate relationship with Magnús Hákonarson
required that he present Hákon in the best possible light
without mocking him with exaggerated praise. And, with Magnús'
close supervision and the quite possibly questionable accuracy
of the eye-witness reports, we should not be surprised if the
gaga style seems constrained. 2

1. Narve Bjørøg, "Om Skriflege Kjelder for Hákonar Saga" in
Bjørøg, "Hákonar s. og Bøglunga s" in Maal og Minne 1968,
pp. 8-25, also makes a strong case that Sturla used Bøglunga
Saga as a source for the early part of Hákonar Saga when he
was establishing Hákon's right to the throne. This seems
extremely likely, although its importance as a source is
confined to the first few chapters and it is less significant
than the documents from the Royal Library which form a basis
for most of the legal detail that appears throughout the
saga, very often in lengthy and unenlivened speeches.

2. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, Prolegomena to Sturlunga Saga, Volume I,
(Oxford, 1878), p. cvi
### APPENDIX B: The proportions of Hákonar Saga

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Chapter Five

Literary Device and Artistic Control in *Njáls Saga*

I Introduction

In this chapter an attempt is made to demonstrate how saga style is affected in a specific case when historical constraints are removed. For the Njála author, this freedom allows him to control and shape the narrative in an imaginative and subtle fashion, making deliberate use of literary device, inverted convention, and structuring. Such sophistication and manipulation as are evident in Njála represent a style almost contemporary with Sturla Bórdarson's in Íslendinga Saga and another among those styles which Sturla might have adopted for his own work, altogether or in part. This, in addition to the parallels of subject matter between the two works, gives Njála place in this dissertation.
II The complex and deliberate patterning of a series of related incidents: Hallgerðr's marriages

A Recent critical opinion

The Njála author exploits his freedom from historical constraints by creating and controlling complex patterns of action which are at once delicate and tightly interwoven. Recent critical opinion has over simplified this patterning, as reviewers have pointed out. T.M. Andersson has suggested that patterns of action in the family sagas in general are built up from basic structures which are saga writers' common equipment:

An analysis of the saga plots leads to the conclusion that there are recurrent structural features and patterns. The patterns are in fact so repetitive and the similarities so great that, without doing undue violence to the plots, one can abstract from them a standard structure to which all sagas under study, with the exception of Vatnsdæla Saga, conform to a greater or lesser degree.¹

Though he does not acknowledge it, Andersson's outline patterns of action are critical constructs, not creative ones. They have been

Lars Lönnroth, in Njáls Saga: A Critical Introduction (California, 1976) p. 19, criticises Andersson's approach, acknowledging that individual authors may have patterns unique to their own works. However, he emphasises, just as Andersson does, the common elements in "individual stock scenes" (p. 47), gives examples (for instance, the travel pattern, p. 71), and provides a scheme of saga structure similar to Andersson's (pp. 68 ff).
Some reviewers have merely described the content of Andersson's book, offering little or no opinion of his approach and method: Carl F. Bayerschmidt, Germanic Review XLII, 1967, pp. 227-28; Jacqueline Simpson, Folklore LXXVIII, Autumn, 1967, p. 223. A more discerning review has been published by Richard M. Perkins in Scandinavica VI, pp. 137-139, who writes: "The author's conception of saga structure itself is very interesting, but his attempt to generalise it to the whole corpus is misguided and cannot fail to give an erroneous impression to the uninitiated. If any structural pattern has any genuine and general applicability to the whole genre it should be possible to show it by subtler and gentler means than those used here."
abstracted from the literature in order to describe its superficial structure in a simple and rational manner. Yet close reading reveals that specific incidents in a series are more complexly related than this crude critical approach allows. Conventional or repeated elements are present, but they are used, as a refrain is used in a ballad, to set in relief what is distinctive in each incident. The pattern the Njála author establishes is not therefore repeated exactly, but rather constantly developed, refined, and made to emerge, as much by contrast as by correspondence and with specific artistic intent.¹

In his accounts of Hallgerðr's first two marriages, the saga author makes use of this patterning to show that Hallgerðr only behaves in the manner of a wilful, spoiled child when she is treated badly; to kindness and respect she responds with sincerity and decorum. Andersson and Lönroth have clearly missed this point. Andersson speaks of "Hallgerðr's equally ill-fated marriages to two successive husbands"² and of the established pattern of "quarrel, blow, vengeance, and death of her husband."³ The brief outline sketch which he offers of this pattern scarcely acknowledges the differences between the two accounts.

¹. Ian Maxwell recognised this even before Andersson wrote The Icelandic Family Saga, in his article "Patterns in Njáls Saga S-BVS Vol. XV 1957-59, p. 22, where he says there is "on every page evidence of precise shaping and subtle linking...planned crescendo...calculated echoes...pointed crises."

². Andersson, op. cit. p. 291

³. Andersson, op. cit. p. 304
Lönnroth, even though he allows that for the second marriage
"The prospects thus look excellent, much better than the first
time," still insists:

...when she marries another man, Glúmr, the same
disastrous pattern is repeated: Hallgerðr is slapped
after a quarrel, and Pjóstólfr promptly kills the
husband. Again, a settlement is arranged, and
Hallgerðr - like Unn in the previous episode - is
available for marriage.  

...we get a distinct feeling of recurrence. Each of
Hallgerðr's husbands, for example, goes through the
same series of experiences.

This superficial view is matched by his fixed opinion of Hallgerðr,
quite unshaken by the author's demonstrable attempts to present
her blameless behaviour during her second marriage. 4 Lönnroth
speaks authoritatively but without specific instance, of Hallgerðr's
"harsh, unfeminine nature, which is repeatedly demonstrated in the
stories about her marriages" 5 and he suggests that her mind is
equally as evil as the Clontarf viking Bróðir's, because they
are both described as tall, with hair sufficiently long to tuck under
their belts. The absence of any other common features between the
two, together with their separation in the saga in both objective and
narrative time, makes it unlikely that any comparison was intended
by the author. The very different contexts and diction of the descriptions
confirms this. In Hallgerðr's case, the four references to her size

1. Lönnroth, "Structural Divisions in the Njála Manuscripts" in
Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi XC, p. 76
2. Lönnroth, Njáls Saga, op. cit. p. 25
3. Ibid., p. 32
4. See below, pp. 338 ff.
5. Lönnroth, Njáls Saga, op cit. p. 37
and hair (pp. 6, 29, 44, 85) are set in scenes in which her physical attractiveness clearly wins male notice, whether her father's, Glúmr's, Þorvaldr's, or Gunnarr's. The sketch of Bróðir, however, presents a figure made repellent by apostacy and swarthiness. The detail of the long hair here contributes a suggestion of unkemptness to the portrait (p. 446). In addition, the verb used in the case of Bróðir's hair is "vefja", but in the descriptions of Hallgerðr, the author uses "þat tók ofan á belti," and "drap hon undir beltisér," and "hon mátti hylja sík með." There is no verbal echo.

B Analysis of the two marriage accounts:

Closer reading, as just applied to the descriptions of Hallgerðr, shows that the two marriage accounts are not constructed as mirror images of each other. Rather, the author has shaped them from a deliberate selection of comparable scenes and details in such a way that the similarities point to significant differences. These distinctive features can be seen to proceed from the inner natures attributed to the saga figures through description, action, and direct discourse.

1. Richard Allen, Fire and Iron (Pittsburg, 1971) p. 80, writes that the silence about Hallgerðr's manners here may be deliberate and is "appropriate in light of Hallgerðr's later behaviour." Yet, she behaves with excellent manners during her courtship and marriage to Glúmr.

2. Ibid., p. 149. Allen remarks this function of each description, which, he says "delves on her remarkable hair and perhaps suggests the strong element of sexuality residing in her."

3. Ibid., p. 63, Allen seems to recognise this when he writes that the two accounts share "the same structure, although the details of each motif are different." He goes on, however, to suggest that these differences are not as significant as my reading indicates: "closer examination reveals that their structure is virtually identical."
1 Initial character sketches present the very qualities which determine each figure's subsequent behaviour.

The effect of Hallgerðr's beauty has been mentioned. Of the features referring to her inner nature, her open-handedness (örlynd) will manifest itself as wastefulness during her first marriage but as uncriticised generosity during her second. The severity of her temperament (skaphörð) will emerge prominently during her marriage to Þorvaldr, strengthened by the encouragement and unscrupulous eagerness for violence mentioned in the sketch of Bjóstólftr.

The two prospective husbands, Þorvaldr and Glúmr, are both described as wealthy and strong (p. 29: vel auðigr at fé; vel styrkr maðr; pp. 40-41: vel auðigr at fé; mikill maðr ok sterkr), indicating a comparable social class and anticipating the final physical contest each man has with Bjóstólftr. Only in Þorvaldr's case is a source of his wealth mentioned, the fish and meal from the Bjarnareyjar, precisely because these goods form the basis of the quarrel between Þorvaldr and Hallgerðr and because the island will be the scene of Þorvaldr's death (pp. 34-35).

Glúmr's only distinguishing feature is his handsomeness (friðr sýnum) which is probably intended as a match to the refinement (kurteiss, p. 30) attributed to Þorvaldr. More important to Glúmr's image are his connections with his warrior brother Ragi and his law-
speaker brother Þórarinn, who will have a significant role as counsellor in subsequent events. In addition, Glúmr is said to be well-travelled, a feature which clearly attracts Hallgerðr to Gunnarr later in the saga, as the reader may suppose it does here. In this case, Glúmr will seem to Hallgerðr less provincial than Þórvaldr.

The only negative quality included in either description is attributed to Þórvaldr, his quick-temperedness (bráðr í skaplyndi, p. 30). This aspect of his inner nature prepares the reader for his clash with Hallgerðr.

Further significant qualities of each husband's nature emerge from his consultation with a male relative about marriage prospects, Þórvaldr with his father Ösvífr and Glúmr with the wise Þórarinn. In the first consultation, Þórvaldr's choosiness among possible brides clearly depends upon conceit rather than long consideration (honum þótti sér óvíða fullkosta, p. 30), while his snappish refusal to heed his father's caution ("Hon er kona skapstór en þú harðlyndr ok óváginn" p. 30) reveals a stubborn insensitivity anticipating the later clash with Hallgerðr:

"mun mik ekki tjóa at letja" "nothing will succeed in dissuading me" (p. 30)

Glúmr displays none of Þórvaldr's conceit, but demonstrates the consideration for Hallgerðr behind his choice when Þórarinn protests on the basis of precedent:
"Má, at hana hendi eigi slík ógipta í annat sinn, ok veit ek víst, at hon reðr eigi mér bana." (p. 42)  "It may be that such bad luck will not befall her a second time; and I know for certain that she will not cause my killing."

Glúmr's respect for his brother is evident in the more polite tone of their discussion compared to Þórvaldr's with Ósvífr, and in Glúmr's repeated attempts to win Þórarinn's support for the suit:

Opt kom Glúmr á um þetta mál við Þórarinn (p. 42)  Glúmr often brought the matter up with Þórarinn.

Although Þórarinn's initial opposition is stronger than Ósvífr's his ultimate support is positive rather than resigned. Unlike the silent Ósvífr, Þórarinn declares Glúmr's suit to Höskuldr and he also argues strongly for the potential success of the second marriage:

"...eigi skal einn elðr alla verða, ok má þetta verða vel, þó at hitt yrði illa, enda spilti Bjóstólfr òar mest un." (p. 43)  "...one broken oath does not invalidate all, and this may turn out well even though the other turned out badly; and indeed, Bjóstólfr spoiled it most of all."

3 The contrast between the two consultations is continued by the two wooing scenes, boding ill for the first marriage and well for the second.

Elements of Þórvaldr's wooing scene:

a) The suit is declared at once and the matter settled briefly, showing imprudent haste on both sides.1

Elements of Glúmr's wooing scene:

a) The suit is not declared until the suitor's party has spent the night, showing a promising attentiveness to social niceties.

1. Allen, op. cit., p. 75 has also recognised this: "this hastiness is unseemly and runs counter to the usual motif of polite delay proper on such occasions."
b) Höskuldr arranges the betrothal without consulting anyone else because he is anxious to have Hallgerðr married:

...ok spurði Höskuldr dóttur sína ekki eptir, því at honum var hugr á at gipta hana (p. 31)

b) Höskuldr consults Hrútr at once and shows a readiness to take his advice ("Hvat þykkir þér ráð?" p. 42) which betrays his anxiety not to make a mistake a second time.

c) When cautioned about Hallgerðr's nature, Órvaldr exposes an insensitive business-like approach to the marriage, ominous for his bride's happiness:

"Ger þú kostinn, því at ek mun skaplyndi hennar ekki láta fyrir kaupi standa." (p. 31)

c) Pórarinn's arguments against Höskuldr's hesitation to consent reflect his own and Glúmr's more considerate and welcoming attitude toward Hallgerðr.

d) Órvaldr's party depart before Hallgerðr is told of the betrothal.

d) On Hrútr's advice, Hallgerðr is consulted before the betrothal is fixed.

e) Hrútr foresees the failure of the marriage and implies that their temperaments will be the cause:

"...hvárigu mun í pesku kaupi gipta, honum né henni." (p. 32)

e) Hrútr warns Glúmr that the marriage will be successful only if Bjóstólfr is not allowed to interfere (p. 43). This warning indicates the external basis of the couple's later quarrel.

4 Hallgerðr's reaction to each betrothal is distinct, revealing separate sides of her nature. Having had no say in her first betrothal, her annoyance and depression (var henni skapþungt, p. 31) are justified, but her challenge to her father's love for her discloses a particularly girlish spitefulness. Bjóstólfr's consolation only encourages this, while at the same time it poses an implicit threat to Órvaldr's life:
When she is in fact consulted before her betrothal to Glúmr, Hallgerðr behaves with an enchanting decorum. Her conversation is polite, she indicates her attraction to Glúmr with coy discretion, and she acknowledges her father's and uncle's decision with a pointed magnanimity:

"Svá vel sem þér hefir farit til mín, faðir, um þetta mál, ok þér, Hrútr, at ek vil þetta at ykkru ráði gera." (p. 44) You have treated me so well, Father, in this matter, and you, Hrútr, that I will do what you advise."

This behaviour rewards Glúmr's confidence in choosing her for his wife and accounts for the pervasive peace which precedes the wedding: Er nú kyrrt þar til, er menn ríða til boðs. (p. 45)

5 The comparable elements of the brief wedding accounts promise failure and success, respectively:

Porvaldr's wedding:

a) The bride behaves in a markedly coarse fashion, too boisterous for her position:

...sat Hallgerðr á palli, ok var brúðrin allkát. (p. 32)

b) Þjöstólfr is present and behaves suspiciously with Hallgerðr's sorcerer uncle, Svanr, as people notice:

...gekk Þjöstólfr jafnan til tals við hana, en stundum talar hann við Svan, ok fannsk mönnnum mikit um tal þeira. (p. 32)

Glúmr's wedding:

a) The bride behaves with dignity:

Hallgerðr sat á palli ok samði sér vel. (p. 45)

b) Þjöstólfr, but not Svanr, is present and behaves in a menacing fashion which is deliberately ignored by the guests:

Þjöstólfr gekk með óxi reidda ok lét it dölgligsta, ok lét þat engi sem vissi. (p. 45)
c) In cautioning Höskuldr not to waste money on gifts to the guests, Hrútr foresees the need to pay compensation for Þórarinn after his death.

c) No mention is made of gifts, either given or withheld, and no shadow is cast over the couple's prospects.

6 Þjóstólfur's presence or absence from the marriage home affects Hallgerðr's behaviour:

First marriage, Þjóstólfur present:

a) Hallgerðr ignores Þórarinn on their journey home from the wedding and loudly enjoys Þjóstólfur's company. Þórarinn is insensitive to this.

b) Hallgerðr takes over the household and manages it wastefully: hafói allt í sukki. (p. 33)

Second marriage, Þjóstólfur absent at first:

a) Þjóstólfur does not go to Hallgerðr's new home with the couple.

b) While Þórarinn remains at the farm, Hallgerðr does not take over the household and her subdued conduct is noticed with approval:

Hallgerðr sat mjökk á sér um vetrinn, ok líkaði við hana ekki illa. (p. 45)

Several elements are added to the account of the second marriage to reinforce its success and Hallgerðr's new responsible attitude, springing out of love and respect for Glúmr:

a) When Þórarinn sets the conditions of inheritance on the brothers' farms, Hallgerðr shows a gracious respect for him by acknowledging the couple's debt to him and agreeing with great dignity to his request: "Makligr er Þórarinn þess frá oss." (p. 47)

b) Her management of the household after Þórarinn's departure is still characteristically open-handed (örynd ok fengsöm, p. 46), but she is not criticised for waste.

c) She and Glúmr have a child, an indication that their physical relationship is good.
Pjóstólfr arrives on the scene as it were out of the blue, having provoked his own dismissal from Höskuldsstaör:

Pjóstólfr hafói barit húskarli Höskulds; rekr hann Pjóstólfr í braut. (p. 47) Pjóstólfr had beaten a servant of Höskuldr's; he drove Pjóstólfr away.

His intention to interfere in the marriage is evident from his query about Hallgerðr's happiness, but it is also clear that he knows Hallgerðr will not welcome this interference from his false suggestion to her that he was driven from Höskuldsstaör without cause; and told to seek her:

Hann sagði Hallgerði, at faðir hennar hefði hann á braut rekit, ok bað hana á sjá. (p. 47)

Initially, events seem to indicate that Pjóstólfr will not be able to ruffle the bliss of the marriage, for Hallgerðr's behaviour remains irreproachable. She requests permission from Glúmr for Pjóstólfr to stay with affection and deference and it is precisely because she behaves so well that Glúmr grants her request. She continues in the role of supporting wife, even when Pjóstólfr causes trouble, by never taking his side.

Although Hallgerðr quarrels with both her husbands, she is only responsible for the provocation and consequences of the first.

Quarrel with Porvaldr:

a) After wasting her husband's substance, Hallgerðr accuses him of stinginess.

Quarrel with Glúmr:

a) Hallgerðr takes Pjóstólfr's side in a quarrel he has with Glúmr for which Glúmr is partly to blame. His self-control is undermined by the trouble.
b) Eorvaldr is justly annoyed at Hallgerðr's accusation and his quick temper makes him slap her sharply: Laust hana í andlitit, svá at blæddi. (p. 33)

b) Glúmr slaps Hallgerðr for defending Bjóstólfr because he can make no reasonable argument on his own behalf. His blow is, however, clearly less harsh than Eorvaldr's:

Glúmr drap til hennar hendi sinni ok malti: "Ekki deili ek við þik lengr." (p. 48)

c) Hallgerðr is depressed because of the quarrel, just as she was with her betrothal. The author uses the same term "skapþungt" in each case to show that her mood is the same.

c) Hallgerðr weeps, not because of the blow, but because of heartfelt grief, springing uncontrollably out of her love for Glúmr:

Hon unni honum mikit ok mátti eigi stilla sik ok gret hástofum. (p. 48)

d) Hallgerðr explicitly challenges Bjóstólfr to take revenge for her on Eorvaldr, playing upon his love for her as a goad:

"...stóttú mér þá fjari, ef þér þoetti nökkut undir um mik." (p. 34)
("you stood rather far from me then, if you cared anything for me.")

d) Hallgerðr explicitly forbids Bjóstólfr to interfere in the quarrel, although it is plain from his grin that he will in any case:

"Ekki skalt þú þessa hefna," segir hon, "ok engan hlut í eiga, hversu sem með okkr ferr." Hann gekk í braut ok glotti við. (p. 48)

She does not question his courage at all, nor does she later in the saga, but rather uses him as an example of manly behaviour in order to incite her chosen henchmen, Kolr (chapter 26) and Brynjólfr (chapter 38) against Bergbóra's agents. She also challenges Gunnarr's courage at the beginning of that feud when he does not defend her (p. 91).
Porvaldr stands less chance than Glúmr in his final contest with Pjóstólfr because he is quick-tempered and is confronted without much warning.

Porvaldr's death:

a) Pjóstólfr does not accompany Porvaldr on his trip to gather supplies, but arrives at the site later when, by chance, Porvaldr is alone aboard his boat.

b) Pjóstólfr provokes Porvaldr by accusing him of being a bad husband and by insulting his skill as a worker and his ability to provide for his household. This is an implicit reference to his quarrel with Hallgerðr.

c) Porvaldr responds at once with a blow.

d) Pjóstólfr disarms Porvaldr with one blow from his axe and kills him with a second blow to the head.

e) Pjóstólfr disguises the deed and prevents pursuit by scuttling Porvaldr's boat.

Glúmr's death:

a) Pjóstólfr accompanies Glúmr on the sheep gathering and Glúmr makes no attempt to avoid being isolated with Pjóstólfr.

b) Glúmr and Pjóstólfr begin to argue because some sheep escape them. Only in the course of this spontaneous argument does Pjóstólfr begin to insult Glúmr, accusing him of an exaggerated sexual appetite and revealing his own jealousy of the couple's happiness.

c) Glúmr engages in a further exchange of insults before resorting to a blow.

d) Pjóstólfr strikes Glúmr's shoulder with his first and only axe blow, and is saved from being throttled by Glúmr because Glúmr suffocates on his own blood.

e) Pjóstólfr is not threatened by immediate pursuit and takes time to bury Glúmr's body under stones, taking his armring as a token.
The reactions to the killings reveal the extent of Hallgerðr’s responsibility in each case.

After Þorvaldr’s death:

a) Hallgerðr betrays no emotion whatever when she realises Þorvaldr is dead.

b) Hallgerðr’s plan to send Þjóðólfr to Svanr for protection is entirely premeditated and it appears she sponsored their friendship before her marriage with this plan in view.

Certainly she has gauged Svanr’s response exactly:

"mun Svanr taka við þér baðum hóndum."...
tök Svanr við honum baðum hóndum. (p. 36)

c) Hrútr points out to Höskuldur that Hallgerðr is to blame for Þorvaldr’s death and that compensation must be paid to Ósvíffr.

d) Hrútr supplements Höskuldur’s payment in an attempt to discourage gossip and so protect their reputation. (p. 39)

After Glúmr’s death:

a) Þjóðólfr declares he is uncertain of Hallgerðr’s pleasure at the news and Hallgerðr is only able to control and at the same time disguise her distress by her laugh (Hon hló at, p. 50).

b) When Hallgerðr suggests Þjóðólfr should go to her uncle Hrútr, he begins to doubt her intentions, but not sufficiently to refuse her plan.

"Eigi veit ek," sagði Þjóðólfr, "hvart þetta er heilireði, en þó skal ek þínum ráðum frama um þetta mál." (p. 50)

c) Hrútr recognises that Hallgerðr is not to blame for Glúmr’s death and that she wants him to punish Þjóðólfr for her:

"Eigi veldr hon þessu þá" (p. 51)

d) Hrútr suggests that he and Höskuldur give Glúmr’s brother presents in order to encourage favourable gossip and so increase their reputation. (p. 52)
Hallgerðr's innocence in the case of Glúmr's death is also acknowledged implicitly during the exchange of insults between Berghóra and Hallgerðr at the feast (p. 91). Berghóra accuses Hallgerðr of plotting Þorvaldr's death, but lays no blame on her for Glúmr's:

"...en eigi var skegglauss Þorvaldr, bóni þinn, ok rétt þú honum þó bana."  
"...but your husband Þorvaldr was not beardless and yet you contrived his killing."

This patterning prepares the reader for Hallgerðr's behaviour as Gunnarr's wife.

The complex patterning produced by the author's deliberate balance of common and distinctive elements in the two marriage accounts has a significance reaching beyond the accounts themselves and giving them function and purpose in the saga. This significance lies in the figure of Hallgerðr, for it is out of the very patterning of these two accounts that her nature emerges, revealing precisely those qualities which will help shape the events of her marriage to Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi:

1. She is aware of her physical attractiveness and exploits it. She did so with Glúmr (p. 44) and she does again when she meets Gunnarr for the first time (p. 85), and when she makes a favourite of Sigmundr Lambason, in order to use him as an agent against Berghóra (p. 106).

2. She reacts strongly and rather like a spoiled child to bad treatment, holding a grudge a long time, and willing to have her opponents killed for revenge. She treated Þorvaldr and Bjóstólfr in this way and later pits herself with equally childish spite against Berghóra, because of her insults, and against Gunnarr, because of his slap (p. 124).
3 She responds well to respect and kindness. Her relationship with Glúmr shows Hallgerðr at her best, and she will behave equally well as Gunnarr's wife until she is slighted by Bergþóra. Only then does she take her defence into her own hands.

4 She is astute in assessing other people's weak points and she exploits them as a precocious girl might exploit her parents. The success of her plan to rid herself of Þorvaldr depended upon Þorvaldr's short-tempered conceit and Þjóstólfur's jealous possessiveness of her. She persuades Glúmr to let Þjóstólfur stay by combining good behaviour and affection, but it must be remembered that this behaviour, though knowing, is not false. With Gunnarr, she will play subtly upon his pride in his reputation.

It is characteristic of many family sagas,¹ that the individual elements of the dreams recorded correspond exactly to the details of the events they foretell. The writer of Njáls Saga has deliberately engineered such correspondence to give the impression that the course of events in the saga is fated; he uses dreams in this way as a foil to the true springs of action which lie in the temperaments he has attributed to the saga figures.²

The dream elements are elaborate as well as emblematic. For instance, in the dream preceding the burning at Berghörshvall, a black man is seen riding in the midst of a circle of fire: "þóttisk hann sjá hring ok eldslit á ok í hringinum mann á grám hesti... honum sýndisk hann svartr sem bik" (p. 321). After reciting a verse in which he compares Flosi's plans with the flaming brand he carries, the dream man hurls the brand. It erupts in the east, blotting out the mountains: "hann skjóta brandinum austr til fjallanna, ok þótti honum hlaupa upp eldr svá mikill, at hann þóttisk ekki sjá til fjallanna fyrir." (p. 321)

¹. Further examples in Njáls Saga include Flosi's dream (pp. 346-48) in which the naming of some of the burners indicates those who will be killed in revenge; and Gunnarr's dream before the death of his brother, Hjörtr, in which Hjörtr is killed by a pack of wolves which attack the brothers (pp. 155-56). Examples from other family sagas are abundant. One which also includes an attack by wolves occurs in Droplaugarsona Saga (p. 161) when Helgi Droplaugarson dreams his chin is mutilated by a wolf. This corresponds to the wound he receives in subsequent attack (p. 164). See Droplaugarsona Saga, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, Íslensk Fornrit, volume XI (Reykjavík, 1950).

². See below, pp. 359 ff.
In this instance, the dreamer is named as Hildiglúmr Runólfsson, although he is not connected with the burning in any other way and is otherwise unknown. His dream seems to have been given to him gratuitously. There is nothing to indicate that the dream springs from apprehension of impending violence.  

The prophecies in Njáls Saga are also highly particularised and carefully interpreted, and they always prove true in their significance. For instance, the old woman foretells that chickweed will be used in the burning (p. 320); Bergþóra prophesies on the evening before the burning that the meal she serves them will be their last (p. 324); and Njáll has a vision of their home being destroyed (p. 234). Like the dreams in the saga, such prophecies appear throughout the saga rather than characterising one particular period.

The systematic fulfilment of dreams and prophecies in the saga contrasts with Sturla Órðarson's use of them in Islendinga Saga. His presentation of dreams is concerned not so much with fulfilment as with the pervasive apprehension they reflect in men's minds.

1. But see the use of dreams in Islendinga Saga as discussed below in Chapter Six, pp. 440-44.

2. This is shown below in Appendix A for all the dreams and prophecies in the saga.
IV The often eccentric use of conventional words and phrases in *Njála Saga* to achieve a calculated artistic effect

A Critical opinion

Lönnroth has suggested that the *Njála* author uses common words and phrases "for presenting recurrent but fairly trivial motifs" and "as a kind of cement between the larger building blocks."¹ This confirms Denton Fox's view that the *Njála* author uses a formulaic word or phrase "whenever the appropriate situation recurs."² Close reading exposes the crudity of these statements and discovers the *Njála* author's highly individual and often inverted use of conventional elements, always to convey specific points implicitly.³ The following have been selected from numerous examples to indicate the varied manifestations of this calculated use of convention in *Njála*:

B "Síðan" and "en þegar"

These prepositions (or conjunctions) are deliberately repeated in the passage describing Hrutr's departure from Norway, landfall in Iceland, and subsequent activity, in order to convey Hrutr's business-like approach to his tasks. This approach is appropriate to six of the seven activities it prefaces: meeting the king before departing, boarding ship, riding home from his ship, leaving Ózurr to unload the ship, returning to the ship with his brother, housing the ship, and transporting the cargo west (p. 21). But when the author makes unconventional use of one these words, with its pragmatic

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¹ Lönnroth, *Njáls Saga*, op. cit. p. 45. The second expression cited is not only inaccurate but ironic, given that Lönnroth has elsewhere accused Andersson of being "a little too rigid in his approach", cf. Review, *Speculum*, 43 1968, pp. 115-119.

² Denton Fox, "Njáls Saga and the Western Literary Tradition" in *Comparative Literature* vol. 15 1963 (Oregon), pp. 289-310, especially p. 292.

³ It is principally because the phrases are used idiosyncratically as literary device that they do not seem monotonous. Novelty is not primarily due, as Fox says, to "a skilful manipulation of rhythm - which furnishes another link between the sagas and epic poetry." Ibid. p. 292, note 8.
connotations, to describe Hrutr's approach to the arrangements for
his marriage to Unnr, he provides a clue to the source of the
couple's subsequent incompatibility:

\[
\text{Síðan sendu þeir mann austr til Móður gígju at búask við boði... (p. 21)}
\]

Then they sent a man east to Móður fiddle to arrange for the wedding.

Hrutr's behaviour throughout his marriage to Unnr will be as business-
like as it appears in this passage and is matched later by the
pragmatism of his advice to Höskuldr over Hallgerðr's marriages (see
above, p. 347). He treats Unnr irreproachably by material standards,
as the household testify: sognu hana eina ráða öllu því, sem hon vildi (p. 23). But the author gives the reader no indication that
this treatment includes those marks of affection, public and private,
which distinguish a woman from her husband's other possessions.
Even without Gunnhildr's spell, the insensitive attitude implied by
this omission sufficiently accounts for the failure of their love-
making and the breakdown of their marriage. The spell itself poses
a more obvious threat to Hrutr's marriage by suggesting that his
virility has become too exaggerated for normal sexual relations (p. 21).

C "Pat var einu hverju sinni"

This phrase appears in Njála at least fourteen times and is
always used to introduce incidents which seem to appear in the
narrative out of the blue, but have significant repercussions. It

1. pp. 6, 7, 30, 106, 107, 147, 198, 211, 225, 226, 236 (twice), 276,
318 and considerably more frequently - at least 24 times - if the
variants are included: þat var eitthvert haust, p. 48; þat var
einn dag, pp. 85, 279, 320, 374; þat var einn nótt, p. 446; as
well as the phrase sá atburð varð, pp. 112, 175, 192, 272, which
has the same function as einu hverju sinni.
introduces, for instance, the scene in which Ósvífr and Þorvaldr discuss Þorvaldr's potential marriage (see p. 339 above), and, later in the saga, the scene in which Ñjáll meets the child Höskuldr Práinsson and is prompted to offer to foster him:

Einu hverju sinni ríðr Njáll upp í Mörk, ok var tekit við honum vel; þar var hann um nóttina. Um kveldit gekk sveinninn at honum, ok kallaði Njáll á hann (p. 236).

One time Njáll rides up to Mörk, and he was received well; he was there during the night. During the evening the boy (Höskuldr) went up to him and Njáll called him by name.

As the saga progresses this phrase acquires an idiosyncratic conventionality and heralds for the reader those scenes which will set the course of subsequent events. This use of the phrase is therefore another indication of the author's deliberate structuring. Like his emerging patterns of related incidents, such usage incorporates both the common and the distinctive; the same phrase is repeated from incident to incident, but each incident referred to is unique.

D The unconventional chapter opening

The Ñjála author is clearly not cramped by formulaic phrases into a corner of common conventional usage. He demonstrates his freedom and easy mastery still further where he dispenses altogether with formulas at the beginnings of certain chapters which introduce new action in a new location. One instance of such an abrupt transition has already been cited (see above, p. 344). When Þjóstólfr's name appears at the opening of chapter 15 in a context that demonstrates his truculent nature, and follows directly after the portrait of

1. Lönnroth has presented a systematic survey of the principal Ñjála MSS in Arkiv 1975, op. cit., pp. 49-79. He concludes that all the divisions in Sveinsson's text are the original ones intended by the author except the following: 7, 12, 14, 16, 44, 49, 130, 142, 149, 152, and 159. None of these exceptions affect my argument.
Hallgerðr's happiness in chapter 14, a threat is posed. Any introductory formula at chapter 15 would only diminish the immediacy and intrusive power of that threat, captured by the opening as it stands.

Absence of formal opening is also used by the Njála author to limit rather than alter the focus, as, for instance, between chapters 76 and 77:

chapter 76:
...hundrinn kvað við hátt, svá at þat þótti með ódoemum, ok fell hann dauðr niðr. (p. 186)

the dog cried out so loudly at the blow that it seemed almost unearthly, and he fell down dead.

chapter 77:
Gunnarr vaknaði í skálanum ok mælti: "Sárt ertú leikinn, Sámr fóstri." (p. 186)

Gunnarr woke in the hall and said: "You are ill-treated, Sámr, fosterling."

Here the transition is achieved with a phrase giving the specific location - í skálanum - while the precise time is evident from Gunnarr's remark: he wakes at the dog's howl. No traditional opening is required and is accordingly avoided. The Njál author has the habit of using every word purposefully.

These examples indicate that chapter divisions in Njál become literary devices in the author's hands, a point already made and substantiated by Lønnroth:
...these techniques and principles are rather sophisticated. Instead of just using the chapters as a potential index for readers leafing through the manuscript - as many other Icelandic scribes did - he used them to increase the artistic effect of his saga.¹

While Lönroth has observed this use of unconventional chapter openings in Njáls Saga, he has failed to notice that conventional words and phrases have also become sophisticated literary devices in the hands of the author. What Lönroth has termed inconsistency² might better be seen as innovation and variety.

1. Lönroth, Arkiv 1975, op. cit. pp. 78-79
2. Lönroth, Njáls Saga, op. cit. p. 53: "the author is inconsistent in his use of transition formulas and other devices for making structural divisions."
The Njála author exploits with artistic purpose the saga convention of the introductory character sketch.

Brief introductions sketching the physical and personal qualities of saga figures are a common feature of the family sagas, including Njála. Instance has already been given of how the Njála author uses these sketches to capture the saga figures' inner natures and establish the potential for their subsequent behaviour. (See above, pp. 338-39).

The extent and individuality of the qualities in each sketch depend upon the importance and individuality in the saga of the figure introduced. For secondary figures such as Bjóstólfr, Borvaldr, and Glúmr, a few features are sufficient, some of them distinctive in context, while figures with very minor roles, usually as agents acting once for more important figures, are described entirely conventionally in order to indicate a mere type:

- **Svanr:** Hann var ódøll ok illr viðreignar (p. 32) He was difficult and unpleasant to deal with.
- **Kolr:** Hann...var it mesta illmenni (p. 92) He...was one of the greatest scoundrels.
- **Brynjólfur:** Hann var illmenni mikit (p. 100) He was one of the greatest scoundrels.
- **Skjöldr:** Hann var sænskr maðr ok illr viðreignar (p. 105) He was a Swede and unpleasant to deal with.
- **Skammtøll:** Hann var ill-gjarnr ok lyginn, ódøll ok illr viðreignar (p. 120) He was a man who lied, difficult and unpleasant to deal with.

Shared features are also included in the sketches of primary figures, often to encourage the reader to make comparisons and, by corollary, distinctions among them. Hallgerðr and Berghóra, for instance, are both described as nökkut skaphórð (pp. 29, 57),
pointing to each woman's refusal to relent in their dispute. But the superlative degree of this same quality is reserved for Hildiggunnr - allra kvenna skaphörðust (pp. 238-239) - who displays it first in her refusal to marry any but a góðorðsmagr (p. 241) and more memorably in her manner of securing revenge for her murdered husband, Höskuldr Práísson (pp. 289-291).
VI The inner nature attributed to the saga figure determines his career in the saga: Skap and Sköp in the career of Gunnarr of Hliðarendi

The world of Njála is a created world rather than a world reproduced on the basis of historical fact. Abbot Karl did not create Sverrir; he observed and described him very astutely. And in Íslendinga Saga, Sturla Dóðarson may emphasise men's irrational natures and behaviour, but he does not invent them. The minds of men and women such as Gunnarr, Skarphéinn, Hallgerðr, Flosi, and Hildigunnr are, however, of the Njála author's imagining. The differences among their natures account for their different behaviour and reactions in comparable situations. The action develops as it does only because of the combinations of features and figures the saga author selects.

Of all the natures given to principal saga figures in Njála, none more clearly determines his career than that of Gunnarr of Hliðarendi. The saga author reveals Gunnarr's nature and its consequences primarily by dramatic presentation. But even in the descriptive introduction, he gives a clue to the feature of Gunnarr's personality which brings difficulties upon him: he is "harðgørr í öllu" (p. 53). Magnússon and Pálsson have translated this as 'fearless',¹ one interpretation of the literal meaning, 'resolute and tough in all things', for certainly Gunnarr proves and reproves his courage where he appears in the saga. Yet here the implication is of a naive courage, based upon the physical strength, agility, and handsomeness on which his reputation rests. The mental qualities which temper such courage, such as judgment, wisdom, and far-sighted-

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¹ Njáll's Saga, translated by Magnús Magnússon and Hermann Pálsson (Penguin, 1960) p. 73
ness, are deliberately omitted from the introductory sketch of Gunnarr. In addition, the phrase “harðgörð í öllu” also indicates a mental resistance or stubbornness, Gunnarr's unassailable determination to follow his own mind, even when his friends and counsellors advise otherwise.

This introductory sketch provides the necessary ground for a further feature of Gunnarr's nature which is never mentioned explicitly in the saga, that is, Gunnarr's instinctive desire to live up to society's expectations of him. This is by no means a feature peculiar to Gunnarr, among men who appear either in this saga or in others. Hrútr manifests it when he acknowledges the need to pay Ósvífir compensation for Þorvaldr (see above, p. 347) and when he declares the good sense of giving Dócarinn presents; Hallbjörn, Otkell's brother, insists on defending Otkell when he is attacked by Gunnarr (p. 137 “OK er þat skómm, ef ek sit hjá”); and the Þorvaldssons in Íslendinga Saga determine not to surrender to Sturla Sighvatsson because it would not make a very good story of their defence (Íslendinga Saga, vol. 1, p. 352: þeir með engu móti upp gefast, sögðu, at þá væri lítítt til frásagnar). But Gunnarr's case is different in two respects: public expectation of him is created and fostered by his own physical strength and abilities, and it has an almost exaggerated influence on his behaviour, leading him to take many ill-judged decisions.

These ill-judged decisions can be traced throughout his career as follows:

1. Allen, op. cit., p. 147, has also remarked Gunnarr's hastiness of decision, but only cites two instances: his marriage to Hallgerðr and his refusal to leave Iceland. This second example I consider an indication of Gunnarr's resignation rather than his impulsiveness.
1 Gunnarr offers arguments against involving himself in Unnr's claim for her dowry from Hrutr until she challenges his courage, when he acquiesces at once:

"Enda er sá engi í minni
ætt, at gangi í þetta mál,
ef þú hefir eigi þrek til."
"bóra mun ek," segir hann
(p. 58)

"Indeed there is no one in my family to undertake this case if you haven't the courage for it." "I will dare it," he says.

The imprudence of this interference is implied but not criticised by Njáll:

"Pat er mikít vandamál,"
segir Njáll, "ok mikil
hætta, hversu ferr." (p. 59)

"It is a very awkward case," says Njáll, "and there is great danger however it goes."

2 After his sojourn abroad, Gunnarr fails to appreciate Njáll's warning of other men's envy (p. 84), and rides to the alping against Njáll's advice when Kolskeggr argues that this will increase Gunnarr's honour. His protestation that it is not his nature to vaunt himself is proved false by the magnificent attire he wears to the þing:

váru þeir svá vel búnir, at
engir váru þeir þar, at
jafnvel vári búnir, ok fóru
menn út ór hverri búð at
undrask þá’ (p. 85)

they were so well attired that there was no one there that was so well attired, and men came out from every booth to marvel.

3 It seems that Gunnarr persists in his offer of marriage to Hallgerðr because of a sense of honour, even though he becomes doubtful about her nature (p. 87) and Njáll reacts strongly against his decision, foreseeing trouble (p. 87).

4 Gunnarr's self-consciously off-hand acceptance of the slave from Otkell indicates that the gesture is intended to dissociate him from Otkell's meanness in not selling Gunnarr any hay.

5 When he becomes aware of Hallgerðr's theft of cheese by means of this same slave, he is quick to offer an honourable compensation to Otkell (p. 126), once he knows that the theft has become public knowledge.
6 Gunnarr is roused to wrath against Otkell and Skamkell, not because of the accident in which Otkell wounds him, but because Skamkell has rumoured it that Gunnarr wept, a serious slight to his manliness (p. 136). Yet Gunnarr advises his own shepherd not to be too sensitive to these rumours, showing that he acts in spite of sound judgment.

7 Gunnarr is reluctant to accept the challenge to the horsefight until the challengers refer to his reputation among others:


"There were those men," they say, "who said that none would dare to set theirs against our horses." "I will dare to set mine," says Gunnarr.

8 Gunnarr becomes involved in Æsgrímr Ellíða-Grímsson's flawed legal case because he is outraged by injustice and because, as he says, Njáll would expect him to help Æsgrímr: "ok myndi þat Njáll atla ok Helgi, vínr mín, at ek mynda hafa nókkura vörn í máli með þér, Æsgrímr, ef þeir væri eigi víð." (p. 152).

9 Gunnarr becomes annoyed with Þorgeirr Otkelsson because Þorgeirr seduces Gunnarr's kinswoman. Just as his involvement in Unnr's case, this animosity indicates that Gunnarr's sense of responsibility includes his family's as well as his own reputation (p. 174).

10 After being outlawed for killing Þorgeirr, Gunnarr refuses the support of Njáll's sons, not because he wishes to spare their lives, but because he does not wish to be held responsible by others for their deaths:

"Eigi vil ek þat," segir Gunnarr, "at synir þínr sé drephir fyrir mínar sakir, ok átt þú annat at mér." (p. 184) "I do not wish," says Gunnarr, "that your sons be killed for my sake, and you deserve otherwise from me."

The reputation Gunnarr is so anxious to maintain is clearly menaced in the saga by the envy of other men, in particular that of Skamkell.
and Otkell, the horsefighters, and Mörör Valgarósson, whose envy is explicitly remarked: Hann öfundaði mjökl Gunnar frá Hlíðarenda (p. 119). The author also draws attention to this envy in two other ways:

1 He remarks upon it dramatically through the warnings of Njáll (p. 84) and Óláf pá (p. 174);

2 In the narrative, the author points by repeated instance to public acknowledgment of Gunnarr's prestige, which indicates clearly the source of other men's envy:

   a) After Unnr's case has been won: Hafði Gunnarr ína mestu sömð af málinu (p. 68).

   b) At Helgi Njállsson's wedding, Gunnarr is numbered among the prominent guests: Gunnarr var at veizlu þeiri ok margir aðrir inir beztu menn (p. 74).

   c) Gunnarr's finery sets him apart at the alping as an object of awe (p. 85).

   d) Gunnarr's wedding is clearly a subject of general discussion and its magnificence is evident in the great number of guests he invites, including the envious Mörör Valgarósson:

        Skyldi þetta boð vera at Hlíðarenda ok skyldi fara fyrst ley-niliga, en þó kom þar, er allir vissu. (p. 87)  
        Gunnarr hafði marga fyrirboðsmenn, ok skípaði hann svá sínum mönnnum... (p. 88)

   e) Gunnarr wins credit from the case between himself and Otkell over the theft from Kirkjubær instigated by Hallgerðr: Gunnar hafði mikla sömð af málinu (p. 133).
f) Gunnarr wins credit from the case over Otkell's death: Sitr Gunnarr nú heima í soemǫ sinni (p. 146).

g) Gunnarr gains credit from the case between him and the horsefighters, for whom Mörr Valgarðsson is spokesman. Here the envy itself is explicitly mentioned: ofunduðu móttstoðumenn hans mjök hans soemǫ (p. 166).

Even in Gunnarr's last hour, envy plays a critical role, again provoked by Gunnarr himself when he reaches out to retrieve an arrow from his roof, exposing a golden armband in the process:

"Hönd kom þar út," segir Gizurr, "ok var á gull-hringr ok tök ór, er lá á þekjunni." (p. 188)

"An arm came out there," says Gizurr, "and there was a golden armband on it and it took an arrow which lay in the thatch."

This symbol of wealth and success provokes his assailants anew even as it informs them he is out of ammunition.

The complications introduced by other men's envy of Gunnarr's prestige are fatally exaggerated by Gunnarr's dependence upon physical strength as an answer to his problems. This dependence is revealed as increasing by the fluctuations in his temper among states of fragile restraint, resignation, and violent reaction:

1 Physical response: Gunnarr wins Unnr's case for her by challenging Hrutr to single combat, just as Hrutr had once challenged Mörr, even though Njáll is ready with a legal solution (p. 66).

2 Physical response: Gunnarr vaults over the table at Njáll's feast as a means of releasing the tension he feels because of Hallgerðr's argument with Bergbóra and her challenge to his courage: Hann spratt upp ok sté fram yfir borðit (p. 91).
3 Resignation: Gunnarr abandons as futile any attempt to discuss with Hallgerðr her conduct toward his friends: 
Gunnarr riðr til þings ok sá, at eigi var gott orðum við hana at koma (p. 92).

4 Restraint: Gunnarr carefully controls his temper when he hears in public about the first killing Hallgerðr instigates: 
Gunnarr hallmælti ekký Hallgerði fyrir sendimanninum (p. 94); but he berates her when he gets home in private: Gunnarr 
kom heim af þingi ok talði á Hallgerði (p. 95).

5 Restraint: Gunnarr deliberately treats Hallgerðr with cold disdain after the death of Kolr as a defence against 
her temperamental onslaughts: 
hon geisaði mjók. Gunnarr she fumed greatly. Gunnarr 
gaf eigi gaum at því (p. 99). paid no attention to that.

6 Violent outburst: Gunnarr flies into such a rage when he overhears Sigmundr's ribaldry about Njáll and his sons that 
his whole household are frightened: Gunnarr var reiðr mjók... 
En svá stóð þeim af honum mikil ógn, at engi þorði þessi orð at herma (p. 113).

7 Resignation: After Sigmundr's death, Gunnarr makes no attempt 
to claim compensation and he ignores Hallgerðr's promptings 
(p. 118).

8 Violent outburst: Gunnarr slaps Hallgerðr when she reveals 
her part in the theft from Otkell: 
Gunnarr reiddisk...ok lýstr Gunnarr became angry...and 
hana kinhest (p. 124). strikes her a box on the ear.

He is provoked by her contemptuous use of the word "karl" in reference to him ("er þat ekký karla at annask um matreiðu" p. 124), an implicit insult to a man of his status; by the fact of the theft itself; and by the humiliation he feels before his guests. The cost of this slap is not measured until Gunnarr's last hours, when Hallgerðr takes her revenge by refusing him a strand of hair to replace his bowstring (p. 189).

9 Resignation: Gunnarr at first tells no one about it when Otkell wounds him, showing the same lethargy he did over 
Sigmundr's death and only securing legal witnesses at the instigation of his brother Kolskeggr (p. 135).
10 Violent outburst: Gunnarr reacts against Skamkell and Otkell with sudden violence when he hears of Skamkell's rumours. After this killing he releases residual tension by a leap from his horse after a burst of fast riding and then comments on his own behaviour in a calmer frame of mind with a mixture of puzzlement and distaste:

"Hvat ek veit," segir Gunnarr, "hvárt ek mun því óvaskari maðr en aðrir menn sem mér þykkir meira fyrir en öðrum mónum at vega menn." (p. 139).

11 Restraint: When the horsefighters use dirty play against him, Gunnarr responds only to disarm them and shows remarkable constraint in the face of their threats and Skarpheðinn's promptings:

Gunnarr var kyrr, sva at honum helt einn maðr, ok mælti ekki orð, þat er áfatt veri (p. 151).

12 Physical response: Gunnarr solves Ásgrím's flawed case by challenging his opponent to single combat, as he did Hrötr over Unnr's dowry case (p. 152).

13 Violent outburst: Ambushed by the horsefighters, Gunnarr reacts in cool self-defence until his brother Hjörtr is killed; then he hurls himself at the enemy like a berserk:

Gunnarr sér þetta ok varpar sér skjót til höggs við Austmanninn ok höggr hann í sundr í miðju (p. 159).

Njáll had foreseen this violence earlier (p. 149).

14 Violent outburst: Ambushed again by the horsefighters together with Borgeirr Otkelsson, Gunnarr is more aggressive in his defence, killing men from a distance with arrows and attacking Borgeirr with noted fury during the hand to hand combat: Gunnarr snýsk at honum skjót af mikillí reiði (p. 176). Gunnarr's comment after this encounter shows a much greater and more deliberate tendency toward violence than he expressed after Otkell's death:
"Standa munu nökkurir hans makar á götu minni, áðr en ek hræðumsk þá," segir Gunnarr (p. 177).

"Several as good as he would have to stand in my way before I became frightened," says Gunnarr.

15 Resignation: After being sentenced to exile, Gunnarr irrationally refuses to leave Hlíðarendi and clings to the familiar, which, in his weariness with trouble, becomes transformed in his eyes:

"Fögr er hlíðin, svá at mér hefir hon aldri jafnfögr sýnzk, bleikir akrar ok slegin tún, ok mun ek ríða heim aprtr ok fara hvergi." (p. 182).

"Fair is the hillside, fairer than it has ever seemed to me before, sun-bleached crops and new-mown meadow, and I will ride back home and not go."

This same resignation is evident, but without the adornment of poetic vision, in Gunnarr's inexplicable failure to go west to Óláfr pá as he had agreed: Gunnarrí þótt í fýsillegt fyrist ok játæði því, en þá er at kom, vildi hann eigi (p. 183).

These itemisations do not and are not intended to capture the interweaving of the evidence they marshal. Rather, they demonstrate that the inner qualities attributed to Gunnarr and others associated with him in the saga have been calculated by the author and revealed in ways which account for the shape of the narrative.

Readers very familiar with Njáls Saga will have missed here a mention of Gunnarr's early journey abroad. This episode has been omitted from discussion until now because it forms an almost separate interlude in Gunnarr's career. In the straightforward viking world he travels, Gunnarr's quick decisiveness, authority, and physical strength are the guarantees of a fine reputation and a smooth and steady passage. The author has thus introduced the episode to make an implicit contrast between a simple social world in
which Gunnarr thrives and the more complex society of Iceland in which he later encounters one trouble after another.

The style of these viking passages is as significant as their position. Gunnarr's adventures are told in a remarkably flat fashion lacking the excitement and appeal conveyed, for instance, in the scenes of Hrútr's journey abroad by the livelier quality of the description and drama (see in particular, pp. 17-18). This stylistic difference is, I believe, deliberate. It suggests to the reader that the viking world has no special attraction for Gunnarr and so exerts no special pull on him when he is exiled abroad after killing Borgeirr Otkelsson.

A comparable artistic intent is evident in the placing of certain details after Gunnarr's death. It becomes ironically clear from the repeated tributes to him made by other saga figures - tributes that often enshrine him as the highest standard of manhood and courage - that Gunnarr has only managed to secure his precious reputation by dying:

a) In the words of his opponent, Gizurr hluti:

"mun hans vörn uppi, meðan landit er byggt." (p. 191). "his defence will be recalled as long as the land is inhabited."

b) In the wide public notice and regret at his death:

*Víg* Gunnarrs maltisk ill fyrir um allar sveitir, ok var hann mörgum mönnum mjökk hármduði (p. 191).

"sét hefi ek marga íslenzka menn ok engan hans maka." (p. 198) men and none his equal."
d) In the Jarl's favour toward Práinn:

...en þat fannsk á jafnan, ...and it was always evident
at jarl virði mikils Gunnar , that the jarl regarded Gunnarr
því at hann setti þá harðliga highly, because he checked
aptr alla, er á Práinn severely all those who showed
leituðu (p. 201).

hostility to Práinn.

e) In Runólfr's reference to Gunnarr as an absolute standard
against which to measure the Ænjalssons: "eigi sé þeira maki,
síz Gunnarr at Hlíðarendi lézk." (p. 230)

f) In Flosi's measurement of Kári against Gunnarr: "sá maðr,...
er næst gengr Gunnari at Hlíðarenda í öllum hlutum." (p. 335)
VII Literary verisimilitude in Njáls Saga

The dependence of the shape of the narrative on the saga figures' inner natures, as evident in the above tracing of Gunnarr's career, lends the accounts a quality of authenticity. In the saga, the reader recognises motives, actions, and reactions which resemble those encountered in his own life. But this quality of authenticity is both produced and qualified by the author's sustained and calculated artistic control. Scarcely bound by a thin basis of historical fact, he is free, for instance, to introduce sudden reversals in the direction of the action, based upon the inner natures he himself has attributed to the saga figures. One instance of such a reversal has already been mentioned in the analysis of Hallgerðr's second marriage when Jóstólfr provokes his own dismissal from Höskuldstaðr. Others are plain in Gunnarr's decisions to accept the slave from Otkell, and later, not to leave Hlíðarendi. Such deliberate artifice does not convey the authenticity of Islendinga Saga, nor is that the author's intention. Instead, it provides a literary verisimilitude, the fictional semblance of authenticity. This is nowhere more apparent than in the chapters presenting the burning at Bergþórsváll.

1. Clearly the careers of Hallgerðr and Njáll might be traced in a similar fashion. Gunnarr's career is representative here.
Individual acts in this passage in *Njála* may resemble actual incidents, but within the context of the whole burning account, and compared to Sturla's *Flugumýrarbrenna*, the literary and fictional qualities can be recognised. The most staring evidence of this lies in the different use each author makes of dreams and prophecies as has been mentioned (see above, p.350). Other more subtle distinctions between the two accounts emerge from close reading.

For instance, in his account of the warnings before *Flugumýrarbrenna*, Sturla conveys the seemingly accidental way in which people fail to take hints or forget to give them. Gizurr fails to appreciate Ari's nearly naked warning:

"Efa aldri þat, Gizurr," segir hann, "at vér komum at finna þik, ok eigi skulum vit Kolbeinn grön, frændi minn, vera með Eyjólfi, ef eigi komum vér at finna þik." (p. 484)

"Never doubt it, Gizurr," says he "that we shall come to visit you, and my kinsman, Kolbeinn grön and I shall not be with Eyjólfr if we do not come to visit you."

Gizurr also misses Hrafn's more oblique declaration of the impending threat:...

"mælti varúðarmálum til Gizurar, bað hann gæta sín vel. (p. 483)
A third man, to whom Hrafn has revealed the burners' plans in detail, simply forgets to tell Gizurr: Hrafn hafði varat hann við ófriðinn, en honum hafði ór hug líóit at segja Gizuri Borvaldssyni. (p. 487)
Nevertheless, Gizurr is well supported with men because of the wedding feast at Flugumýrr, a fact Sturla has refused to alter in order to give the aborted warnings a greater significance than they actually had.
In Njála the warnings are not only repeated but explicit and understood. Apart from visions and prophecies, Njáll is told of Flosi's plans by his old mistress Hróðný (p. 319) and Grímr and Helgi hear of the gathering of their enemies from some beggar women, gossiping types (p. 324). Yet no effort is made to gather support for a defence, or to leave Bergþórhvall for some safer place, or even to send away the women and children. No pragmatic steps are taken whatsoever, even though the reader can see that there was easy opportunity.

This absence of pragmatic action is deliberate and indicates both artistic control and the element of fiction. This extends to the attack itself when Njáll insists that they all go inside, against the advice of his sons. No such choice is, of course, open to those at Flugumýrr, who are surprised from their sleep by the attack. The reason Njáll gives - that their house is as strong as Gunnarr's was (p. 326) - is the weakest reason he could choose, since Gunnarr's house did not in fact protect him. His assailants wrenched off the roof. What is more, they had no intention of burning him in the house, as have Flosi and his men. Barði Guðmundsson suggests that Njáll makes them go inside in order to work an atonement for his sons' killing of Höskuldur Bráinsson. Guðmundsson bases his supposition on Njáll's later remark:

1. For an instance of a saga figure taking steps to avoid an impending attack after being warned, see Chapter Six, below, p. 390. cf Islendinga Saga, p. 325, where it tells of Sturla Sighvatsson's departure from Sauðafell.

2. Barði Guðmundsson, Höfundar Njálu (Reykjavík, 1958) p. 234
His interpretation would indeed fit well with the evidence that Njáll uses the opportunity to take vengeance on his sons for Höskuldr bráinsson's death. He himself had declared that he loved Höskuldr best:

"Ek vil yór kunnigt gera, at ek unna meira Höskuldi en sonum mínun." (p. 309)  
"I want to make known to you that I loved Höskuldr more that my own sons."

And it is Njáll's gift of the ambiguous silkislaður which causes the breakdown of peace negotiations at the alþing after the killing (p. 312). This interpretation and Guðmundsson's both allow that Njáll was willing to sacrifice the lives of other innocent people for his purposes. No figure within the house at Flugumýrr holds such an attitude. It serves in Njála to unite the burning with previous events and it emphasises that the figures bring their fate upon themselves, but such a calculated fullness of meaning and relevance makes the scene seem artificial.

Yet another instance of deliberate structuring occurs when Bergþóra refuses to leave her husband and makes her dramatic protestation of loyalty:

"Ek var ung gefin Njáli, — hefi ek því heitit honum, at eitt skyldi ganga yfir ökr baði." (p. 330)  
"I was married young to Njáli, — I have promised him that one fate should happen to both of us."
Groá at Flugumýrr is not invited to come out by the burners, so she has no opportunity to make a similar declaration. But when Gizurr tells her he expects her to survive and gives her tokens, she does not protest against their separation, though her emotion is recorded. Her behaviour is more believable than Bergþóra's, the context is entirely different: Groá...segir, at eitt skyldi yfir þar ganga báðar (Ísl. s. p. 490). Here Groá means that she and her daughter-in-law, Ingibjörg Sturludóttir will live or die together, but unlike Bergþóra's prophecy, Groá's fails, for she herself does not survive the conflagration and Ingibjörg does.

Groá's efforts to preserve life, both Ingibjörg's and that of her nephew, whom she tries to save before her own death, contrast markedly with Bergþóra's readiness to let her grandson die with her at his request. Guðmundsson has remarked that it is difficult to decide which is more preposterous in the Njála scene, Bergþóra's acquiescence or the child's wish to die with her. Certainly the child's explicit declaration of loyalty has an edge of artificiality about it, especially coming so soon after Bergþóra's refusal to part from Njáll:

"Hinu hefir þú mér heitin, amma," segir sveinninn, "at vit skyldim aldrí skilja, ok skal svá vera." (p. 330)

"You have promised me, grandmother," says the boy, "that we should never part, and so it shall be."

But 'preposterous' is not entirely fair, since actual people, even children, are sometimes willing to share death with those they love. Ingibjörg Sturludóttir is a good example; at Flugumýrr she refuses to leave the burning house without Groá and must be carried out by a

1. See Chapter Six, below, p. 487.
kinsman. But again the style there in *Íslendinga Saga* is reticent, almost matter of fact compared to the assuredly fictional dramatic emphasis of the *Njála* passage.

Other dramatisations in the account of the burning in *Njála* possess a similar contrived quality: Skarphéinn's use of Þráinn Sigfússon's tooth to wound Grani; the death of Helgi Njálsson dressed as a woman; the conversation between Njáll and Bergþóra and Flosi, pregnant with heroic gesture; Kári's escape, decorated by dialogue; the ritual dance of Skarphéinn and Grímr to stamp out the flames when it is too late to make any difference; the verse attributed to Skarphéinn after his death and recited from the gutted remains of the house; and the ironic narrative juxtaposition of one burner's morbid curiosity to see who has died in the fire with the report that Kári has survived. There are no parallel passages in the Flugumýrarbrenna, no exchange of pithy statements between the burners and the burned, no delight in powerful blows struck; no balance between the separate conversations of those outside the house and those within or about to go in. On the other hand there are distinctive features of the Flugumýrr account which make it more authentic. Sturla emphasises the passage of time and the changing light as the *Njála* author does not; he extends his focus over a wider range, covering general and specific action, both inside and outside, and including the deeds of less significant participants as well as the prominent ones; he provides extensive factual detail about the dead and the destruction of property; and he reveals the deepest emotions of several participants and hints at his own. These features are considered in detail in the next chapter. They are mentioned here to point out more precisely the literary quality of the *Njála* account.
IX Conclusions

No attempt is made in this chapter to include all the stylistic and structural features of Njála, but only a selection has been presented, sufficient to demonstrate the principal ways in which the saga is distinct from historical writing of the same century. Clearly the extent of the difference depends upon the historical saga compared. Íslendinga Saga, intended by its author to be as authentic a representation of what happened as possible, differs greatly. The contrast between the burning at Bergþórshvall and the Flugumýrarbrenna has shown this. Between Njáls Saga and Heimskringla there are differences in the degree of fiction. Snorri, too, is a keen dramatist, but for the most part he bases his dramatisations on known events, whether traditional or historical, and he is less concerned with the subtle operation of saga-figures’ natures in the network of events than he is with rationalising events into a coherent and orderly series.

The Njála author differs from all the historians in the nature of relationship to the saga material. He is not deliberately impartial as is Sturla in writing Íslendinga Saga, nor diplomatically restrained as Sturla in writing Hákonar Saga. Nor is he dependent for his aloofness upon separation in time from the events told, as are the authors of Heimskringla and Knytlinga; the author of Sverris Saga is, of course, not aloof at all. In Njála, the historical events which precede the author’s account by more than two hundred years form only a thin basis of the saga. The detail and immediacy of the narrative
depend not on historicity but on invention and artifice, and it is this which determines the author's aloofness. He may evoke an emotional response in his readers, but as a conscious artist he does not participate in their response. This relationship with his material distinguishes him and his work from Sturla and Íslendinga Saga, where the emotional power over the reader reflects the effect of actual events upon actual people, often including the author himself.

It would not do justice to the evident literary sophistication of Njáls Saga to attribute to its author only one intention in writing it. Easily identified are the Christian and legal emphases and the insight into women, to name only a few. Guðmundsson has argued that the entire saga is a thinly disguised vindication of Þórarinn Pórarinsson, who appears in such a negative light in the contemporary sagas, Pórar Saga Kakala, Porgils Saga Skarða, and Íslendinga Saga. But this interpretation does not allow for the author's emotional distance from the narrative, and in any case, it seems more plausible that Þórarinn would write something explicitly defensive. Nevertheless, the feuds in Njál cannot have been intended, at least in part, as an implicit analogue to the feuds of the thirteenth century. ¹ The climax in a burning supports this view, although, as has been shown, the relationship is by no means imitative.

The complexity of the saga structure and style easily accommodate many analyses and interpretations and much of the readers' joy in the saga lies in the rich suggestiveness and abundant invitations to speculate which the author provides.

Appendix A

Dreams, prophecies, and visions in *Njáls Saga* and their systematic fulfilment in the saga.

Chapter 1

Hrútr remarks Hallgerðr's "thief's eyes"; she later steals from Otkell through the slave Melkoff.

Chapter 10

Hrútr prophesies that Hallgerðr will cost Höskuldr money through her marriage to Þorvaldr: in chapter 12 Þorvaldr is killed and Höskuldr must pay his father compensation.

Chapter 13

Hrútr warns Glúmr against harbouring Þjóstólfr: in chapter 17 Þjóstólfr kills Glúmr.

Chapter 22

Njáll tells Gunnarr exactly what will happen when he assumes the disguise of Hawker-Hóðinn: in chapter 23 all this is fulfilled.

Chapter 23

Höskuldr dreams of a great bear with two cubs that come to his house and Hrútr's: this is fulfilled by Gunnarr's visits incognito, accompanied by two men.

Chapter 24

Hrútr prophesies trouble for Gunnarr and that he will later turn to Hrútr and Höskuldr as friends: in chapter 33 Gunnarr seeks their permission to marry Hallgerðr and only reaps trouble from the marriage.

Chapter 32

Njáll prophesies envy of Gunnarr: instances of this occur in chapters 65 and 70:
Chapter 33  
Njáll prophesies that Hallgerðr will be the cause of trouble when she comes to the district; she will menace their friendship, and Gunnarr will always have to pay for her misdeeds: this is fulfilled, first through her feud with Bergþóra, then through her provocation of insults against Njáll, and finally, through the payments Gunnarr makes for her deeds.

Chapter 36  
Kólur prophesies that he will lose his life for killing Svartr at Hallgerðr's instigation: in chapter 37 Kólur is killed by Átlí.

Chapter 36  
Njáll prophesies that Hallgerðr will cause Gunnarr worse trouble: the feud between her and Bergþóra continues, involving the death of Gunnarr's kinsman.

Chapter 40  
Pórðr has a vision in broad daylight of the killed goat in the hollow: this is an omen of his own imminent death.

Chapter 40  
As Pórðr faces his killers, he prophesies that Skarphéðinn Njálsson will avenge him on Sigmundr: Skarphéðinn kills Sigmundr Lambason, Gunnarr's kinsman, in chapter 45.

Chapter 40  
Njáll prophesies that Skarphéðinn will soon have a part in the feud: in chapter 45 the Njálssons kill Sigmundr.

Chapter 41  
Dráinn Sigfússon prophesies that the Njálssons will avenge Pórðr's death: they do so in chapter 45.
Chapter 42  Rannveigr warns Sigmundr that he will lose his life if he takes another of Hallgerðr's baits: the Njálssons kill him.

Chapter 43  Njáll tells Skarpheðinn he will soon be involved in the feud: he kills Sigmundr.

Chapter 44  Gunnarr tells Sigmundr his ribald mocking of Njáll and his sons will cost him his life: it does.

Chapter 48  Hallgerðr promises to pay Gunnarr for the slap he gives her over the theft from Otkell: in chapter 77 she refuses him a plait of her hair to restring his bow during the attack on their farm.

Repeated prophecies emphasise the malign role of Skammkell in the theft case against Gunnarr, and the fate that he, Otkell, and Hallbjörn will meet because of it:

Chapter 49  Gunnarr prophesies that Skammkell will pay for his part in the quarrel with Otkell.

Chapter 49  Hallbjörn, Otkell's brother, forecasts trouble because of Skammkell and also forecasts Gunnarr's anger.

Chapter 50  Hallbjörn forecasts that they will regret their journey to summon Gunnarr at Hlíðarendi.

Chapter 50  Gunnarr promises to pay Skammkell back for his part in the lawsuit.
Chapter 53 After the wound from Otkell's spur and the mockery of Skammkel, Gunnarr promises to meet Skammkel next with his halberd.

These prophecies are fulfilled:

1. In chapter 50, when Skammkel by his lies tries to prevent settlement of the case with Gunnarr and so raises hostility to a greater pitch.

2. In chapter 53, when Skammkel spreads the rumours that Gunnarr cried when struck by Otkell's spur.

3. In chapter 54, when Gunnarr kills Otkell and Skammkel with his halberd.

Chapter 50 Njáll says the quarrel with Otkell will turn out to Gunnarr's credit: in chapter 51, Gunnarr wins the legal case.

Chapter 53 Runólfr says he will never see Otkell again. Otkell is killed on his way home from visiting Runólfr.

Chapter 55 Njáll says Gunnarr will get credit from the case but it will start more killings, and he warns Gunnarr not to kill twice in the same family: Gunnarr kills Órgeirr Otkelsson in chapter 72 and is himself killed as a result in chapters 76-77.

Chapter 58 Hildigunnr the Healer says the horsefight will bring more trouble on her kinsmen who challenge Gunnarr: they die at his hands in chapters 62, 63, and 72.
Chapter 58  Njáll forecasts more hatred and enmity over the horsefight: this follows in chapters 59, 62-63, and 66-71.

Chapter 61  Þórir the Norwegian prophesies his own death: he is killed in chapter 63.

Chapter 61  Þórir prophesies that Þorgrímr must leave the country or be killed: he stays and is killed in chapter 77.

Chapter 62  Gunnar dreams of being attacked: he is ambushed in chapter 63.

Chapter 69  Njáll sees fetches of Gunnar's enemies: in chapter 72 Gunnarr is ambushed.

Chapter 72  A stream of blood appears on Gunnarr's halberd, a death rain: he is ambushed in chapter 72 and kills three men.

Chapter 73  Njáll tells Gunnarr to keep the settlement after the ambush or die: Gunnarr breaks it and is killed in chapter 77.

Chapter 75  Njáll forecasts danger for Grímr and Helgi on their voyage abroad and trouble afterwards: from this journey their conflict with Práinn Sigfússon arises.

Chapter 75  Njáll forecasts that his sons will become the centre of trouble after Gunnarr's death: this proves to be the case.

Chapter 81  Kolskeggr dreams he is chosen to be a "knight of God": in chapter 81 he is baptised and lives and dies in Byzantium.
Chapter 85

Helgi sees by second sight that the Scots have killed the steward of Jarl Sigurðr of the Orkneys and has stopped messages over the Pentland Firth to the Jarl: in chapter 85 this vision proves true.

Chapter 87

Three people prophesy that misfortune will arise because of Hrappr: these premonitions are fulfilled when his involvement with Práinn Sigfússon leads to Práinn's conflict with the Njálssons and to Práinn's and Hrappr's deaths in chapter 92.

Chapter 88

Jarl Hákon forecasts that Hrappr will bring Práinn's destruction: Práinn is killed in chapter 92.

Chapter 92

Runólfr prophesies that the trouble which arose over Hrappr in Norway will bring Práinn death from the Njálssons: they kill Práinn in chapter 92.

Chapter 99

Njáll advises Lýtingr to leave the district after killing Höskuldr Njálsson, as there is danger from someone who will rise up in the district to menace him: in chapter 106 Ámundi Höskuldsson kills Lýtingr (Ámundi presumably lived at Höskuldr's farm at Holt; see chapter 98).

Chapter 109

Flósi forecasts disaster in the estrangement between Höskuldr Hvítanessgóði and the Njálssons: in chapter 111 Höskuldr is killed by the Njálssons.

Chapter 111

Njáll forecasts his own death: in chapter 129 he dies in the burning at Bergþórshvíll.
Chapter 115  Flosi forecasts evil after Höskuldr's death: the burning ensues.

Chapter 118  Pórhallr Ásgrímsson prophesies that he will prosecute for Njáll's death: in chapter 145 he does so.

Chapter 118  Njáll is uneasy about the case over Höskuldr's killing: in chapter 123 the settlement breaks down.

Chapter 124  Hróðný foretells that Ingjaldr will live to be a man of honour if he does not join the burners: in chapter 130 Ingjaldr defends himself bravely against the burners after the burning.

Chapter 124  The old woman foretells that the chickweed will be used in the burning of Njáll and Bergbóra: it is used as kindling by the burners in chapter 129.

Chapter 125  HildiglÚmr has a vision of the "gandrei6" and great disaster is forecast: the burning ensues.

Chapter 127  There are three ominous prophecies and visions at Bergþórváll prior to the burning - Bergþóra tells her family that the meal she is serving them will be their last; Njáll has a vision that the gable ends of the house have collapsed and that there is blood all over the table and the food; and Bergþóra prophesies that Grímr and Helgi will arrive home that evening although they are not expected: all prove true.
Chapter 129  Skarpheðinn prophesies that Kári will avenge them:
Kári escapes the burning house in chapter 129 and
in the course of time avenges those who were burned
to death.

Chapter 129  The burners who see Kári jump from the house mistake
him for one of Skarpheðinn's flaming brands: metaphorically
this is true, as Kári will avenge Skarpheðinn.

Chapter 133  Flosi's dream of the calling of the names of some of
the burners is interpreted as foreshadowing their deaths:
these men are killed by Kári, with help from Órgeirr
Pórisson and Björn hvíti.

Chapter 139  Snorri góði foretells the course of the case against
Flosi: this is borne out in chapters 141-45.

Chapters 156, 157  Six dreams, visions, and ominous occurrences are
recorded prior to or during the Battle of Clontarf,
including Dórrur's gruesome vision of the women
weaving in a house (see below, p. 440): in chapter
157 these are fulfilled by the battle and by the death
of King Brian.
Chapter Six

A New Critical Assessment of Sturla Bórðarson's 'Islendinga Saga'

I Introduction

It appears from the nature, scope, and arrangement of the saga material, that Sturla Bórðarson, at the end of his life, achieved several objectives in writing Islendinga Saga:

a) He establishes a more comprehensive and detailed history of events in Iceland in the first two thirds of the thirteenth century than he was able to offer in Hákonar Saga (see above, Chapter Four, pp.277 ff). Although there is evidence of selection, Sturla does not limit the focus of his material to those who wielded power and influence.

b) He makes his record as impartial as possible, showing both the faults and the virtues of the major protagonists; this is particularly evident in his account of the career of Gizurr Þorvaldsson.

c) He conveys the infectiousness of the conflicts during this period by refusing to impose an order not suggested by the events as they arise and by this means reproduces their complex interlocking and passionate impetus in his narrative.

d) He captures in his record the actuality of individual happenings, whether he is recording a private exchange charged with emotion, such as that between Sighvatr Sturluson and his son, or a brutally violent physical confrontation, such as the Þorvaldssons' attack on Sauðafell, or an event in which physical violence and private emotion are present in dramatic juxtaposition, such as the Flugumýrarbrenna, the saga climax.

1. This is a widely held view. See Jón Jóhannesson, Sturl. 2, p. xxxix, where a survey of critical opinion is offered.
These stylistic and structural features of the saga were intended by the author and set it apart from the works of other thirteenth century historians discussed in previous chapters. All the writers of those sagas, in structuring their material, impose conventional literary controls, even though they choose to do so in different ways and to different extents. In Sverris Saga, the focus is on the eccentric figure of Sverrir himself in the context of his political career and especially its military manifestation; in Knytlinga Saga, the author champions the Danish Christian monarchs of the past, elaborating aspects relevant to that theme and treating other kings more briefly; in Heimskringla, Snorri controls the wealth and variety of his subject matter by imposing upon it a tight, logically simplified and contrived pattern in order to suggest causal relationship between events; in Njáls Saga the author is equally concerned to give every incident and every figure a clear purpose in the development of occurrence, but makes motives and causal linking of events depend upon the inner natures of people; in Hákonar Saga, Sturla's earlier work, there is no thematic selection, since this is primarily a diplomatic record: the royal figure of Hákon is the most dominant and a strict chronology provides order.

To communicate the experience of the Sturlung age, its chaos and disruption, not from one man's but from a nation's point of view, Sturla had to write and structure his saga in an unconventional way. He does so by sacrificing outright any tidy, superficially coherent
pattern of events and by emphasising the very features of his age which would have proved intractable had he attempted to use the saga models offered by his contemporaries and immediate predecessors: namely, the impulsiveness of human behaviour within individual incidents; the passionate impetus to action; the complex interlocking of events; the diversity of human response to actual occurrences.

Though he could not follow the same structural model, Sturla was most helped in his task stylistically by the experience of writing Hákonar Saga. The serious spare style observed there (see above, Chapter Four, pp. 322ff), most noticeable in the scenes of high emotion, is made with all its bare intensity the common style in Ísleinda Saga. This style lends itself perfectly to impartial reporting because of its very reticence, and to the reflection of an equivalent reticence in the emotional lives of the people. At the same time, its spare and serious qualities capture the direct and merciless violence of the period, the waste and devastation of lives and property, and in contrast, the private acts of love, courage, and honour that appear almost unexpectedly and often in strange quarters in the midst of barbarism (see below, pp. 468-9).

In this chapter the structural and stylistic features of the saga are critically examined and parallels and contrasts are drawn with the analyses offered in previous chapters. On the basis of this, a new assessment is offered of the position of Ísleinda Saga in thirteenth century Norse historical writing.

1. Finnur Jónsson has noticed this in Den Oldnorske Litteraturs Historie, Volume II, p. 727: Stilen er helt igennem klar, jaevn og rolig, uden alt glimmer og prunk.
II Evidence of selection in Sturla's comprehensive account

A The comprehensiveness of Sturla's account is deliberate

Iðslendinga Saga is not a biographical saga as are most\(^1\) other thirteenth century historical sagas (Fórgils s. Skarða; Fóðar s. Kakala; Guðmundur s. Góða; Hrafn s. Sveinbjarnarsonar). Sturla does not restrict the focus to the activities of a single hero and his associates, as in Fóðar s. Kakala or Fórgils s. Skarða, where the pace is sometimes relaxed within that limited focus in order to include many scenes emphasising the hero's generosity, prowess, and righteousness.\(^2\) Sturla's spare and at times staccato style keeps the pace moving quickly and forces the reader ahead, with no more guidance, preparation, or explanation, than the participants in the events can have had themselves, into a narrative which seems to overflow with happenings and figures from all levels of society.\(^3\) Yet close examination of the progression of events does not betray an uncontrolled inclusiveness. Without imposing structure, Sturla deliberately included all the incidents and figures important to the complex anatomy of events that he is tracing, even though these incidents and figures may seem of slight significance in themselves and their relevance may not be immediately apparent. Instances of this organising power of Sturla's are too many to be enumerated here,\(^4\) but consider, by way of example, the importance of Brandr Jónsson and his petty quarrels to the shape events take in the life of his greater cousin, Sturla Sighvatsson.

1. One might dispute, for instance, that Haukðela frattr and Svinfellinga Saga in the Sturlunga Saga collection are biographies, although their subjects are much more restricted than that of Iðslendinga Saga.
2. See Fóðar s. Kakala in Sturl. 2, chapters 22, 29, 30, 33, for examples of this.
3. See below, section IV, pp. 423 ff. for instances.
4. Something more of it can be seen below in section IV.
Brandr is the son of Steinunn Sturludóttir, the sister of Snorri Sturluson and the aunt of Sturla Sighvatsson. He appears first in the saga for the year 1222 (pp. 294-95) when he joins his brothers on an unsuccessful raid on Þóraldr Vatnsfirðingr, whose brother has fathered a child on one of Brandr's sisters-in-law. The Jónssons stir up the Hrafnssons to break off their good relations with Þóraldr and form a new alliance with the Jónssons, but this soon ends in disagreement. Þóraldr then ambushes the Jónssons and Brandr escapes to stay with Sturla Sighvatsson at Sauðafell (p. 296). In 1228 (p. 319), Brandr obstinately resists Snorri Sturluson's attempts to get money from him because of an old lawsuit against Brandr's mother and he is dragged captive south to Snorri by Snorri's son Jón (p. 324). When Snorri yields the case and restores their friendship, Brandr returns north to Víðidalr where he is maimed in a fight with some men led by Þorsteinn Hjálmsn of Breiðabólstaðr after cheating some local farmers over a purchase of meat (p. 324).

Running parallel to Brandr's seemingly unimportant troubles are Sturla Sighvatsson's own quarrels with Snorri Sturluson and Þóraldr Vatnsfirðingr. These reach their climax in 1228 (pp. 322-323) when Þóraldr is burned by the Hrafnssons, who pretend Sturla Sighvatsson is with them in the attack. Þóraldr's sons believe Sturla Sighvatsson is to blame and attack his farm at Sauðafell early in 1229 (pp. 325-328). But Sturla is not there, warned by the wife of a family friend that ófriðarfélagjur are in the district. Brandr's quarrel, it now emerges, has probably saved Sturla's life, for he takes the opportunity to go north to settle it (p. 325).

1. For an analysis of this passage, see below, pp. 464 ff.

2. The full extent of Sturla Þórðarson's control over the interlocking of incidents is evident from the detailed tracing of a longer series of events presented below, pp. 423 ff.
It is Sturla's practice to omit from his material any which has already been narrated in other sagas, notably Sturlu Saga, Hrafns s. Sveinbjarnarsonar, Guðmundar s. góða, Borgils s. skarða, and Þóðar s. kakala. Such a practice is not uncommon among saga writers. The writer of Knytlinga Saga refers to Norwegian sources for detailed accounts of events not essential to his own work; Heimskringla ends in the year 1177 so as not to encroach on the material already set down by Abbot Karl in Sverris Saga. But in each of these cases, the coherence of the saga is not disrupted, because no internal threads are left untied, while in Íslendinga Saga the loose ends stare off the pages from beginning to end. What, for instance, was the argument that gave rise to the enmity between Einarr Þorgilsson and the Sturlungs at the beginning of chapter 1? (See Sturlu Saga). Who is Þorvaldr Snorrason Vatnsfirðingr and how did he become so powerful and arouse the hostility of Hrafn's sons? (See Hrafns s. Sveinbjarnarsonar). What happened to Kolbeinn Arnórrson and Órðakja Snorrason, who disappear from the saga without a trace? (See Þóðar s. kakala). And what did Þóðr Sighvatsson and Þorgils Þóðvarsson do during the years 1245-1248 and 1252-1258 respectively? (See Þóðar s. kakala and Þorgils s. skarða). Sturla Þóðarson may expect his audience to know the answers to these questions from their familiarity with other sagas that came to be in the Sturlung collection, perhaps intending that Íslendinga Saga should be part of some such collection from the beginning.

1. See above, Chapter Three, P. 202.
2. See Jón Jóhannesson, Sturl. 2, especially p. xxxv
C Sturla is reticent about specific subjects

Although Sturla attempts to be impartial in his accounts, giving both sides of a matter wherever possible, on some subjects about which he must have been fully informed he is reserved. Particularly touching is his delicacy in telling about his father's unsuccessful first marriage in 1188 and his subsequent mistress:

Эорёр бар эгія ауоңу тіл ат фелла ҧвіліка ҧст тіл Helgu, сем вера аtti, ок ком ҧви сва, ат скинаөр пёира вар грэр. Ен Форөр ток пі тіл сін Hрöðныйju Форёрдөттір, эр аtti Bersi инн ауоgi Vermundarson, ок helzt пёira виnатта lengi. (p. 231)

Eorёr did not have the fortune to feel such love for Helga as he ought, and it turned out that their divorce was arranged. But Eorёr then took as his mistress Hрöðный Fорёрдөттір who had married Bersi Vermundarson the wealthy, and their affection continued for a long time.

Sturla never mentions Eorёr's relationship with Hрöðнý again, although it evidently continued, since Sturla's record of Eorёr's second marriage suggests it was one of convenience (Тòk ханн віё henni mikit фё, p. 232). It is also reported that Eorёr was able to arrange for Hрöðнý's sister Herdіs' marriage to his brother, Snorri Sturluson, in 1197 (p. 237).

More evocative still is Sturla's reticent handling of Eорвалдр Gizurarson's short marriage to Jоре the bishop's daughter, a relationship strangled by some obscure clerical decree (p. 230). Here, without violating discretion or the dignity of the people involved by offering any factual explanation, Sturla conveys very simply the pain of Eорвалдр's resignation to the decree of separation, through the force of the prefix віllmikit and the interjection of бó:
En at liðnum þu vetrum skyldi þau skilja, hvárt þeim varð þat það blítth eða strítt. En þau unnust allmikit, ok þó játar Porvaldr þessu. (p. 230)

But after ten years they must part whether that seemed to them happy or hard. But they loved each other very much, and yet Porvaldr agreed to it.

Especially remarkable as evidence of selection is Sturla's reticence about his own role in the events he records. He is often a participant and the reader might well expect his versions here to be full of detail and direct discourse involving the author. But the reverse is true. Sturla usually mentions himself only in passing (pp. 303, 315, 320, 331, 346, 362, 387, 369, 391, 401, 409) or without any close attention to him himself (pp. 376, 378, 382-384, 385, 396, 381-384). His most active role is in 1241 (chapters 148, 156, 157, 165) when he is involved with Órskja against Snorri Sturluson's opponents and killers, led by Gizurr Porvaldsson. But here his point of view is not given directly, nor is any of his discourse recorded apart from one verse (p. 469). Elsewhere in the saga his direct speech is rare and brief and the function of his remarks is always connected with some other figure; he is merely a commentator, never an orator.¹

¹. In chapter 129, pp. 413, he and Klængr speak together briefly, as observers of a encounter between Sturla Sighvatsson and Gizurr Porvaldsson. In chapter 134, p. 422, he interprets for Sturla Sighvatsson an ominous dream which he himself has had before Önlygsstaðr, but Sturla Sighvatsson attempts to diminish its significance with a generalisation "oft verðr sveipr í svefni." This exchange emphasises Sturla Sighvatsson's refusal to recognise that the odds are against him in his final conflict with Gizurr. The last piece of direct discourse Sturla Þórðarson contributes to the saga is in chapter 189 at the battle at Íverð, as he fights alongside Porgils skarði. Sturla is foremost in the fighting, but a question from Porgils makes this forwardness appear rash rather than brave:

Porgils maelti við hann, hví hann fari svá óvarliga.
Porgils spoke with him, why he advanced so recklessly.

Sturla's reply is no longer complete in existing manuscripts:

(continued overleaf)
The one touch of personal irony comes very late in the saga, in chapter 197. This opinion functions as part of the candid portrait of Gizurr Þorvaldsson, showing up his faults as well as his strengths with the ironic use of the phrase "in tögru heit":

Þá var Hrafní Oddssyni skipaðr Borgarfjörður, en tekinn af Gizuri jarli, en jarl hafði skipat Þor Sturlu Þórðarsyni. Þóttí Sturlu þá eigi efnd við sik af Gizuri jarli þau in tögru heit, er fram varu mælt við hann. (p. 528)

Then Borgarfjörður was assigned to Hrafní Oddsson and received from Jarl Gizurr, but the jarl had previously assigned it to Sturlu Þórðarson. Sturla then thought that Gizurr's fair promises, which were previously made to him were not fulfilled.

Continued from previous page:

Sturla svarar: "Lát mik sjá fyrir báti mínun (fræ)ndi, sem auðit má verða, eða ser ...(G)anga ekki eftir þeim, því at þeir eru..."

Sturla answers: "Let me see to my own boat, kinsman, as it may fall to my lot, or...not to pursue them, because they are..."

Borgils answers in action as well as indirect speech, which, combined with the praise stanza which follows, places the focus entirely on Borgils, emphasising his bravery rather than Sturla's:

Borgils hljóp fram til hans ok segir, at þeir skyldi báðir sama ver.

Borgils ran forward to him and says that they should both be together (in their fate).

The glorification of a warrior's boldness, here Borgils', is more characteristic of Borgils s. skarða than Íslendinga Saga. Pétur Sigurðsson op, cit. pp. 121-124, has suggested that the present Íslendinga version of the Þverá battle is a combination of material put together by the compiler from the Borgils s. skarða version and from Sturlu Þórðarson's original account. Certainly there are several near or exact correspondences between the existing text of Íslendinga and Borgils s., as well as some discrepancies of fact which, according to Jón Jóhannesson, (Sturl. 2, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii), indicate Sturla's corrections. Compare Íslendinga Saga, Sturl. 1, pp. 517-519, with Borgils s., Sturl. 2, pp. 189-192, of Jóhannesson's edition of Sturlunga Saga.
Sturla's attempt to keep his own figure in such low profile in the saga is the most self-conscious instance of his characteristic approach to his material: how can he give an authentic picture of himself? A fuller view of Sturla Bóðarson as a participant in thirteenth century Icelandic events can only be obtained in the biographical saga of his relative, Bórgils Skarði.¹

¹. See Bórgils s. Skarða, chapters 12, 14, 17, 21, 23, 31, 39, 41, 43
III Impartiality and design: the career of Gizurr Þorvaldsson in 
Islendinga Saga

Gizurr Þorvaldsson's prominence in the events of the saga is 
amost certainly historically accurate and not a reflection of Sturla 
Nórdarson's partiality for the man, for which there is otherwise 
little evidence. Sturla emphasises Gizurr's powerful vital force 
by selecting for the saga the events of Gizurr's life which expose 
the intensity of both his savagery and his tenderness. These are 
recorded without explicit moral judgment and without omitting 
evidence of Gizurr's ambivalent or questionable behaviour.

As well as the extremes of Gizurr's nature, Sturla has chosen 
to record such events and anecdotes concerning Gizurr which suggest 
that his life had a design to it, the quality of a living legend. 
In addition, Sturla has taken advantage of Gizurr's historical 
importance by using his figure in the saga as a bold streak dominating 
the intricately woven cloth of the narrative. This design does 
not appear to be imposed, but rather to emerge from Gizurr's career 
as it progresses in the saga account. This is the measure of 
Sturla's skill. Only once in the saga does he openly declare his 
awareness of a shape to Gizurr's life, when he points to its 
chronological symmetry:

\[
\begin{align*}
1 & \text{ Björgyn var Gizuri jarlsnafn gefit a fyrsta ári ins fimmta} \\
& \text{tigir konungsdóms Hákonar. Bá skorti Gizurr jarl vetr á fimmt} \\
& \text{tugan. En þá skorti hann vetr} \\
& \text{á fertugan, er hann gekk suðr,} \\
& \text{vetr á þritugan, er Örlygsstaða} \\
& \text{fundr var, vetr á tvítugan, er} \\
& \text{hann gerðist skutilsveinn. (p. 524)}
\end{align*}
\]

In Bergen Gizurr was given the 
title of Jarl in the forty-first 
year of Hákon's reign. Jarl 
Gizurr was then one year short 
of fifty. And he was one year 
short of forty when he went south 
(to Rome), a year of thirty at 
the time of the battle at Örlygs-
staðr, a winter of twenty when 
he was made a member of the 
king's retinue.

1. Robert J. Glendinning, Träume und Vorbedeutung in der Islendinga Saga 
Sturla Thordarsons (Frankfurt, 1974), p. 245, has also recognised this 
as a special merit of Sturla's approach.
Because it is unique in the saga, this annalistic summary is a significant indication of the design intended for Gizurr's career as the author conceived it.

Gizurr is brought into prominence in the saga events only gradually, yet his early years, from his birth in 1209 until his father's death in 1235, receive more attention than those of any other saga figure, and it is in the accounts of these years that Sturla establishes the design of Gizurr's life. His naming at birth is the first of these accounts and suggests that Sturla has allowed popular traditions to provide the shape of the early years. For even though the passage includes a direct statement by Þorvaldr Gizurarson which lends the passage an apparent authenticity, it is quite possible that the anecdote is apocryphal and grew out of public speculation and discussion about Gizurr's destiny. Þorvaldr chooses an ancestral name for his son as it might impart to the child some of the integrity of its previous bearers:

"Munn ek son minn láta heita Gizur, því at lítt hafa þeir aukvisar verit í Haukðælaætt, er svá hafa heitit hér til." (p. 250)

He has already discarded the name Kolbeinn because he does not deem it fitting or propitious that his son should be named after Kolbeinn Tumason, who had died a violent and unshriven death fighting against the bishop

1. Another passage in the saga which reveals Sturla's willingness to incorporate such popular traditions is the report of Sturla Sighvats-son's public penance in Rome, p. 364: "Hann var leiddr berfætr á millum allra kirkna í Rómaborg ok ráðit fyrir flestum hófuðkirkjum. Bar hann þat drengiliga, sem líkligr var, en flest fólk stóð útí ok undraðist, barði á þrjóst ok harmaði, er svá fríðr maðr var svá hórmuliga leikinn, ok máttu eigi vatni halda bæði konur ok karlar."
in 1208 (p. 246). This account may well be based in fact, but it also has an edge of literary convention.\(^1\)

Apart from Gizurr's brief appearance at the alping in 1221, Sturla does not mention him again until 1223, chapter 50. The first part of this chapter, in which Þorvaldr Gizurarson presents his children, including Gizurr, to Sighvatr Sturluson, is thought to have been added to the saga by the compiler of the Sturlung collection.\(^2\) But the second half of the chapter is not disputed as Sturla's and records a conversation between Sighvatr and Þorvaldr which further emphasises the foreboding over Gizurr's adult career. Sighvatr asks Þorvaldr to ensure with him that their sons maintain their friendship, a request suggesting that Sighvatr is still troubled by the veiled threat he senses in Gizurr. Sturla Þórarson conveys Þorvaldr's concern at the request by details of his actions:

\[\text{Þorvaldr leit niðr fyrir sik - ok heldr áhyggjusamliga.} \quad \text{Þorvaldr looked down before him - and rather anxiously.} \]

(p. 300)

His words, as recorded here, are prophetic:

"Gætt mun, meðan við lifum báðir."  
"It will be protected as long as the two of us are alive." 

---

1. Parallel passages include the Heimskringla account of the naming of Magnus Óláfrsson after Charlemagne (Hkr. 2, pp. 209-10) and the Laxdala account of the naming of Kjartan after his grandfather Myrkjartan, former king in Ireland (Laxdala Saga, chapter 28).

Three years after Porvaldr's death in 1235, Gizurr attacks and kills Sighvatr and his son at Örlygsstaðr. This conversation too has a ring of convention about it. The reader will recall how in Laxdala Saga, Kjartan and Bolli only become irreconcilable enemies after the death of Gláfr pá, and how in Heimskringla Magnús blindi and Haraldr Gilli only become mortal enemies after the death of King Sigurðr Magnússon. 1

Gizurr's consistent closeness and self-control throughout the saga make his acts of violence seem more vicious for their calculation. He lacks entirely the impulsiveness which give his rival, Sturla Sighvatsson, a certain magnetism. The author, however, has provided some evidence in the saga that Gizurr's self-control was partly determined by his father, which explains why Gizurr only becomes involved in conflict after Porvaldr dies. Up until then, Gizurr takes no decisive role in any major quarrel in Iceland, even though Sturla Þórðarson mentions three times that he appeared at the alþing with considerable strength of numbers:

Var þar fyrir Gizurr Porvaldsson með mikit fjölmenni, ok vissi engi, hvárum hann átlaði at veita. Porvaldr, faðir hans, var á þingi ok var beggja vinr. (p. 334)

Gizurr Porvaldsson hafði ok mikit fjölmenni, ok vissu menn óvíst hvárum hann myndi veita, þvi at hann lét vel til hvárra tveggja. (p. 359)

Gizurr was there with a large company and none knew whom he intended to support. Porvaldr, his father, was at the ping and was a friend of both sides.

Gizurr Porvaldsson also had a large company and men were uncertain whom he might support, because he was well disposed to either side.

1. For this parallel, see Hkr. 2, pp. 107 ff.
Gizurr Porvaldsson had two hundred men and kept them all in order...Porvaldr Gizurarson went to Gizurr, his son, and asked him to support neither side - he said it was the best hope for peace if he did not make them unequal, because there was otherwise little difference between the forces, although Snorri had slightly more men.

The correspondences between these three statements are deliberate. Through them, Sturla suggests that Porvaldr's influence was behind Gizurr's aloof neutrality and they indicate the common recognition of Gizurr's latent power, a recognition out of which the contemporary legend could grow.

In his account of one further incident prior to Porvaldr's death, Sturla Bóðarson has selected the details to reveal the close and calculating nature which will determine Gizurr's behaviour after he receives full power and is released from his father's restraining hand. The incident occurs in Norway where Gizurr is in attendance at King Hákon's court together with his brother-in-law Jón murt Snorrsason, in 1231. When the two men return drunk one evening to their common quarters and find the beds unprepared, Jón - and not Gizurr, who appears more self-controlled - flies into a rage at the servants and strikes one of his companions, Óláfr, with a stick for speaking in the servants' defence. After the blow, Gizurr intervenes by physically restraining Jón, an action capable of two interpretations: either he is attempting to stop the fight and only gives Óláfr the chance to strike Jón back using a weapon because he is somewhat fuddled by drink, or he deliberately holds Jón under Óláfr's blow. The author does not interpret:
Jon took a stick and struck at Olafr, but Gizurr seized Jon, restrained him. Then Olafr got a handaxe and struck Jon in the head.

The effect of the blow is hardly noticeable at first, but nevertheless Jon accuses Gizurr of apparent treachery:

Varð þat eigi mikít sár ásýndum. Hann Jon brást við hart ok spurði, hví Gizurr heldi honum undir högg.

In Sturla's account, Gizurr gives no explanation, but instead, falls upon the trap door of their sleeping loft as soon as Olafr has made his escape. This action may also be interpreted as treachery. Does Gizurr mean to prevent Jon from chasing Olafr or merely to separate the combatants? (Gizurr fell á hlemmi fyrst). Gizurr does, however, join Jon in pursuing the fugitive when he realises Jon's wound is serious, and this seems to prove his faith to Jon, although the ungenerous might interpret this as an attempt to allay suspicion of earlier betrayal. Jon, having run about with the wound unattended in a Norwegian January, continues to be careless of treatment, drinks, bathes, and subsequently dies a week later:

Jón geymði sín lítt, fór í bað ok drakk inni fyrst. Sló þá í verkjum, ok lagði hann niðr. Hann andaðist Agnesarmessu.

Clearly Jon's carelessness makes the wound fatal and he did bring it on himself by striking first. Yet Gizurr played a responsible part, though the motives of his inscrutable behaviour are not revealed by
Sturla. This ambiguity is deliberately sustained, for Sturla does
not dispel it later in chapter 82, when Gizurr is reported as having
exonerated himself before Jón's father, Snorri Sturluson. Gizurr
swears there that he

\[
\text{Ok á þeim fundi sör Gizurr}
\]
\[
\text{fimmtárdómseǐð, at hann}
\]
\[
\text{hefði í engum réðum verit}
\]
\[
\text{með Óláfi um víg Jóns}
\]
\[
\text{ok hann vildi þá réttum}
\]
\[
\text{skilnaði skilja í alla}
\]
\[
\text{staði. (pp. 345-346)}
\]

exonerated himself before Jón’s father, Snorri Sturluson. Gizurr
swears there that he

\[
\text{let Snorri sér þat allt vel}
\]
\[
\text{skiljast er Gizurr sagði.}
\]
\[
\text{(p. 346)}
\]

The matter is not pursued any further by Jón's relatives, but Sturla
Dómarson, in recording indirectly Snorri Sturluson's reply to
Gizurr's oath, allows by his phrasing the interpretation that Snorri
did not believe Gizurr, though he declared he did:

Immediately after this passage, Sturla records the break-up of
Gizurr's marriage with Snorri's daughter, Ingibjörg, implying by the
juxtaposition of the incidents that relations were not smooth between
Gizurr and Snorri's family and so encouraging further speculation
about Gizurr's part in Jón's death. The problem is never resolved
in the saga, but the tension between Gizurr and Snorri only ends in
1241 with Snorri's death (p. 454) at Gizurr's command.

1. Pétur Sigurðsson op. cit., p. 17, interprets this statement as being
sincere, yet subsequent events suggest that tension between Gizurr
and Snorri was not eased.
Gizurr is shown to embark on a carefully planned struggle for total power as soon as he gains control of the godørð at his father's death in 1235 (p. 402). Sturla Bóðarson marks this struggle with three vicious executions of Gizurr's rivals. The first is the result of an open rivalry with Sturla Sighvatsson. The excuse for this declaration of what must have been a long latent hostility, is a quarrel over some land among þingmen of each in 1237. Initially, the two chieftains agree to settle this dispute amicably, but when Sturla prepares to enter Gizurr's area with a company of men in order to meet and make the settlement, Gizurr sends him word that all is settled. But Sturla insists on the journey just the same, betraying in the saga account his suspicion of Gizurr and his pique at Gizurr's audacity:

Sturla kvað Sunnlendinga ekki skyldu vísa sér sem hjörð í haga, hverigri lausung sem þeir slægi á sik. (p. 412)

Sturla declared that the Southerners should not herd him and his men about like a flock of sheep in a pasture, whatever deception they might practice on them.

At their meeting Sturla Sighvatsson displays his suspicions by taking Gizurr prisoner and making him swear to go abroad, only after accompanying Sturla and his men further south to make the settlement. In response to Gizurr's query why he has taken him captive, Sturla first pugnaciously tells him not to doubt his intentions of becoming the most important man in Iceland:

...hann atlaði sér meira hlut en ðórum mónnum á Íslandi. (p. 414)

...he intended for himself a greater part than other men in Iceland.
Yet Sturla Dóðarson also records that Sturla Sighvatsson openly declared his fear of Gizurr as an opponent:

"En mér þykkir sem þá sé allir yfírkommir, er þú evert, því at ek uggi þik einn Mann á Íslandi, ef eigi ferr vel móð okkr."  
(p. 414)

"And it seems to me that all is mastered when you are, because I fear you of all men in Iceland if things do not go well between us."

The prophetic nature of this remark is, of course, extremely ironic, since very shortly his most significant role will be as Gizurr's victim.

The battle at Órlygsstaðr at which Sturla Sighvatsson and his father die in 1238 and the climax of Gizurr and Sturla's rivalry, is discussed in connection with the bond between Sturla and Sighvatr. But in the present context it is necessary to look ahead to that account in order to demonstrate the implicit contrast the author makes there between Sturla Sighvatsson and Gizurr, his executioner. The focus on the wounded Sturla is remarkably close, attracting the reader's sympathy by the emphasis on Sturla's helplessness and on the support he receives from those around him, even though they have just wounded him cruelly. In particular, the author's minute attention to every movement of Hjalti's assistance, marked by the repetition of "þá", forces the reader to follow each stage of this death. Yet there is no effusiveness in the telling; dignity is preserved by reticence:

Sturla var þá þrotinn af móð ok blóðrás. Hann studdi þá hóndunum á herðar Hjalta, ok gengu þeir svá út af gerðinu. Hjalti tók þá annarri hendi aftr á bak  
Sturla was by then worn out from exhaustion and bleeding. He propped his arms on Hjalti's shoulders and they went like that then out of the enclosure. Hjalti then put his arm behind Sturla's back and so supported
Sturla cast himself down when he came a short distance from the enclosure. His speech was by then unclear and Hjalti thought he requested the services of a priest. Then Hjalti went away and Óláfr tottr, the in-law of the priest Flosi, stood over him (Sturla). He drew his shield over Sturla and Játgeirr Teitsson, Gizurr's in-law, threw a buckler over him.

What is particularly significant about these attentions is that all are administered by Gizurr's men after Sturla has sought quarter from them, and not by Sturla's own men. Hjalti promises him quarter, at least on his own behalf: "Gríð skaltu af mér hafa," sagði Hjalti (p. 435). When Gizurr himself comes upon the scene Hjalti is still away searching for the priest, and it may be argued that Gizurr did not know quarter had been offered to Sturla. On the other hand, Sturla Íðararson's account suggests that he did not even question why his own men were protecting Sturla Sighvatsson. Rather, he appears to have cast away their defence of him without a word, along with Sturla's armour:

Then Gizurr arrived and threw the covers off him (Sturla) as well as his steel cap.

Then, speaking only a few curt words of determination, with an undertone of satisfaction, he ruthlessly executes the helpless Sturla, and with an astonishing ferocity:
Hann mělti: "Hér skal ek at vinna." Hann tōk breiðöxi òr hendí bōrði Valdassyni ok hjó í höfuð Sturlu vinstra megin fyrr aftan eyrar mikit sár ok hjóp lit í sundr. Þat segja menn þeir, er hjá váru, at Gizurr hjóp báum fōtum upp við, er hann hjó Sturlu, svá at lofti sa milli fōtanna ok jarðar-innar. (p. 435-436)

He spoke: "I will do the work here." He took a broadaxe out of Þórðr Valdasson's hand and struck a great wound into the left side of Sturla's head behind the ear, but it split apart little. Those men who were nearby say that Gizurr sprang up with both feet when he struck Sturla, so that the air was seen between his feet and the ground.

Gizurr's remarkable leap into the air emphasises the implicit contrast between Sturla and Gizurr, the one passively helpless in the gentle hands of Gizurr's men, the other isolated in a deliberately vicious assault on his defenceless victim. The author caps the contrast with the precise measurement of the wound Gizurr has inflicted, as if this is the measure of an antipathy he has loosed with calculation on Sturla:

\begin{quote}
Var allt sári svá mikit, at stinga mátti í premr fingrum.
(p. 436)
\end{quote}

The whole wound was so great that three fingers might be inserted.

According to Sturla Þórðarson's record, the careful and calculating Gizurr is only once a killer himself, the killer of Sturla Sighvatsson.¹

¹. Here at his death, Sturla Sighvatsson is a figure attracting sympathy and even pity from the saga reader, sympathy dependent to some extent upon earlier dramatic presentations of him in private conversations with his father. The rash, volatile, and often gullible nature attributed to him in those passages make his role in violent confrontation less culpable than Gizurr's more carefully calculated participation. Nevertheless, the saga author does not omit from his narrative those incidents which reveal a barbarousness equal to Gizurr's.

At the Grímseyjarfórr, for instance, in 1222, a reprisal taken against the bishop's men for the killing of Tumi Sighvatsson, Sturla Sighvatsson returns to the churchyard after leaving Aron Hjörleifsson for dead, and has two priests gelded out of ruthless spite for his brother's death:

"Fóru þeir Sturla þá heim til kirkjugarós. Váru þar teknir prestari tveir ok geldir, Snorri ok Knútr."
(p. 292)

(continued overleaf)
Later, in 1236, during Sturla's dispute with Örækja Snorrason, Sturla captures Örækja and tortures him in a brutal fashion, comparable to his treatment of the priests. It is noticeable in the saga account that one of Sturla's assistants refuses to carry out the tortures, while the others appear deliberately to inflict as little damage as possible. Örækja himself behaves most creditably and with a demonstration of Christian faith which implicitly passes judgment on his oppressor:

They trimmed a spear-shaft and made a sharp-pointed peg from it. Sturla told him (Dorsteinn) to gouge out his eyes with it. But Dorsteinn said he did not know how. Then a knife was taken and wrapped around and estimated at more than a finger's breath. Örækja called upon Bishop Forlák to help him and he also sang during the torture prayers to St Mary, the mother of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Dorsteinn stuck the knife in his eyes up to the top of the wrappings. And when that was finished, Sturla then told him (Örækja) to remember Arnbjörn, and castrated him. He cut away one testicle.

There is nothing heroic about Sturla's behaviour, nor does Sturla Þoróarson brush past the grim actuality of the deeds. Between these two scenes of torture is the account of Sturla's attack upon the sons of Þorvaldr Vatsfjörðgr in 1232, where Sturla is mercilessly insistent that neither of the Þorvaldssons be granted quarter, though others would clearly support such a concession:

...bá sendi Sturla Þorkel prest til fundar við þá þróar ok bað þá skrifastok búast við, ef þeir vildi verjast, - segir, at þá mun eigi griða kostr."
(p. 351)

...sagóí Sturla, 'at eigi þarf griða at bídja, því at engi munu fást. Ok sakið at fast.'
"Eigi munum vèr at sákja," sagóí Halldór, 'ok eru menninir mjök unnir nú.'
"Verða munu þá aðrir til,' segir Sturla, 'þó at þér gangist hugr við orð þeirra.'
Gerði Sturla sík þá reiðan.
(p. 354)
At the other two executions for which he is responsible, Gizurr does not strike the blows himself, yet the accounts in *Íslendinga Saga* mark a quality of grim mercilessness similar to his own killings, so that it appears as if his henchmen have adopted his style in becoming his instruments.

The first of these executions is the murder of Snorri Sturluson in 1241. Gizurr carries this out on instruction from King Hákon in a letter which demands Snorri be forced to go abroad or be slain. The author makes plain, however, that Gizurr does not hesitate over the possible alternatives. He assumes without enquiry that Snorri will refuse to go abroad and determines to seize him at his farm, Reykjahólt:

The details preserved in this account are similar to those in the account of Gizurr's execution of Póðór Andrésson (p. 534). Sturla Pórðarson may have recorded exact facts, but he may have intended the comparisons by his selection in each case. Clearly he does not present Sturla Sighvatsson as any less barbarous than Gizurr.
Gizurr said that he would under no circumstances disobey the king's letter and said he knew that Snorri would not go abroad uncompelled. Gizurr said he wanted to go and seize Snorri.

The author leaves it open to the reader to detect in these decisive remarks a tone of gleefulness and to recognise in Gizurr's willingness to comply with Hákon's demands not a genuine sense of duty to the king, but a personal desire to eliminate Snorri. The letter is a convenient excuse.

Under attack, Snorri appears almost as helpless as his nephew Sturla Sighvatsson was at Órlygsstaðr. Surprised by night in the building where he is sleeping, he is presented making a hurried and rather pathetic attempt to hide in the cellar of a small adjoining building:

En hann hljóp upp ok ór skemmuna ok í in litlu húsin, er váru við skemmuna. Fann hann þar Arnbjörn prest ok talaði við hann. Réðu þeir þat, at Snorri gekk í kjallarann, er var undir loftinu þar í húsunum. (p. 454) But he ran up out of the sleeping quarters and into the little outhouses next to the sleeping quarters. He found the priest Arnbjörn there and talked with him. They decided that Snorri go into the cellar which was under the upper room in the outbuildings.

Gizurr soon encounters the priest and questions him, but the priest will not divulge his secret. Gizurr attempts to cajole him with reasonableness, a tactic recorded here to indicate the cold calculation behind his perfect self-control. It is quite easy to imagine that he smiles at the wit of his own treachery when he suggests with condescension that his intentions are peaceful: Gizurr kvað þá eigi
Once Gizurr's men have found Snorri, Gizurr does not attend the execution. But the author's silence about him does not exonerate Gizurr, rather it encourages an impression of Gizurr's ruthlessly postured detachment.

The death itself is only briefly told, but by its brevity Sturla conveys the merciless efficiency of the henchmen as well as the stark ineloquence of Snorri's cowardly and hopeless protest:


The other execution scene occurs at the very end of the saga, as if to crown the sequence. The victim here is Óðrör Andréasson, who like Sturla Sighvatsson and Snorri, had been at times both ally and opponent to Gizurr and at this time has been plotting to take Gizurr's life. Óðrör is captured in 1264 by a ruse at a meeting

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1. Pétur Sigurðsson op. cit. (p. 141) points out that this passage does not flatter Gizurr and he does not think it could have been written by a friend of Gizurr's. This view does not contradict my own that Sturla strove to write impartially; he was allied with Gizurr at the time of the incident. But Pétur Sigurðsson also believes that Sturla did not write chapter 200. He suggests it was added by the compiler from information from a separate þátrr about the Andréasses' opposition to the jarl. Jóhannesson argues that there are later additions to Sturla's work in chapters 198-199 (Jón Jóhannesson, Stur. 2, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii), but he inclines to the view that chapter 200 is Sturla's own (p. xxxviii). Nothing conclusive can be said about this at present. When I write here as if the passage comes from Sturla's hand, I do so only to point out that it contributes to the design of Gizurr's career evident in the rest of the saga and it is wholly consistent stylistically with passages known to be Sturla's.
called ostensibly to work out a settlement between Pórór and Gizurr. Gizurr keeps him prisoner overnight, but declares his decision by morning that he will have Pórór executed. When Pórór is led out after being shriven, he at first asks Gizurr to forgive him, perhaps hoping for mercy:

Pórór malti þá: "Pess vil ek biðja þik, Gizurr jarl, at þú fyrirgefir mér þat, er ek hefi af gert við þik." (p. 534) Then Pórór spoke: "I will ask this of you, Jarl Gizurr, that you forgive me that which I have done to you."

Gizurr's reply in the saga is both unrelenting and mocking in its explicitness, as if Gizurr is amused at Pórór's predicament:

Gizurr jarl svarar: "Þat vil ek gera, þegar þú ert dauðr." Jarl Gizurr answers: "I will do that when you are dead."

Against this promise of doom, Pórór makes a wild leap for freedom. The record of this attempt dignifies Pórór's last moments with bravery; it also marks a pattern among Gizurr's victims: the first was wounded and passive; the second made a frightened verbal protest; the last makes a futile struggle to escape and dies with dignity, making a cross of his body (p. 534). Gizurr stands aloof though not so distantly as at Snorri's execution, for he guarantees Pórór's death with an action chillingly thorough and a stony command to the henchman:

Gizurr jarl þreifaði í sárit ok bað hann höggva annat, ok svá gerði hann. (p. 534) Jarl Gizurr felt in the wound and told him to strike again, and he did so.
After this incident, Sturla Bóðarson delays the end of Íslendinga Saga only to remark a subsequent calm in events:

Nú varu kyrr tíðindi þenna vetr
eftir hér á Íslandi. Sat
Gizurr jarl heima á Stað.

The news was peaceful the following winter here in Iceland. Jarl Gizurr sat at home at Staðr.

This statement concludes Gizurr's quarrel with the Andreássons, the sequence of his grim executions, and the eighty years of conflict and violence recorded by the saga. The statement also places Gizurr's figure with symbolic finality, the checkmate to the independence of the Icelandic republic.

If these were the only accounts of Gizurr in Íslendinga Saga, he would indeed appear a legendary figure and rather a black one. For although no moral judgment is pronounced upon him, there is much in the manner of telling which encourages the reader to judge Gizurr for himself. Sturla Bóðarson balances this portrait, however, by several saga accounts which reveal a tender element in Gizurr's nature, especially towards his family and friends. The bond between him and his father has already been mentioned (see above, p. 399), a bond different in nature but comparable in strength to that between Sighvatr Sturluson and his son Sturla (see below, pp. 449 ff.). But the most extensive evidence of Gizurr's tender nature is provided in Sturla's account of the Flugumýrarbrenna. This is discussed below (pp. 488 ff.). Here Gizurr is not repellent; his words and actions strongly attract the reader's sympathy; and the tragic elements in the account create by the end a cumulative pathos which reaches its climax in
Gizurr's violent and involuntary outburst of tears after the burning. Sturla conveys the actuality of the man and deliberately balances the conventional and legendary elements in the design of Gizurr's career in the saga.\(^1\) This career, as Sturla represents it, depends upon the careers of other men, great and small: Sturla Sighvatsson, Snorri Sturluson, Óðr Andréasson, and the participants at Flugumýrarbrenna. This interdependence suggests that no separate Gizurar Saga can have existed. Pétur Sigurðsson\(^2\) also argues the non-existence of Gizurar Saga, refuting B.M. Olsen,\(^3\) but their controversy is concerned primarily with availability of sources and the interpretation of ambiguous factual discrepancies between certain passages in Íslendinga Saga and Hákonar Saga. Except for Pétur Sigurðsson's reference to the absence of any evidence of insertion in the Flugumýrarbrenna account,\(^4\) neither scholar uses literary arguments. To my knowledge, the design in the Gizurr material and its importance to the structural integrity of Íslendinga Saga are first demonstrated in this dissertation.

Although Sturla's selective record of Gizurr's career contributes to the structure of the saga, it does so without reducing the complexity of connections between events. It acts, as has been said, as a bold streak dominating the weave, providing an element of pattern where there is otherwise an intricately and continuously connected, but unpatterned, series of events.

1. Gunnar Benediktsson, op. cit. p. 182, though he does not trace Gizurr's career in the saga or remark on its design, mentions that the presentation of Gizurr in the Flugumýrarbrenna account contrasts with the repugnance of the man as portrayed elsewhere in the saga: "Við sjáum hann í nýju ljósi án alls misramis við þær myndir, sem aðrar frásagnir Íslendingasógu sýna okkur af honum, svo ólíkar sem þær þó eru."

2. Pétur Sigurðsson, op. cit., pp. 24 ff

3. Björn M. Olsen, Um Sturlunga, in Safn til Sögú Íslands, Volume III (Reykjavík, 1902), especially pp. 320-384

4. Pétur Sigurðsson, op. cit., p. 114
IV Sturla conveys the passionate impetus, complexity, and infectiousness of events

Motives to action and the consequent pattern of events are not often easy to predict in life, nor to determine and understand with hindsight, especially at times of great upheaval and violence. Even at the distance of decades, historians are still trying to interpret the events which led to and became the great wars of this century. The conflicts in thirteenth century Iceland were not on so large a scale, but their causes and development were no less easy to interpret by contemporaries. Sturla, therefore, instead of imposing an interpretive order of his own, attempts to capture the way the progression of events appeared to those living at the time. To this end he refuses in his accounts to simplify the complex interlocking of events or to cut away from the mesh of individual figures' motives for their involvement and actions.

Scholars have not recognised that this approach to the material is a deliberate narrative practice of Sturla's. Jón Jóhannesson concludes, without instance, that the saga is unfinished on the grounds that the connection of events is weak and unclear:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yfirsýn skortir víða hjá honum,} \\
\text{ok samhengi er oft harðla óljóst.} \\
\text{En flestar þeir gallar geta} \\
\text{verið sprotnir af því, að} \\
\text{sagan hafi verið frumdrög fremur} \\
\text{en fullkomið verk.}\end{align*}
\]

Gunnar Benediktsson has stated, also without instance, that parts of the saga are chaotic, containing detail with no significance for the narrative thread; this he suggests, is the fault of the compiler:

1. Jón Jóhannesson, Sturl. 2, p. xl
2. Gunnar Benediktsson, op. cit., p. 177
Robert Glendinning, when discussing Sturla's aims in writing Islendinga Saga, has suggested that the only framework in the saga is supplied by the role of the principal families in events; the material is otherwise incoherent:

Ganz offensichtlich wollte Sturla Þórðarson zweierlei mit seiner Saga erreichen: ein möglichst ausführliches und vollständiges Tagebuch der Bevölkerung Westislands schreiben,... und zugleich die Geschichte der eigenen Familie als den zentralen Baupfeiler, als den Sinnträger seines unfangreichen und an sich wenig zusammenhängenden Stoffes vorlegen.

English scholars have criticised the author's methods as careless:

Great and small happenings are seen without sufficient perspective, and every farmer in Iceland seems to intrude on his canvas.

...a mass of detail is occasionally lavished on an insignificant incident...the humour and boldness with which Snorri disregards all useless facts...Sturla does not possess.

1. Robert Glendinning, Träume und Vorbedeutung in der Islendinga Saga Sturla Thordarsons (Frankfurt, 1974), p. 228
3. Guðbrandur Vigfússon, Prolegomena to Sturlunga Saga (Oxford, 1878) volume 1, p. cvii
The carelessness these English scholars attribute to the author belongs rather to the saga figures themselves. I can point to only one case in the saga where a man is shown to involve himself in a dispute after conscious reasoning and on the basis of an abstract principle. Jón Loftsson, when asked to support Þorvaldr Gizurarson in the case of compensation for Einarr Borgilsson, points out that he has no emotional incentive himself, since his relationship with Einarr was not of a nature to create it:

"Pat eitt var vinfengi okkart Einars, at mér er fyrir þá sök engi vandi á þessu máli."  
(p. 230)

"Given the state of our friendship, Einarr's and mine, I feel no obligation in this case."

However, he agrees to support the case for the sake of justice and to preserve the social and political hierarchy:

"En þó þykkr mér í övænt efni konur, ef þat skal eigi rétta, er skillitir menn drepa niór höfðingja, ok vil ek því heita þér minni lið- veizlu um þetta mál, þá er til þings kemr."  

"And yet it seems to me that matters are come to a hopeless pass if justice cannot be achieved when men of little integrity slay chieftains, and I will therefore promise you my support in that case when it comes to the þing."

This record of Jón's statement shows that Sturla was not incapable of presenting the clear reasoning behind the actions of the saga figures where it was obvious and probably common knowledge. Evidence of clear ratiocination in Sturla's work has also been remarked in the speeches in Hákonar Saga (see Chapter Four, 307 ff.). But when Sturla records in Íslendinga Saga the issue of large political controversies, he makes motives plain without explicit statement such
as is attributed to Jón. For instance, in one specific manifestation of the far reaching struggle between clergy and chieftains, the evident catalyst is Kolbeinn Tumason's jealous determination to achieve supremacy:

Hann kaus við ráð vina sinna Guðmund prest inn góða Arason til biskups...Ok váru þau orðtök margra manna, at Kolbeinn vildi því Guðmund til biskups kjósa, at hann þóttist þá ráða þeði leik mönnum ok kennimönnun fyrir norðan land. (p. 238)

Pá er Guðmundr biskup kom út ...Var biskup allt minni leiðingamaðr ok ráðgjarnari en svá sem Kolbeinn aðlaði. (p. 243).

He chose with the advice of his friends the priest Guðmundr Arason the good to be bishop... and it was the talk of many men that Kolbeinn wanted Guðmundr to be chosen because he intended to control both laymen and clergy in the north.

When Bishop Guðmundr came back from abroad...The bishop was altogether less the easily led man and more ambitious than Kolbeinn had anticipated.

These statements reveal that the motivation for the subsequent disputes between Guðmundr and Kolbeinn is a complexity of greed for power and reaction against clerical assertiveness.

In accounts of localised occurrences, there is considerable evidence that Sturla deliberately refused to attribute motives to the saga figures. In some instances, this may be because he was unsure of the motive behind a person's behaviour, as in chapter 5 (1195) when Porgils Skeggjason is blinded by Guðmundr Steinsson. From what Sturla says, Guðmundr's blow was entirely accidental:

stakk Guðmundr óxinni á bak sér, svá at hann leit eigi til, ok kom í auga Porgils, ok varð hann einsýnn. (p. 233)

Guðmundr swung his axe over his shoulder without looking behind him and it struck Porgils in the eye so that he became one-eyed.
What remains unclear is why Órgils is directly behind Guðmundr, who is walking with Órgils' daughter after church. Does he pursue the couple in anger or with the friendly intention of joining their stroll?

Hana leiddi Guðmundr Steinsson á götu frá tíðum. Órgils hljóp eftir þeim. En er hann bar at... (p. 233)

Guðmundr Steinsson accompanied her along the path after the service. Órgils ran after them. But when he reached them...

Nothing has been said to suggest that enmity already existed between Guðmundr and Órgils and the reader may only speculate about Órgils' motive. The incident is important to the narrative because the enmity it produces fuels a dispute already existing between Hámundr Gilsson and Bóðr rauðr, friends of Órgils and Guðmundr respectively. This dispute leads to violence and eventually draws in many of the powerful chieftains, including the Sturlungs.

Elsewhere, the absence of any explicit motivation in some of Sturla's reports suggests that impetuous behaviour was the result of uncontrolled, passionate reaction to circumstances. In 1191, for instance, (pp. 231-232), the four Sturlusynir - Bóðr, Sighvatr, Snorri, and Sveinn - still young men, catch a thief at the bath at Sælingsdalr while they are on a journey to Saurber. With no regard for the proper legal procedure, they decide to hang the culprit, but are foiled in their plans by Hallr Arason, who lets the thief escape. Bóðr Sturluson then gives his anger full vent, insisting on an attack on Hallr, in spite of his mother's efforts to prevent it:
Yet as soon as a man is killed in the quarrel, Bórrr’s anger flares down again, as suddenly as it was sparked:

This incident makes no causal connection with subsequent events in the saga, but the impulsive response of the Sturlusons is characteristic of the way people behave during the period; all are ready to take the law into their own hands. But there are few men in the saga who seem capable of recovering their sobriety as quickly as Bórrr does here.

Even where a saga figure does have a premeditated plan of action, Sturla does not reveal it to the reader in advance, but only allows it to emerge through the actions of the participants. In his record of Eyjólfur Kársson’s trip from Víðidalr in 1216, Sturla achieves this by a consummate control over narrative pace and detail, although his selection only acquires significance as the events unfold. Initially, the pace is extremely swift, but it is nonetheless essential that the reader follows the geographical pattern of Eyjólfur’s movements which Sturla traces so briefly:
And after that Eyjólfr Kársson moved west in the fjords and married Hrðís Hrafnspétur Sveinbjarnarsonar. The estate at Stakkur in Rauðasand went with her as her dowry.

When Eyjólfr was at Eyrr with his in-laws, he became eager to go north to Viðidalr on his business. He had a company of men. Sveinbjörn, his brother-in-law, was with him. They went from the north from Haukadalsskarð and paused below the enclosure at Snóksdalr.

This provides the narrative framework for what follows. For those with the geographical knowledge Sturla evidently assumes, it is clear that after Eyjólfr moved from his home in Vatnsdalr west to Stakkur at the northwest tip of Breiðafjörður, he visited his brother-in-law at Eyrr mid-point on the south coast of Breiðafjörður and then journeyed back to Viðidalr on business with a large company, including his brother-in-law. On the road home through the mountain pass Haukadalsskarð, which leads from Hrutafjörður into Breiðafjörður, Eyjólfr and his men make a stop below Snóksdalr, ostensibly to get horses for the last stage of the journey back to Eyrr.

From this, the attentive reader will anticipate some act of vengeance from Eyjólfr, because Sturla has previously mentioned Snóksdalr (p. 264) as the home of Dórarinn Grímsson, a man who had supplied the Miðfirðingar with food, weapons, and men for their confrontation with Eyjólfr and the Viðidalir (pp. 262–263). But the precise nature of Eyjólfr's intentions are kept mysterious as long as possible and the facts provided are puzzling. First, Sturla mentions that Eyjólfr calls the priest from the farm, but without declaring any reason:
Eyjólfr then holds a private conference with one of his men, whom he sends with three others up to the farm, ostensibly to ask for horses, which would be needed for the return journey to Eyrr:

Eyjólfr called Þorberg, his follower, to talk to him, and spoke privately with him. Then he told him to go to the homestead and ask for horses from out at Hólmblár from Þórarinn, the farmer. They intended to go out to Eyrr and from there west by ship. (i.e. back to Stakkar)

The substance of the secret parley only becomes evident when the four men attack and fatally wound Þórarinn, as well as a deacon visiting at the farm who tries to defend him, as the farmer indicates where the horses are. When this has been accomplished, Eyjólfr sends the priest back to the farm and rides off:

And Þorberg and the others turned back to meet Eyjólfr and they told the priest it seemed to be the farmer's custom that he came home. Eyjólfr and his men ride away at once.

It would seem from this that Eyjólfr originally called the priest away because he did not want him involved in the fighting and to ensure that there would be a priest for the man he meant to kill. This implicit motive is consistent with Eyjólfr's background and subsequent actions. He was the son of a monk (p. 262) and later became an ardent and fearless supporter of Bishop Guðmundr. 1

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1. See below, pp. 431-33.
Sturla's presentation of this incident offers the reader the view of a contemporary witness not in Eyjólfr's confidence, a man such as Eyjólfr's brother-in-law, Sveinbjörn Hrafnsson. Though he is present at the killing of Dórarinn, he is not said to strike any blows and he later swears he was not privy to the plan of attack:

Sveinbjörn vann eið, at hann hefði eigi vitat vígit. (p. 265) he had not been a party to the killing.

Eyjólfr, however, is held liable for the plot, a decision which Sturla's account justifies:

En Eyjólfr galt fyrir þat, er honum váru fjörráð kennd. (p. 265) But Eyjólfr paid because the plan was attributed to him.

Sturla's control of his material even in this minor incident shows that he has perfect command of the motives and reasoning behind the actions of the saga figures, even though he regularly refuses to explain them.

1. Incidents not tightly woven into the complex sequence of events in the saga are rare. Two such incidents occur in chapter 141 where the style is more leisured and reasoning is better supplied than in the main stream of Sturla's narration. The first incident concerns the killing of Kolbeinn Arnórsson's uncle, Vermundr Tumason, by the son of his neatherd, a man he had dismissed on a charge of theft - a charge the narrative neither refutes nor supports. Kolbeinn has the neatherd's son pursued and killed in turn, and no further repercussions are mentioned in Islendinga Saga. Perhaps the incident is meant to indicate Kolbeinn's unopposed authority in the north.

It is more difficult to fathom Sturla's reason for recording the other incident, which forms an interlude between the killing of Vermundr Tumason and the revenge taken by Kolbeinn. In a dream, Guðmundr Gunnarsson is told of the killing of Geirr that same night at Hornskappr (p. 441). Neither of these men appear anywhere else in Islendinga Saga or in Sturlunga Saga as a whole. Perhaps Sturla included the passage as further evidence of the spreading of violence to all levels of social importance and the troubled nature of people's subconscious minds during the period. Jóhannesson makes no comment in his notes to the text, nor does Sigurðsson in his book.
It can also be demonstrated, by tracing the connections between events for any given period of the narrative, that Sturla's control extends to whole series of events and that he provides all the information necessary to follow the connections and human motives, except where such information is provided by other sagas. What he does not provide - and it is this which has misled Philpotts, Vigfússon, and Jóhannesson - is the explicit assistance for a reader engaged in pursuing the sequence of events which is offered in other sagas in the Sturlung collection. In Dóðar s. kakala, for instance, the author carefully reminds his reader that a figure has appeared before and in what circumstances, even when the figure in question has only been absent for a single chapter. Chapters 12 to 15 of Dóðar s. provide two examples of this:

Chapter 12 Ásbjörn Guðmundarson sendi hann Dóðar norðr til Steingrímsfjarðar ok þá tuttugu saman. (p. 26)

Chapter 14 Ásbjörn Guðmundarson fóru til Steingrímsfjarðar, sem vör gátum fyrir. (p. 27)

Chapter 13 Setti hann (Kolbeinn) þá Brodda, mág sinn, höfðingja yfir skipaliðinu. Skipti hann þá liðinu í tvá staði, en hann ætlði sjálfr at fara landveg. Var þat þá eitt í orði at eyða Vestfjarðrú... (p. 27)

Chapter 15 Nú er þar til máls at taka, er Kolbeinn Arnórsson hafði sent þá Brodda til Vestfjarða. (p. 29)

In Islendinga Saga, Sturla usually omits reminders and directions of this kind. He offers all the necessary facts, but only once; he does not summarise the essentials of previous actions or conflicts even when they have repercussions on events much later in the narrative.
The reader, therefore, unless possessed of an astonishing memory, must continually go back over the pages of the saga, just as contemporaries must have consulted their memories, in order to account for the direction events are shown to take. The saga reader in this way apprehends like a contemporary the rapid infectiousness and swift branching of occurrences, even though there is no confusion in the mind of the author himself. To demonstrate this, a detailed analysis is now offered of three of the interlocking series of events for the years 1199 to 1237. Although the material has been somewhat simplified and arranged in sequence here, the years and page numbers provided in the margin indicate how the various threads reappear in the saga narrative.

1 The Rise of factions for and against the Bishop of Hólmar

1199

(p. 237) a) Sigurðr Ormsson at Svíafell quarrels with Sæmundr Jónsson over property in Síða. Sæmundr's father had held this in trust, but the heirs live in Sigurðr's territory.

(p. 237) b) Sigurðr Ormsson refuses a settlement on the advice of Kolbeinn Tumason and Sighvatr Sturluson, his relatives by marriage (Sigurðr Ormsson had married twice into Kolbeinn Tumason's family, first his half-sister, then his mother; Sighvatr Sturluson had married Kolbeinn's sister), and places his own agent at Síða.
c) Sæmundr Jónsson has the agent killed and summons Sigurðr Órmarsson to an assembly at which he is outlawed, because he is outnumbered by Sæmundr. Both Sighvatr Sturluson and Kolbeinn Tumason are prevented from attending and supporting Sigurðr because the roads are impassable. The Bishop of Skálholt later arranges a fair settlement but honour goes to Sæmundr Jónsson.

Kolbeinn and Sighvatr are greatly displeased.

d) Kolbeinn Tumason arranges for a bishop whom he thinks he can control to be elected to Hólar. The sequence of events implies that Kolbeinn has learned from c) above to beware the power of bishops.

Kolbeinn brings his mother and Sigurðr Órmarsson north to manage the Hólar estates. The bishop later sends Sigurðr Órmarsson to raise an establishment at Æverá, a place of special importance to Sigurðr because his father had died there as a monk. Soon after this the bishop moves Sigurðr to Móðruvellir. This sequence of events suggests that something of the basis for the rift that develops between Sigurðr and the bishop may be that Sigurðr resented being moved from Æverá so soon.
e) Violent quarrels arise when the bishop condemns and opposes Kolbeinn, Sigurðr Ormsson, and Hallr Kleppjarnsson for vicious injustices, especially against clerics.

Hallr and Sigurðr make peace with the bishop temporarily.

f) In renewed attacks on the bishop, Kolbeinn is killed by a stray stone. Sigurðr Ormsson and Arnórðr, Kolbeinn Tumason's brother, secretly desert Hallr Kleppjarnsson, who then makes lasting peace with the bishop.

g) After continued persecution by Sigurðr Ormsson and Arnórðr Tumason, the bishop goes to stay with Hallr Kleppjarnsson.

Bishop Guðmundr and Arnórðr Tumason go abroad separately at the request of the Archbishop of Niðarós, Dórir. Arnórðr goes to discuss a settlement with the bishop at Niðarós.

Subsequent events now show that Hallr has Sigurðr Ormsson's relatives—Sighvatr Sturluson and Kolbeinn's two nephews (see 2. d below)—ranged against him.
2 Tumi Sighvatsson's godørð

1203 (p. 243) a) Sigurðr Órason has given a godørð in the north to his fosterson Tumi Sighvatsson, still a child.

1211 (p. 258) b) Sigurðr Órason and Arnórr Tumason ask Sighvatr Sturluson to come north and take over this godørð. Sighvatr stays with Sigurðr Órason in Eyjafjörður. This puts Sighvatr in a position to become involved in local quarrels there.

1211 (p. 257) c) In Eyjafjörður there is animosity between Hallr Kleppjarðsson and Kálfur Guttormsson, arising from lawsuits (for example, over the rights to a dead whale) and exacerbated by mocking verses against Kálfur.

1211-1212 (p. 258) d) Kálfur secures Sighvatr Sturluson's tacit approval and support and ambushes and kills Hallr Kleppjarðsson. Kálfur is accompanied in this by the two nephews of Sighvatr Sturluson's wife and of Kolbeinn Tumason

[It would seem because Hallr had supported the bishop].

Kálfur is outlawed by Hallr's brother. [No assistance from Sighvatr is mentioned].
Tumi Sighvatsson demands the northern godorð from his father, Sighvatr, who refuses it, not wishing to lessen his power in the north. Tumi then drives the bishop from Hólar and settles there "as if it were his patrimony" - svá sem þat veri hans fóðurleifð.

The bishop's supporters, including Eyjólfr Kársason [see 3 below], Aron Hjörleifsson, and

1. The life of Aron Hjörleifsson and his role in events in thirteenth century Iceland is related in considerable detail in Arons s. Hjörleifsson, including a much longer account of the Grímseyjarfóðr than in Islendinga Saga. (See Islendinga Saga, Sturl. 1, pp. 290-293; Arons s., Sturl. 2, pp. 244-252), though the two accounts do not contradict each other in the facts. It is widely held that Arons s. is the younger of the two sagas (See Jóhannesson, volume 2, pp. xlix-l) and it has been suggested on the basis of certain late verses included, as well as the use of certain terms suggesting a post-republican author, that Arons s. was written as late as 1350. (Kurt Schier, Sagaliteratur (Stuttgart, 1970), p. 66, suggests a more cautious 1340, but this in no way weakens Jóhannesson's argument). Jóhannesson has also remarked on the artificial quality of the amplification of detail in Arons s. compared with Sturla Þórarson's more spare and seemingly authentic account. The Arons s. writer approaches both narrative and discourse in a significantly more leisurely fashion, forfeiting the immediacy of the Islendinga Saga version and at the same time introducing a distinct hagiographical element. In the Grímseyjarfóðr account, for instance, Sturla's report of the bishop's participation is kept very brief:


Aron kvað sík dreymt hafa, at biskup legði yfir hann skikkju sínna um nóttina. Aron hljóp í vík eina, ok váru þeir þar ellifu til varnar.
continued from previous page:

In the corresponding passages in Arons s., both the more leisurely treatment and the clerical element are plain. These features impose an interpretation on events from which Sturla Börðarson abstains:

Arons s. p. 245: Guðmundr biskup stendr upp ok gengr til kirkju með klerkum sínum, en talar nökkurum fógrum orðum fyrir mönnum sínum ok þó fáum, því at eigi var tómsfund til at mæla svá margt gott sem hann myndi vilja.

Arons s. pp. 245-246: Selr nú af höndum sín vápn heim mönnum, sem honum (Aróni) þótt líkligastr til, at vel myndi neyta. Snýr hann nú heim ok mátr Guðmundi biskup í kirkjugarðinum ok klerkasveit hans með honum, ok kveðr Arón biskup, en hann svarar honum blíðlaga, því at hann elskaði Arón með en allþyðu mann, sem síðan þykkir nökkur raun hafa á borit. Fór nú Arón skjót ost vápnar sík með öruggi brynju ok göðum hjálmis ok sterki hlíf. It fjórða vápn var mikit sax - sem stór sverð, ok var þat it ágatasta vápn.

Aron snýr skjótt út. Er nú biskup enn fyrir honum ok látr vel yfir þessum tiltekjum, - "ok vil ek nú, sörr minn, at þú gangir til skriftar við mik."

"Ekki er nú toð til þess, herra," segir Arón, "því at eigi mun þykkja of þykkskipat til varnarinnar, ok er jafnan munr undir mannsliði." "Vel er slíkt máelt," segir biskup, "en þó skýldir þú sem trúmestr vera, sörr minn, ok vertu sem bezt við fátaka menn."

Nú blezrar biskup hann ok málti: "Svá segir mér hugr um, at þú komir hart niðr af Sturlungum, en þó væntir mik, at vit sjáirst enn síðar."

Ok þykkir þat orðin í mesta spásaga, því at þat þótti þá í mestu ólíkindi fyrst í stað ok svá jafnan síðan.

Nú ferr Arón leið sína ok kemr til manna sína, en Guðmundr biskup var eftir heima ok bað Arón vel fara.

The common details are underscored in each case. Though this is only one small instance, the stylistic differences between the two Gríms-eyjarfær accounts are characteristic of all passages where the sagas relate the same events. In this context the versions of the attack on Tumi Sighvatsson at Hölar make an equally illuminating companion (Isl. s., pp. 287-288);(Arons s. pp. 243-244).
Einarr skemmingr, the brother of the man, Hafr, who manages Hallr Kleppjarnsson's estate for his widow and sons (see 2. g below) surround and capture Tumi and his men, including one of the nephews of Kolbeinn Tumason who was at the killing of Hallr. Einarr skemmingr is the only man prepared to kill Tumi. The nephew of Kolbeinn is also killed. (Einarr skemmingr dies of a nose-bleed a few months later.)

So in the killing of Tumi Sighvatsson animosity against his father is shown to play a large part, because people in Hallr Kleppjarnsson's circle think that Sighvatr dealt treacherously in the quarrel between Hallr and Kálfur:

Þeir menn, er eigi váru vinir Sighvats, meltu þat, at hann hefði eigi heilliga farit í skiptum þeira Kálfs Guttormssonar ok Halls. (p. 289)

g) Hafr, brother of the man who killed Tumi Sighvatsson, is mysteriously killed, probably by Gunnarr kumbi, who had a grudge against Hafr, at Sighvatr Sturluson's instigation.

h) Another man, the itinerant Jón Birnuson, suspected of the killing of Hafr, vows on his deathbed ten years later that he was innocent of Hafr's killing.
The Role of Eyjólfr Kársson

a) Eyjólfr Kársson, in Vatnsdalr, provokes a feud with the house of Gísli Bergsson at Reykir in Miðfjörður, by paying attentions to a widowed daughter of Gísli. Mocking verses are composed against her protective relatives in Miðfjörður by the men of Víðidalr, who support Eyjólfr.

b) The Miðfirðingar and Víðadalir meet in violent confrontation at Mel in Miðfjörður. Snorri Sturluson, the local goði, is present but unable to stop the fighting, which is eventually achieved by a local farmer. Snorri later arranges a temporary settlement.

c) Eyjólfr marries in the west and on his way back there from doing business in Víðidalr, he has Þórarinn Grímsson killed at Snóksdalr, a man who had supplied the Miðfirðingar at Mel. (See above, pp. 419 ff.).

d) The case against Eyjólfr for the killing is handled by Þórar Sturluson because his brother, Sighvatr, who is the goði, is north in the godorð of Sigurðr Ormsson. (see 2. b) Sighvatr resents the interference.
e) The enmity between Eyjólfr and Gísli Bergsson and his men flares up repeatedly until Snorri Sturluson settles them again. Eyjólfr then moves out to Flatey and is joined there by Aron Hjörleifsson, the estranged foster-brother of Sturla Sighvatsson.

f) On their return from abroad (See 1. g above), Arnórr Tumason, Kolbeinn Tumason's brother, abducts Bishop Guðmundr from Hólar and imprisons him in a tent, intending to force him to go abroad again. Outraged by this, Eyjólfr Kárrson has the bishop rescued.

The events of 3. d,e, and f attract to Eyjólfr the animosity of Sighvatr Sturluson and his sons, which now has direct issue.

g) Eyjólfr accompanies the bishop in his travels about the north and is present when the bishop is attacked at Helgastaður by Arnórr Tumason and Sighvatr Sturluson and his sons. Sighvatr has recruited among the men from Eyjafjörður a son of Gísli Bergsson, Guðmundr, whom he incites against Eyjólfr, reminding him of the battle at Mel. (See above, 2. a, 2. b). Eyjólfr receives quarter from Arnórr Tumason.

1. Guðmundr Gíslason lives at this time at Hvassafell, below Eyjafjörður and just north of the Djúpadalsá River.
Eyjólfr is with the bishop again on Málmey after the bishop has been driven from Hálar by Tumi Sighvatsson (See above 2. e). Eyjólfr is not named as one of the bishop's men who refused to attack Tumi at Hálar in revenge. (See above 2. f)

Eyjólfr and Aron Hjörleifsson accompany the bishop along with others to Grímsey after Tumi Sighvatsson is killed. Aron escapes, but Eyjólfr is killed when Sighvatr Sturluson and his son Sturla make an attack there in revenge for the death of Tumi.

These three interlocking sequences take place before the author was born and during his early childhood (he was only seven years old at the time of the Grímseyjarfór) so that his command of the material is all the more remarkable.

During Sturla's adult life, power became concentrated in the hands of fewer chieftains and the issues more sharply polarised, so that the interlocking of sequences in the narrative is correspondingly less complex. Nevertheless, Sturla's form of presentation does not alter. He persists in refusing to offer the reader explicit guidance in following the sequence of events; he does not tell us the geography of people's movements; he leaves motivation inexplicit where none seems to have been known; and he continues to include localised quarrels where these can be seen to lead to more serious disputes.
among the most prominent chieftains. All these features are evident in Sturla's presentation of the origins of the conflict between Gizurr Þorvaldsson and Sturla Sighvatsson:

1228 a) Kolr inn auðgi Árnason, a foster-brother of Andréas Sæmundarson Jónssonar, living at Kolbeinsstaðr, has been attacked (the reason is not given) by Dagstyggr Jónsson, the son of a small farmer living on Snorri Sturluson's land. Dagstyggr is then harboured by Snorri.

1231 b) Dagstyggr is killed, after leaving the assembly at Reykjaholt, by the east-fjorder, Brandr, who was hired by Ormr Jónsson Svínfellingr for the purpose. Ormr has been asked by Kolr Árnason to arrange this exchange for payment. [Orm Jónsson is not related to Sæmundr Jónsson].

c) Sighvatr Sturluson and the Sturlungs threaten Ormr at the assembly with their superior strength in numbers, forcing him to grant self-judgment to Snorri Sturluson, who demands forty hundreds. Ormr sarcastically says he will pay for the insult Snorri thinks he has suffered, but not for Dagstyggr, who was an outlaw. Kolr Árnason promises to pay the fine.
d) Ormr Jónsson establishes a friendship with Snorri Sturluson and Snorri willingly gives up the claim for Dagstyggr's death. Kolr Árnason then gives the forty hundreds to Ormr as a gift.

This would appear to settle things satisfactorily for all, except that Ormr's graspingness stirs up further disputes and draws in Sturla Sighvatsson.

e) Ormr Jónsson claims 100 hundreds from Kolr Árnason in payment for the killing of Dagstyggr. He asks Sturla Sighvatsson for help in claiming this and it is said that they intend to share the money.

f) Kolr expects support from his foster-brother Andréas Samundarson.

Andréas' half-brother, Björn Samundarson, visits Sturla Sighvatsson at Sauðafell. Björn thinks he has a claim to half Kolr's money and agrees to let Sturla have what he wants, but no legal arrangement is made.
Björn Sæmundarson then suggests to Ormr Jónsson that Sturla Sighvatsson may intend to have all of Kolr's money for himself.

g) Andréas Sæmundarson refuses to involve himself with Kolr against Sturla. Kolr then asks Björn Sæmundarson to take over his case. Björn attempts to bribe Sturla Sighvatsson into yielding in the case or giving it up altogether. Sturla is insulted by the bribe and declares it has aggravated Kolr's case.

Sighvatr Sturluson warns Sturla that Kolr's money is dirty money.

This sequence of events, e.g., is reported very briefly but is sufficient to show that Björn Sæmundarson is an unscrupulous manipulator. Sturla Sighvatsson's reaction in g is consistent with his hot-headed nature as presented elsewhere in the saga. (See below, pp. 458, 462).

h) Sturla Sighvatsson sends word to Gizurr Þorvaldsson that he will be coming south with Ormr into Gizurr's territory to collect Kolr's money. Gizurr agrees to meet him east of the river Ölfusá, near Gizurr's farm at Reykir.
i) Sturla Sighvatsson rides south with a force of 300, but Gizurr sends a messenger to meet him below Hrafnabjörg, just below Ölfusvatn, to report that Kolr, Björn, and Ormr are settled and to tell Sturla he need not come, but should turn back. Sturla is incensed, suspecting treachery, and sends to Gizurr to meet him west of the Hvítá at Apavatn.

j) At Apavatn, Sturla takes Gizurr prisoner by a ruse and forces him to swear to go abroad. Gizurr is kept in custody by Ormr Jónsson, but sends secretly to his friends urging them to gather a force and come to meet him at Ormr's farm at Skál.

k) While still in the south, Sturla Sighvatsson orders Kolr to pay Ormr the 100 hundreds and takes in trust Kolr's money. Sturla is to have 30 hundreds of Kolr's payment to Ormr for himself.

l) Sturla sends a man to confiscate Kolr's oxen, but Kolr, assisted by Björn Sæmundarson, lets all the oxen escape from their pen so that Sturla's man leaves empty-handed.
Kolr is only mentioned once more in the saga when he is killed for no declared reason by Árni beiskr in 1241 (p. 453). Árni has not been mentioned before this, but subsequently becomes one of Gizurr Þorvaldsson's men and is killed during the Flugumýrarbrenna (p. 491). Though not resolved, the dispute over Kolr's money now fades from the narrative as the more serious dispute between Sturla Sighvatsson and Gizurr Þorvaldsson takes predominance. Presumably Sturla Sighvatsson is too preoccupied with this to disturb Kolr any longer.

(p. 415)  
m) Sturla returns to his district in the west while forces gather against him in the north and south.

(p. 416)  
Kolbeinn ungi Arnórsson gathers men in the north including the sons of Sæmundr Jónsson - Björn, Andréas, and two of their brothers - who are forced to join by Kolbeinn's threats.

(p. 416)  
Gizurr Þorvaldsson's friends come to him at Ormr Jónsson's farm at Skál and Ormr somewhat reluctantly lets him go. [Clearly his refusal would not have availed him at all against Gizurr's men].

(p. 417-419)  
n) Kolbeinn's and Gizurr's forces join together but do not attack Sturla Sighvatsson before dispersing again north and south.

(p. 419-422)  
c) Sturla gathers forces and goes north into Kolbeinn's district, but Kolbeinn leaves the district without confrontation.
After establishing the narrative framework with characteristic brevity, Sturla deliberately reduces the pace, reflecting here the historical significance of the confrontation at Örlygsstaðr and its importance to the design of the saga (See above, pp. 404 ff., and below, pp. 471 ff.).

(p. 423-439) p) Kolbeinn and Gizurr gather forces in the south and attack Sturla Sighvatsson in the north at Víðivellir in an enclosure called Örlygsstaðr. Sturla Sighvatsson and his father Sighvatr are killed there.

Sturla's record of this sequence of events not only reproduces the infectiousness of impassioned disputation and conflict. In addition, it offers the unmistakable suggestion that a certain moral slackness has become rife. From the less powerful such as Kolr, Björn, and Ormr, to the most influential such as the Sturlungs and Gizurr, most of the saga figures do not seek to achieve their ends in the first resort by legal means or even by straightforward physical force, but through hired henchmen, threats, bribery, double-dealing, and treachery. Indeed, the ends themselves are often petty and despicable, such as the greed for Kolr's money. Sturla Bóðarson has reported the repeated instances of such morally questionable behaviour without passing judgment. It is his deliberate accumulation of evidence which invites the reader to judge for himself. Other kinds of human responses to events are considered in the next section.

1. For another instance, see above, pp. 419-20.
Sturla's use of dreams and prophecies

While isolated dreams appear frequently in *Íslendinga Saga*, Sturla Óðarson has selected for thematic purposes several formidable dreams which he records in concentrated groups before some of the major occurrences in the narrative. For instance, before Arnórr Tumason and his men attack Bishop Guðmundr in 1209 (pp. 251-54), Sturla includes two horrifying dreams which clearly anticipate the grim work of Arnórr's vicious vengeance: the violating of church sanctuary, the blood-spattering of the church itself, the gruesome maiming of captives and clerics. The circumstances of these two dreams are sparsely told: "Pat dreymði mann í Skagafirði..."; "En í Vestfjörðum dreymði mann..." (p. 251). Yet the dreams themselves are elaborate, having verses as their core. In both, the anonymous dreamer comes upon a house and looks in to see a strange vision.

1. Glendinning, op. cit., has already made an admirable and extensive study of the dreams in *Íslendinga Saga*. I have therefore kept my own discussion to a few points which bear directly on the argument of this chapter. Glendinning has demonstrated the fictional qualities and occasional literary parallels in many of the dreams incorporated by Sturla Óðarson into *Íslendinga Saga*.

2. Some of the dreams included in Jóhannesson's edition of the saga are believed to be later interpolations and not Sturla's work, for example, the eighteen dreams on pp. 424-28 and Jóreiðr's dreams, pp. 519-22. See Glendinning, op. cit., pp. 186-92, 246.

3. This is characteristic of many of the dreams in *Íslendinga Saga*. Among the notable exceptions are Sturla Sighvatsson's two dreams (pp. 422, 430) and Gizurr Þórvaldsson's dream (p. 429) before the battle at Örlýgsstaðr.

4. This conventional motif also appears, for instance in a dream in *Njáls Saga*, although the dream does not correspond to those in *Íslendinga Saga* in its other elements: "Hann gekk til dyngjunnar ok sá inn í glugg einn, er á var, ok sá, at þar varu konur inni ok hófðu vef upp færðan." (p. 454)
In the first dream, two women in the house rock back and forth, like rowers, while blood rains down on them through the roof. One of them chants a verse about the blood-rain, valkyries, and cursing: -

all omens of death:

Róum vit, ok róum vit,
riguir blógi,
Guór ok Gondul,
fyg guma falli.
Vit skulum rágask
í Raftahlíð,
þar munum blótaðar
ok bóltvaðar. (p. 251)

In the second dream, two hooded men are observed in a small room also rocking back and forth and here bumping the walls so hard that they almost bring them down. They chant a verse responsively, forecasting dishonourable deeds:

Húggvask hart seggir,
en hallask veggir,
ila eru settir,
þás ín koma hettir.
Verk munu upp innask,
þás aldir finnask,
- engr es á sömi,-
- á efsta dómi. (p. 251)

The frequency of stark images such as these, at once homely and repellent, gives the cumulative effect of horror.

1. For a non-verse reference to blood in a dream believed to be Sturla's work, see p. 403: "Kona fó r fyrir liðinu, mikil ok illilig, ok hafði dúk í hendi ok á rauftrefr niðr ok blæði ór."

2. Compared with the dreams of Sverrir and St Óláfr (see above, Chapter One, Appendix A), the elements of the dreams in Íslendinga Saga are often coarse and pagan, for example, the woman with the foul smell in Þorgrímr Hauksson's dream (p. 320); the valkyries (p. 251); and the larded sausage that Sturla Sighvatsson dreams he eats (p. 332). In view of this, it is difficult to agree with Glendinning, op. cit., p. 228, that the saga dreams raise the Sturlung family into a higher field of vision ("so dass der wechselvolle zeitliche Ablauf der Ereignisse gleichsam von einer überzeitlichen geistigen Konstante her beleuchtet wird.")
Before the battle at Örlygsstaðr, Sturla records a longer run of nine dreams to suggest an epidemic of nervous apprehension in the district: two dreams, p. 403; one dream, p. 417; one dream, p. 418; one dream, p. 419; one dream, p. 421; one dream by Sturla Sighvatsson, p. 422; ending in a seemingly invented dream of Gizurr's, p. 429, and one of Sturla Sighvatsson's about which no details are given, p. 430. By including these waves of dreams before the most terrible killings, Sturla Dóðarson indicates that the nerves of the districts are raw and measures the price of conflict in terms of widespread fears, anxieties, and superstitions.  

Elsewhere in the saga, dreams are mentioned but not illustrated, showing Sturla's deliberate selection: "Margir váru aðrir draumar sagðir á þenna tíma, þó at hér sé eigi ritaðir, þeir er tíðinda-væmir þóttu vera, svá at aðrir fyrirburðir." (p. 421). Selection is also evident where Sturla has omitted any dreams, as for instance before the Flugumyrarbrenna. Whether or not he has left out dreams which occurred, the omission here is particularly apt as a literary technique. Any manifestations of superstition would have diminished the concentrated actuality Sturla has built into the existing record.  

1. Although groups of dreams and omens appear before some of the events in Njáls Saga - the burning at Bergþórshváll and the Battle of Clontarf - their significance is always very specific rather than general, as in Íslendinga Saga.  

2. See below, pp. 473 ff.
These examples illustrate the features of Sturla's use of dreams which sharply distinguish it from that of the author of Njáls Saga. Whereas in the family saga the author always names the dreamer, even when he has no other role in the saga, Sturla is often unspecific. And whereas the dreams in Njáls Saga contain emblematic elements which correspond exactly to the details of the events they foretell, the elements of the dreams selected for Íslendinga Saga seem to spring from folk superstition and have no precise correspondence to an event. These features make the dreams in Íslendinga Saga seem less literary and more believable, whether they are all authentic or not.

Sturla's selection of prophetic statements is clearly governed by his attempt to present his time authentically, again distinguishing his approach from that of the author of Njáls Saga. For instance, many of the predictions in Íslendinga Saga do not come true: Þorvaldr Vatnsfirðingr repeatedly declares (pp. 320, 321) that the Hrafnsson will not be his killers, and yet they burn him to death (p. 322); Sturla Sighvatsson brags that he expects greater things for himself than other men in Iceland in order to cow Gizurr, but he will be

2. Ibid.
3. It is not possible to determine with any certainty the authenticity of any of these dreams, although one might well suspect a dream is not authentic if the imagery or symbolism seems very elaborate and exotic; if literary parallels are evident; or if correspondences with the future seem very exact. This matter requires separate study and cannot be considered here with any thoroughness.
4. See Chapter Five, above, pp. 351.
5. See above, p. 403.
killed by Gizurr at Örlygsstaðr; during the Flugumýrarbrenna, Gróa, Gizurr's wife, vows to Ingibjörg Sturludóttir that they will share the same fate, but Gróa later dies in the fire and Ingibjörg is rescued; and Gizurr tells Gróa that she will survive the fire and he will not, and yet he does; Sturla Sighvatsson takes comfort from a dream man's promise (p. 322) that Snorri Sturluson will be in his coffin before Sturla will, and yet Snorri does not die until 1241, three years after Sturla's death.¹

Beside these ironic failures of foresight, Sturla provides cases of genuine prescience: Sturla Sighvatsson leaves Sauðafell after being warned that enemy fetches are in the district, and while he is away the Þorvaldssons attack and ransack his home;² Þóróðr Sturluson, rightly guessing that he will not be the only man to be provoked by his younger brother's recent accession of wealth, predicts Snorri Sturluson's death (p. 304). Other predictions fulfilled by saga events seem to depend less upon foreknowledge than upon keen psychological observation, as, for example, Þorvaldr Gizurarson's prediction that after his death his son will quarrel with Sturla Sighvatsson;³ and Bishop Guðmundr's deathbed prediction in 1234 (p. 399), prior to Örlygsstaðr, that terrible strife is on its way. By conserving a variety of prophetic utterance, Sturla Þóróðarson gives full play to the natural ironies in human expectations.

¹ Glendinning, op. cit., pp. 84-88, includes this as one of the examples of non-literary dreams in the saga.

² See below, pp. 454 ff.

³ See above, p. 398.
VI Sturla records with immediacy diverse human responses to actual occurrences

Sturla refuses to impose an artificially simplified structure on events because it is his intention to present actual happenings authentically. The same purpose can be seen to govern his presentation of diverse human responses, collective and individual, to actual occurrences. His information and experience enable him to include private encounters and the extremes of behaviour in violent confrontation. Sturla's attention to these responses and the immediacy of his portrayal distinguish his record from straightforward documentation or chronicling of events, as well as from the more literary and imaginative historical sagas of the century. These qualities in his writing account for the strength of the saga climax, the record of the Flugumýrarbrenna.

A Private encounters

Sturla has chosen for dramatic presentation, scenes of private encounter between some of the principal saga figures, especially members of the Sturlung family. Very often the nature of the bond which Sturla reveals in one scene prepares the reader for each figure's behaviour in subsequent encounters, with the same companion or a different one. The dialogues also disclose some of the private feelings and tensions fostered by political issues.

1 Sighvatr and Þórðr Sturluson

The brotherly bond between Sighvatr and Þórðr Sturluson is an instance of this. Sighvatr is the younger brother and very deeply attached to Þórðr, as Sturla makes clear:
For harm (Sighvatr) ut til Staðar, there was such a bond of
átví at þá var svá ástúðugt með affection between the brothers,
þeim bræðrum, at nær þöttist that it almost seemed as if
hvárrgi mega af öðrum sjá.
neither could bear to lose
(p. 231, for the year 1191) sight of the other.

This affection accounts for the length of Sighvatr's sojourn at Staðr:

Gerðust bórðr þá hófðingi. Bórðr then became a chieftain.
Sighvatr, bróðir hans, var Sighvatr, his brother, was with
með honum lengstum. (p. 232) him most of the time.

and for Sighvatr's attempt to take vengeance on Þóraldr Gizurarson

when one of Þóraldr's men attacks bórðr at the þing in 1195:

Dá slóst bórðr rauðr á bak Then Bórðr the red struck
bórðr Sturlusyni...ok heit Bórðr Sturluson from behind...and it
ekki...En er Sighvatr bróðir did not bite...And when Sighvatr,
hans, sá hóggit, hljóp hann his brother, saw the blow, he
fram at Þóraldr Gizurarsyni dashed forward at Þóraldr
ok hjó til hans. En Halldórr, Gizurarson and struck at him. But
fylgðarmaðr hans, hljóp fyrir Halldórr, a man of his following,
hann, ok hjó Sighvatr undan ran in front of him, and Sighvatr
honum fótinn, ok varð þat struck his leg from under him and
þat banasár (p. 234) that was his death wound.

In the following year, bórðr pays the compensation for Halldórr on
Sighvatr's behalf (p. 234).

When a bond so strong as this is severed by a dispute between
the brothers, a permanent weakness results. Sighvatr, in 1209,
is party to a plan to attack Bishop Guðmundr and asks bórðr to bring
men in support. Sturla records their dialogue, in part in indirect
discourse in order to indicate bórðr's careful approach to the
subject: 1

1. It seems most probable that bórðr is himself the source here,
being the author's father, though it is Sturla's art that
governs the form of presentation.
If there is a note of jealousy in his question, a suspicion that Sighvatr is about to over-step Bôrór's rights of precedence as elder brother, Sighvatr misses it. The response recorded is free and almost jocular, as if Sighvatr has invited Bôrór to a day of sports instead of a battle:

"Hví muntu eigi ráða því, er þú vill," segir Sighvatr, "ef þá hvé fjólmenntr muntu vera?" (p. 250)

"Why shouldn't you have what authority you please?" says Sighvatr. "And how many men will you be?"

Bôrór's reply is terse in the extreme, making plain his dignified aloofness from Sighvatr's off-hand attitude and showing his displeasure that his contribution of men should make any difference to his authority. All this lies implicitly between the lines of Bôrór's three-word reply, in contrast to Sighvatr's more expansive remarks:


Sighvatr's reaction is one of youthful and indelicate indignation:

"Hvat skal mér þú heldr en annarr meðr, ef þú eft svá fámennr?" (p. 250)

"Why should you be more use to me than another man, if you are so thinly manned?"

With consistent curtness, Bôrór mocks Sighvatr's apparent sense of his own power and lack of consideration for their brotherhood:

No verbal reply of Sighvatr's is given, but, according to Sturla Þórðarson, Sighvatr rides off in a rage:

Sighvatr var þá reiður ok hljóp á bak, ok skildi þar með þeim. (p. 251)

Sighvatr was then angry and jumped on horseback, and they separated there.

Sturla rounds off the encounter by attributing to Þórður the opinion that the damage caused by the brothers' difference is irrevocable:

Ok sagði Þórður svá, at síðan þótt honum aldri haft órðit frændsemi þeirri slík sem áður. (p. 251)

And Þórður said this, that afterwards their brotherly affection seemed to him never as it had been before.

Sturla seems to have included this dialogue to suggest that the resulting rift underlies in part later differences between the brothers in 1226 and 1227. Sturla's presentation of such complexly motivated enmity between brothers, given force by the strength of their earlier affection, is in strong contrast with the conventional literary presentation of such relationships, which is usually in terms of extremes. Brothers may be closely bound even to death, as for instance Hallbjörn and Otkell (Nj. chapter 54) or the sons of Njáll in Njáls Saga; or they may hate each other from childhood, like Guðmundr inn ríki and his brother Einarr in Ljósvetninga Saga.¹ When enmity does spring up, the motivation is usually crude and simple.² Historically, however, serious conflicts were common enough.³

1. Ljósvetninga Saga, ed. Björn Sigfússon. Íslenzk Fornrit, volume X (Reykjavík, 1940) p. 29
2. For instance, again from Njáls Saga, Mörör Valgarðsson, out of jealousy, sows the seeds of conflict between the Njálssons and their foster-brother Höskuldur Bráinsson (chapters 107–111). And in Heimskringla, when the two sons of Magnús berfattr, King Sigrurð and King Eysteinn, compare their respective merits with petty but heated antagonism for each other, more serious disputing seems inevitable, though none occurs (Hkr. 3, pp. 259–262)
3. For instance, in Íslendingabók, ed. Halldór Hermannsson (New York, 1930) p. 49, it is recorded that one brother burns another in his farmhouse, though no motive is given.
In the content of the dialogue between the Sturlusons, there is also an element of irony. Sighvatr Sturluson is young here, careful neither of his words nor his tone, and somewhat explosive in his reactions. His defence of Hóðr in 1196 revealed the same volatile temperament. But later in his life, when he has a son even more hot-headed than himself, the roles are ironically reversed, and it is Sighvatr who behaves and speaks with the most control, mocking his son's conceit, though always with a wish to guide him.

2 Sighvatr Sturluson and Sturla Sighvatsson

Three conversations between Sighvatr Sturluson and his son Sturla appear in Íslendinga Saga: one for the year 1217 when Sturla Sighvatsson is only eighteen, and two shortly before the death of father and son at Ólgygstaðr in 1238. These dialogues are totally unparalleled in the other sagas discussed in previous chapters. ¹

The substance of the exchange was probably available to the author at first hand from both participants, his uncle and cousin, but the presentation of their discourse is attributable to Sturla Óðarson. He uses his characteristic curt style to suggest that the speakers are terse and to weight their remarks with implicit meaning. This requires an intuitive rather than an intellectual understanding from the reader, unlike the irony, for instance, in Sverrir's political speeches in Sverris Saga. ²

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2. See above, Chapter One, pp. 35 ff.
The first exchange occurs at the end of chapter 32. Sturla Sighvatsson has tried to take by force a sword belonging to the farmer Þorvarðr Órnólfsson, splitting Þorvarðr's skull with the butt of his axe and apparently killing him. When Sighvatr takes his son to task, Sturla's reply is sarcastic and cheeky:

\[
\text{Sturla said he expected that unfortunately he might not be dead.}
\]

Sighvatr's response is one of impatience, castigating Sturla severely and threatening to send him away:

\[
\text{Sighvatr then began to berate Sturla fiercely and threatened to send him away.}
\]

The exchange ends here after Sturla's elder brother Tumi makes a brief remark in Sturla's defence. The narrative then jumps ahead to early morning when Sturla is described up and walking about, behaviour implying that he is restless with anxiety over the incident. The frequent full stops in the writing set in relief each statement and capture the early morning atmosphere when the sound of a footstep or a whisper is magnified by the intensity of the surrounding silence:

\[
\text{Early in the morning Sturla was afoot and went across the floor. Sighvatr asked who was there. Sturla named himself. Sighvatr asked him to go into his bed-closet.}
\]

1. This restlessness is in keeping with his behaviour in later incidents at moments of tension. See pp. 458 and 462 below.

2. This treatment resembles the first part of a bed-chamber exchange between Hákon and his queen in Hákonar Saga, both in style and in the atmosphere evoked. See Chapter Four, p. 323.
The narrative is broken here by a brief statement by Sighvatr which completely alters the reader's interpretation of the scolding he gave Sturla the previous evening and proves the relationship between father and son to be deeper and more interesting than first supposed:

"Ekki þykkir món þetta svá illa sem ek lát, ok mun ek um klappa eftir. En þú lát sem þú vitir eigi." (p. 262)

"This does not seem as bad to me as I implied and I will make it good. But you pretend you do not know."

This suggestion that the scolding was completely postured, part of a carefully planned diplomacy to insure an easier reconciliation with Þorvarðr, shows that Sighvatr has softened overnight. It appears that he wants to protect this boy from the wrath and ill-will of the enemies he creates for himself and yet is not wholly displeased with the spunk and aggression Sturla has demonstrated, misdirected and childish though it was. That the author is able to imply so much by so succinct a selection and disposition of discourse and detail is one of the principal strengths of his art.

This record of the early encounter demonstrates how the family is put first without any sense of responsibility to any larger body like the district or the Icelandic people; this does not seem necessary, especially when selfish family interests can be dressed over and disguised. The private exchange between father and son is proof to the reader that Sighvatr does not compensate Þorvarðr out of a sense of justice, but in order to pacify public opinion. There is no
single figure in the whole of the saga who does not share such an inward-looking attitude, including Sturla Þórarson himself. But as he writes Islendinga Saga, he shows by such scenes as this that he recognizes in the bond between the participants a threat to both individual and ultimately national morality.

Sighvatr Sturluson's affection for his son Sturla and pride in the young man's growing power, however come by, present a prominent example of a man who follows his emotional instincts, supporting and even encouraging his son, though he himself knows the young man's quest for power is careless and governed neither by diplomacy nor long-term strategy. In the second encounter recorded between father and son, Sturla Þórarson makes clear that Sighvatr has astutely diagnosed the weakness in Sturla's character, his childish covetousness and his tendency to rush into action without proper consideration. The author does not report this exchange disinterestedly, setting it down because it is there to be set down. He weaves his own reticent insights into his version of the conversation and stamps the passage with his art. ¹

Sturla Þórarson begins by presenting the warmth of Sighvatr's greeting to his son when Sturla Sighvatsson arrives victorious at his father's farm after a sizeable battle against Þorleifr Þórarson

¹ Sigurður Nordal, Sagalitteraturen in Nordisk Kultur Litteratur-Historie (Oslo, 1953) p. 227, has commented on the extent of Sturla's artistic contribution to certain conversations in Islendinga Saga: "Nogle af de samtaler, hvor Sighvatr Sturluson optæder er f. eks. glimrende fortalt, og man kan næppe betragte den som noget nøjagtigt referat af hvad der blev sagt."
at Bær in 1237. (Sturla and Þorleifr had fallen out over the mutilation of Órækja Snorrson (p. 395) in 1236):

Hann tók við honum allvel. He received him very cordially. (p. 407)

The emphasis of "allvel" indicates the warmth of Sighvatr's response, yet the word order suggests a split second of suspense about how Sighvatr will react, as if Sturla Sighvatsson is not sure whether his father approves of his attack on Bær. The author adds at once that Sighvatr had much to say about the incident, but that his words are not uncritical:

ok var margtalaðr um bardagann and indulged in much talk
í Bær ok þó með eljaraglettu' about the battle at Bær, and
nókkuri. (p. 407) yet with some jesting sarcasm.

This introduction to the exchange conveys the full warmth for the son superceding all else and suggesting an affection independent of the son's actions; there is also in "margtalaðr" an indication of Sighvatr's sincere interest in his son's activities. But in the ensuing dialogue, Sighvatr's remarks are presented as sarcastic, and though neither harsh nor bitter, reveal his reservations about Sturla Sighvatsson's behaviour.

Sighvatr's first remark belittles the significance of Sturla's victory at Bær. He asks off-handedly if Sturla has had any battles recently:

"Hefir þar enn bardagi hjá yðr verit, frændi?" (p. 407) "Has there been further fighting involving you and your men, kinsman?"

1. This unusual word is rare and appears to have been used here in a deliberate attempt to characterise the tone of the scene.
The use of "frændi", as opposed to any more endearing epithet like "sonr minn" indicates Sighvatr's aloofness, a clue to his posturing, as if to say implicitly "these remarks do not reflect my deepest feelings for you." It is difficult to determine whether Sturla Sighvatsson realises his father is jesting with him or whether he is only suspicious. It is evident in chapter 32 in their exchange about the wounding of Þórarðr and in other incidents later, that Sighvatr very often pretends to be less knowing or less feeling than he is, for a particular end. Here he appears to be trying to force his son to recognise the flaws in his own character and to be less headstrong and self-satisfied, not because Sighvatr disapproves of Sturla's ends, but because he wants him to achieve those ends by the safest and surest means.

At first Sturla seems as cool as his father. He replies sparely and in understatement to his father's query:

"Svá létum vér." (p. 407) "So we thought."

In fact, he had fought at Bær with 750 men in his command.

Sighvatr, with equal off-handedness, supposes it was but a brief skirmish:

"Skammt hefir þat el verit," "That snow-storm has been brief," says Sighvatr.

That Sturla is somewhat grated by this is suggested by his dignified protest, keeping his words to a minimum, perhaps more in an effort to control himself than out of easy indifference to his father's opinion.

1. This aloofness resembles his brother Þórarðr's towards him in their conversation in chapter 23, when Sighvatr is a young man. See above, p. 447.
He must be aware that Sighvatr knows the details of the battle already and is only playing a game with him with these questions, but he is as yet uncertain what purpose the game serves:

"Eigi þótti oss allskammt," "It didn't seem very brief to us," says Sturla. (p. 407)

Sighvatr is presented raising sceptical eyebrows at Sturla's conceit and with his next remark twisting the knife a little deeper in the knowledge that he has his victim:

"Allmjók þykist þú nú upp hafa gengit," segir Sighvatr - "pat er svá auðsét." (p. 407) "You think you've raised yourself up very much now," says Sighvatr - "That is also quite clear."

The last phrase in particular shows that Sighvatr considers Sturla's pride unfounded, or so he pretends. The first part of Sturla's reply is strong in refusing to defend himself and the smile the author remarks is a fine touch, as if Sturla sees through his father's game at last:

"Hví mun eigi svá þó?" kvað Sturla ok svaraði við brósu. said Sturla and answered with a smile. (p. 407) "But why shouldn't it be so," said Sturla and answered with a smile.

But the rest of his reply reveals that the jest has really needled him, as if to say "what did I do to deserve this?":

"en ekki hefi ek þar orð á gert." (p. 407) "but I haven't put it in so many words:"
The author indicates that Sighvatr does not wish to win so easily, having touched a sore point, and so draws back a little by changing the subject, though not his tone. Sighvatr recalls that his son has made over the farm at Reykjaholt to Þorlákr Ketillson (this occurs at the end of chapter 124, p. 407), but by the hint of surprise in the phrase "er mér er sagt" implies that this may have been rash on Sturla's part:

"Bú muntu nú ætla at efna, frendi, er mér er sagt, at þú hafir af höndum látit Reykjaholt." (p. 407)

"You must now intend to acquire a farm, kinsman, for I am told that you have given up Reykjaholt."

He goes on to suggest that Sturla will be fussy about his choice of estate, and, setting aside the bishop's seats - as if Sturla might have coveted even those - he suggests with deliberate facetiousness Möðruvellir, the homestead of Jón Órnólfsson, brother to that Órvarðr from whom Sturla had tried to take the sword in 1217; and Oddastaðr, which had belonged to Sæmundr Jónsson and was part of Sturla's wife Solveig's inheritance. Sturla remarks that neither of these estates is presently available, but Sighvatr chooses to ignore this detail. He has Sturla thinking again and so changes the subject to direct that consideration into other spheres...

In the remainder of their encounter, Sighvatr is shown to do most of the talking, advising Sturla what help he will need to run his establishment properly and which men will fill these posts best. Sturla appears at first to take him seriously, though he ought to have been alerted to a further jest by Sighvatr's "frendi" in his first remark on this matter:
Sighvatr begins by recommending as manager and housekeeper, Sturla's brother-in-law, Hálfdan Sæmundarson, and his wife, Sturla's sister Steinvör. Sturla finds this agreeable:

"Þessa er vist vel til fengit"  "That is clearly a good provision."

He does not appear to consider that Hálfdan might object to being a mere overseer on his father's former estate, and he misses the point of his father's sarcasm. Sighvatr therefore tries again, next recommending Björn Sæmundarson as a shepherd and Sturla's brothers Bóðr and Marcus as retainers. Sturla's reply is given indirectly:

Sturla kvað bræðrum sínum  Sturla said that would suit
hat vel mundu fara.  his brothers well.

It is evident that he is still unaware that Sighvatr is teasing him, though the indirect form of his reply suggests to the reader a certain wariness growing on him, as if he speaks more quietly, less confidently. When Sighvatr goes on to recommend Böðvarr Bóðarsson from Stóð and Porleifr Bóðarsson as workmen, the reticence of Sturla's reaction shows that he doubts his father's sincerity, as well he might, given that it was Porleifr whom he had just attacked at Bæ. He seems to be evading involvement in the talk:

---

1. The men were not brothers. Böðvarr was the son of Bóðr Sturluson, uncle to Sturla Sighvatsson and father of the author. Porleifr was the son of Bóðr Böðvarsolson, whose sister was Sturla's grandmother, Guðrý Böðvarsdóttir.
Sturla showed that he wasn't very keen, but said he thought they were both very skilled.

In a bid for a stronger reaction, Sighvatr next recommends as grooms Loftr biskupsson and Böövarr Pórðarson, brother to Þorleifr above. Neither of these men were Sturla's friends or allies and he would be very blind to suppose they would serve him in such a capacity. He rebukes his father for the suggestion, appearing to realise just now that Sighvatr has been pulling his leg all along:

"Engi ván er mér þess," says Sturla, "at allir menn þjóni til mín, ok er slikt þarflausutal." (p. 408)

"It is not my expectation," says Sturla, "that all men should serve me, and such talk is unnecessary."

But Sighvatr, seeing he has almost completely opened his son's eyes to the jest and brought him right down off his high horse, persists with one more recommendation, the men to serve as stewards. These two posts require very capable men and therefore those he mentions must be men Sighvatr respects as worthy and resourceful, but they are none other than Sturla's greatest rivals for power, Gizurr Þorvalds- son and Kolbeinn ungi. The author shows Sturla leaving the room at this, and without a word, no doubt as much out of embarrassment at having his gullibility exposed as in anger:

"Spratt Sturla upp ok gekk út." (p. 408)

Then Sturla sprang up and went out.

The monosyllables — except for Sturla's name — capture perfectly his quick and explosive reaction. Sighvatr seems to have impressed on Sturla that he must watch his swelling head and keep other men's strengths in perspective, yet he has done so without being explicit or sermonic. His device is successful, at least for the moment, and
when Sturla returns, Sighvatr is shown laughing off the joke and talking of other things:

En er hann kom inn, brá
Sighvatr á gaman við
Sturlu - ok töku þá annat
tal. (p. 408)

And when he came in, Sighvatr broke into jest with Sturla and then they began another topic of conversation.

Sighvatr appears from this account to know his son's limits as well as his weaknesses, but it is the author who is able to communicate this understanding to his readers with all the immediacy of the original encounter.

Sturla Þórðarson follows Sighvatr's concern for his son's meteoric rise to power in the next few chapters and is particular to present in brief dramatic passages Sighvatr's attempts to discover whether his son is taking due care in his activities. In chapter 127, Sturla Þórðarson writes that Sighvatr and his son exchanged messengers that spring (1238), indicating that Sighvatr either knew a great deal about Sturla's plans or was trying to take a part in them:

Margar orðsendingar föru á
millum þeira Sighvats ok
Sturlu, er á leið. (p. 410)

Much sending of messages went between Sighvatr and Sturla as the spring passed.

Yet when Sturla goes west to collect forces, Sighvatr's concern is evident in his attempts to find out why he has gone:

Sighvatr kom norðan í Dalí,
meðan Sturla var vestr í
fjörðum, ok gisti á Jörva
ok lét sér margt finnast um
vestrför Sturlu ok spyrr at,
hví hann hefði farit, en þat
kunni engi at segja. (pp.
410-411)

Sighvatr came from the north into Dalr, while Sturla was west in the fjords, and stayed at Jörvi and showed much concern about Sturla's western journey and asked why he had gone, but that no one was able to say.
Those he asks are said to suspect he knows more than he reveals:

põtti flestum sem hann myndi

Most thought he must know
gerr vita en þeir, er hann
better than those whom he
spurði at. (p. 411)

asked.

The author further emphasises Sighvatr's concern by reporting a
correction between him and Már kumbaldi:

Spyrr Sighvatr en um ferðina
Sighvatr asked further about
Sturlu ok lét sér margt um
Sturla's journey and showed
finnast, (p. 411)
much concern.

But Már too is shown to assume Sighvatr knows the answer:

en Már kvað hann gerst mundu
but Már said he must know
vita. (p. 411)
most.

Given Sighvatr's previous behaviour with Sturla, it is possible
he is dissembling ignorance. Yet his dialogue with Már reveals
that his son has been close about his plans in spite of the exchange
of messengers between himself and his father, and that Sighvatr's
curiosity is real. This is made plain when he opens his heart to his
friend, revealing his deepest fear for Sturla, that the young man's
pride will be his downfall:

"Hvē lengi man haldast ofsi
"How long will this great
sjá inn mikli, er Sturla
arrogance be maintained
hefir umfram alla frændr
which Sturla has beyond
vára?" (p. 411)
all our kinsmen?"

1. Peter Foote notices similar character traits in Sturla Porðarson,
Sighvatr's father and the author's grandfather, as he is presented
in Sturlu Saga, also in the Sturlung collection. See "Sturlusaga
and its Background" in Saga-Book of the Viking Society, vol. 13,
p. 227
Gunnar Benediktsson, op. cit. p. 180, though he offers no detailed
analysis, has observed that the character of Sighvatr Sturluson
is consistently presented in Fslendinga Saga: "Sighvatr er samkvæmur
sjálfum sér í gegnum alla söguna. Hann skilur alvórudýpi atburóanna
fullum skilningi, en hefur gáiska og gamansemi á vörum í hverjum
vanda."
This is meant to be a hint to Mári, delicately but trustingly offered, that Sturla's pride has in fact put a distance between father and son. Mári, however, is shown cautious in reply. His answer is straightforward but diplomatic and it turns the matter back on Sighvatr:

"Pat þykkir lískligt, at lengi haldast fyrir þinar sakir ok annarra frenda yóvarra göfgra. En þó muntu slíku næst geta, þöndi, ok vilda ek heyrð, hvers þú getir til eða hversu þér segól hugr um þetta." (p. 411)

"It seems likely that because of you and others of your prominent kinsmen it will continue long. But you must be nearest such things, þöndi, and I would like to hear what your guess is or what your mind says about this."

There is something cool in that "þöndi" and a suggestion in the first statement that the speaker has no respect for Sturla Sighvatsson in his own right. Sighvatr clearly appreciates this implicit criticism, for he at once withdraws his confiding appeal with a reply both evasive and defensive of his son:

"Ekki kann ek til slíks at sjá, en fá eru óhóf alllangs. En þó má vera, at þetta sé langtett, ef han drepr eigi brátt fatti, en ef hann drepr, þá mun hann drepa eigi sem minnst." (p. 411)

"I am not able to see ahead to that, but few excesses are long-lasting. And yet it may be that this is long-lasting, if he does not stumble over his own feet soon; but if he falls, then he will not fall a short way.

The author pursues Sighvatr's search for information closer to its source in chapter 128 where he is shown approaching Sturla's wife Solveig. Her response, though not suspicious, is still negative:

Sighvatr spurði hana at ferðum Sturlu ok erindum í fjörðuna vestr. En Solveig kvað honum þat mundu eigi ókunnara en sér. (p. 411)

Sighvatr asked her about Sturla's journey and errand in the western fjords. But Solveig told him that no one could know less than she did.
At the sudden arrival of Sturla himself, Sighvatr succumbs to his curiosity by asking him outright about his activities:

Sighvatr asked him about his journey and errand in the fjords.

His anxiety is evident when he loses his temper at Sturla's resistance to his prying, but he only succeeds in driving his son out of his presence, as he did with his sarcasm in chapter 125. Here too, Sturla returns when his own temper cools down:

No attempt is made here to change the subject as it was after Sturla's explosive reaction to Sighvatr's jest in chapter 125. The questioning merely shifts from Sturla's past activities to his future plans:

1. This phrase was also used of Sturla in chapter 125, (see above, p. 458) but the implications of the context differ.

2. The repetition of this or similar phrases in the responses various people make to Sighvatr, in the passages under consideration here, demonstrates how very plain language can be used as effective emphasis - in these cases to stress the tension and wariness prompted by Sighvatr's curiosity, except in Solveig's case, where significantly the author uses instead "mundu eigi ókunnara".
"Etlar þú suðr um land?"  "Do you plan to go south?"
(p. 411)

Sturla is not informative but is at least committal:

"Mælt hefi ok þat." (p. 411)  "I have said that."

The father's hesitation about Sturla's likely plans is then disclosed, for he knows the ignoble origins of the money, but his expression of concern is unfortunately censorial:

"Párf hefir þú illt erindi, er þú atllar at deila um fé Kols," segir Sighvatr, "því at þar er þat fé, er margr muni stórt illt af hljóta, því at illa er fengit." (p. 411) "You have a bad errand there if you plan to quarrel over Kolr's property," says Sighvatr, "because that is an estate over which many must get great misfortune because it is ill-gotten."

Sturla appears antagonised by what to him seems further meddling. He counters his father with the case of Snorri Sturluson's estate at Reykjahlótt, which to Sturla's mind promises less profit than Kolr's. To this Sighvatr only remarks that Sturla will find Kolr's estate a burden before Snorri's:

"Fyrr mun þér þat bera en þetta," segir Sighvatr. (p. 412) "Sooner will that burden you than the other," says Sighvatr.

The author mentions nothing more of Sighvatr until the final and fatal battle at Örlygsstaðr, except in chapter 134, where Sturla hears that his father is coming south with four hundred men:

1. See above, pp. 434 ff.
Then he learned that Sighvatr, his father, was come from the north into the district with four hundred men,

and at the beginning of chapter 138 when Sighvatr and these men actually arrive:

Sighvatr reið pá ofan með fjallinu með sitt lið.

(p. 431)

But by this time the battle has begun and although Sighvatr is shown to take an active and heroic part in the defence, he never sees his son again before he dies.

The reader's understanding of the bond between father and son is not acquired in a moment, but grows gradually out of Sturla Þórðarson's accounts. The bond itself does not develop or alter, but remains constant from the first recorded exchange about the sword until its mute testimony at Örlygsstaðr. These separate exchanges form a network in the saga which continually refreshes the reader's insight, so that the full depth of feeling behind the relationship of father and son can only be appreciated in retrospect.

B Representative passages of violent confrontation: Sauðafell and Örlygsstaðr

In 1229, the sons of Þorvaldr Vatnsfirðingr attacked Sturla Sighvatsson's farm at Sauðafell during his absence, wrongly believing that he had been at the burning of their father. Sturla Þórðarson's
record of their assault (pp. 326-328) leaves the reader with an impression of waste and tragedy; this is characteristic of passages of violent confrontation throughout the saga. Such accounts almost never present the happenings as heroic adventures and never glorify the warrior for his eagerness, strength, or success in killing others. Instead, the tone is sober and the emphasis is on the extremes of participants' behaviour, often compellingly juxtaposed.

The Sauðafell account offers evidence of the attackers' collective barbarism. They appear so determined against Sturla that they give no heed to the strength of those they oppose, and have no scruples about using whatever means are necessary to succeed:

Var þat þá átlan þeirra at veita atgöngu, hvárt er Sturla væri fyrir fámmennari eða fjölemennari, ok sækja mað vápnum þáinn, ef kostr væri, eða með eldi. (p. 326)

It was then their intention to make an attack, whether few men or many more, and to attack the farm with weapons, if there was a chance of that, or with fire.

The author shows that their fierceness is shared equally among all and not merely instilled by the incitement of any man in particular:

Svá var flokkr sá ákafr, at hverr eggjaði annan. Engi var til latanna. (p. 326)

The troop was so fierce, that each incited the other. None was dissuasive.

The release of their violence is marked by the collective thunder of their horses' hooves:

Ok er þeirr kömu heim á hlaðit, varð gnýr mikill af fórmu þeira. (p. 326)

And when they reached the courtyard of the homestead, there was a great din from their rush forward.
To capture the attackers' impetuosity in the hall as they deal out their blows indiscriminately, Sturla Þórðarson uses successive coordinate clauses:

Nú gengu þeir í skálann með hóggum ok blóti ok hjuggu þá allt þat, er fyrir varð, ok ruddu hvárum tveggja megin lokrekkju, ok urðu engir menn til varnar með vápnum. (p. 326)

Now they went into the hall with blows and cursing and struck all that was in their way and ran-sacked on both sides the bed-closets and there were no men defending with weapons to put up a defence.

In addition, they loot the farmstead of anything of value, including weapons and horses, before they leave next morning:

þeir rantu öllu því, er þeir komu hóndum á, ok bundu skjöldu í klyfjar ok toku hross þau öll, er þeir gátu nát. Þá var mar alljóst, er þeir váru búnir. (p. 328)

They plundered everything which they laid hands on and bound shields on pack horses and took all the horses they could catch. It was then nearly broad daylight, when they had finished.

An individual instance of ferocity is provided by a close focus on one of the leaders, Þórir Þorvaldsson, who attacks Sturla's bed-closet:

En er hurðin lyftist, gekk Þórir í lokrekkjuna ok lagði í rúmit. Þá fann hann, at engi var maðr í rúminu. (p. 326)

And when the door came free, Þórir entered the bed-closet and struck into the bed. Then he realised that there was no one in the bed.

The repetition of "í rúmit" - "í rúminu" acts as a stop in the flow of the narrative corresponding to the sudden halt in Þórir's attack when he finds no enemy at the receiving end of his blow. The pause of his surprise and disappointment Sturla Þórðarson further marks by including here Þórir's later reflections on his own reaction:
Ok sagði hann svá síðan... And he said later...that he
at því hefði hann fægnastr became happiest when he came
orðið, er hann kom at hvílunni to the bed and he expected
ok hann ætalði, at Sturla myndi Sturla would be there, but
þar vera, en hinu ðefægnastr, er unhappiest, when he was not
hann var eigi þar. (p. 326) there.

Þóðr's angry frustration at the time of the incident is indicated by
the curt way in which Sturla describes Þóðr's abandonment of the
bed-closet:

Sneri hann þá ofan. (p. 326) Then he jumped down.

The author balances this brutality with evidence of the attackers'
self-consciousness once they realise that Sturla Sighvatsson is absent
and their raid a failure. Their grisly threats to the women before
parting are postured and almost theatrical, showing that their initial
spontaneous frenzy has subsided:

þeir gengu at hvílu Solveigar They made at Solveig's bed
með brugðum ok blóðum vápnum with brandished and bloody
ok hristu at henni ok sögðu, weapons and shook them at
þar varu þau vápnum, er þeir her and said that there were
höfðu litat lokkinn á honum Dala-those weapons with which
Frey með. (p. 327) they had dyed the locks of
Dala-Freyr (i.e. Sturla).

Further instance of growing sobriety and distaste at their deeds is
offered in one man's reaction to the tale of Kristrún, the beggar-
woman. She claims that a small box he is about to confiscate contains
a salve need for a grossly wounded woman:

Hon (Kristrún farkona) sagði She (Kristrún the travelling
ok kona þá, er brjóstin bæði woman) said there was also a
váru af hóggvin, yfrit þungt woman both of whose breasts were
at tekna, þött þau bæði struck off, very seriously ill
smyrslum þeim, er til væri. even though they got the salve
(p. 328) which was there (in the box).
Patently horrified at this, the man surrenders the box at once and quickly dissociates himself from the deed:

Lét hann þá af hendr ok lézt eigi vita, hvat hon segði. Then he dropped it and said he didn't know what she was talking about.

(p. 328)

In fact, it seems Kristrún invented this gruesome story to save the rings in the box which belonged to Sturla Sighvatsson's wife Solveig and mother-in-law, Valgerðr, correctly judging its effect on the man's conscience.

Specific information about the dead and wounded is not extensive, but further emphasises the ignoble and unprincipled behaviour of the attackers as well as the helplessness of those who suffer at their hands. Snorri saurr, for instance, accepts their blows like a martyr in order to save the life of the priest who shares his bed-closet. There is no indication that he attempted to strike back, and he was probably weaponless. His words precede an immediate death:

"Sækið at oss inum ólærðum mönnum, en látið vera prestinn í friði." Var þá sótt at Snorra, ok var hann særðr til ólífis. (p. 327)

"Attack the unlearned men, but leave the priest in peace." Then the attack was made at Snorri and he was wounded to death.

Another man, the servant Þormóðr valskr, is struck dead by a blow in the chest as he emerges from the women's quarters to discover the reason for the noise:
Ok þegar er hann kemr fram í stéttinnar, er høggvit í fang honum, ok var hann særör til ólífis. (p. 327)

And when he comes out onto the pavement he is struck in the chest and wounded to death.

Though these are the only two deaths specifically mentioned, Sturla indicates that the wounding and slaughter were general and that cries of agony mingled with the shouts of the assailants:

Þar var aumlvtig at heyra til kvenna ok sárra manna. (p. 326) It was wretched to hear the women and wounded men.

As a counter to the violence of the account, Sturla includes one instance of self-sacrifice made out of tenderness. Arngerðr Torfadóttir, foster-mother of Sturla's new-born daughter, Guðný, as soon as she is aware of the attack, runs to the child's bed and shields her with her own body throughout the entire night. A little later in the account (p. 326) the author mentions that no blows were aimed at that bed, as if the woman's love was an invincible charm:

Í þat eitt rúm kom ekki hógg, er mærin Guðný lá í. (p. 326) In that bed alone where the child Guðný lay, no blow came.

The other notable act among the Sauðafell women is Valgerðr's successful attempt to draw the attackers' attention away from her daughter to herself, by casting bitter contempt on their deeds. Sturla Pórðarson includes her courageous outspokenness here, not only as a contrast to the absence of bravery in the attackers' brutality, but also to make explicit through her words the insignificance and wasted effort of their raid:
"Eigi munuð þér þurfa hér at leita Sturlu undir tjöld eða veggi at stanga, - ok er þat mitt hugþó, at til meira dragi um þour skipti, aðr létti, en þótt þér hafið hér unnit á konum ok verkmönnum."
(p. 327)

"There will be no need for you to look for Sturla under the bed hanging or to butt the walls, - and it is my foreboding that there will more significant results from your quarrels before they are over than you have the fact that women and workmen."

Sturla Bóðarson indicates that they feel the justice of her sarcasm by mentioning that they swear to persevere until they have Sturla's head and then move off to extend their search throughout the entire house. He marks their departure with an undeniably bitter understatement:

Gengr bóðr þá út, ok váru engar vináttukveðjur at skilnaði. (p. 328)

bóðr then went out and there were no friendly words at parting.

The account is then closed by a final fact about the foggy conditions, suggesting that the attackers' getaway is hidden even though it is broad daylight and functioning also aesthetically, as a cloak laid upon the wreckage they abandon:

Fóru þeir þá leið sín. Var þá þoka mikil um heraði, en þokulaust um fjöll. (p. 328)

Then they went on their way. There was thick fog over the district but it was clear on the fells.

The image draws the mind back to the beginning of the chapter, where the splendour of Sauðafell is described:

At Sauðafelli váru þá hýðli gáð, skálí tjaldaðr allr ok skipaðr skjóldum útan á tjöldin, en brynjur váru fyrir framan kvennarekkjur. (pp. 325-326)

At Sauðafell there was a fine homestead, the hall entirely hung in tapestries and shields arranged upon the tapestries, but the bernies were just outside the women's quarters.
The careful selection and placing of facts to provide design
is also apparent in the account of the battle at Örlygsstaðir in which
the author creates the impression that Sturla Sighvatsson is certain
of his end. Whereas Gizurr Borvaldsson appears keen and confident
after his alleged wholesome dream that his uncle, Bishop Magnús,
has promised him support, Sturla awakes clearly troubled and sickened
by his dream the night before the battle:

Sturla vaknaði, þá er skammt
var sól farin. Hann settst
upp ok var sveittur um andlitit.
Hann strauk fast hendinni um
kinnina ok meilti: "Ekki er
mark at draumum." (p. 430)

Sturla woke when it was shortly,
after sunrise. He sat up and
there was perspiration over his face.
He rubbed his cheek hard with his
hand and said: "There's nothing
in dreams."

The sense of physical malaise is maintained by the recording of the
detail that Sturla went to the privy and then lay down:

Síðan stoð hann upp ok gekk
til salernis ok Illugi prestr
með honum. En er hann kom aftr,
lá hann litla hrið; (p. 430)

Then he stood up and went to
the privy and the priest Illugi
with him. And when he came back,
he lay down for a little while;

while the fastidiousness of his prayer betrays his apprehension:

Sturla gekk þá til kirkju
ok tók rollu ór þúss sínum
ok söng Agústínusben, meðan
líðið bjóst. (p. 430)

Then Sturla went to the church
and took a scroll from his girdle
and chanted the prayer of Augustine
while the host prepared.

There is a suggestion, too, that he anticipates failure when he refuses
to carry a shield specially reserved for him:

1. This dream seems contrived and is reminiscent of Magnús Ólafsson's
dream in the Heimskringla (see above, Chapter Two, pp. 164-66).
Gizurr's remark is also conventional: "Betra þykkir mér dreymt
en ódreymt." (p. 429). Compare, for instance, Sverrir's dreams,
Chapter One, Appendix D, p. 126, especially dreams 2 and 3.

2. Glendinning, op. cit., pp. 240-41, suspects literary borrowing from
Hávarór Saga for these gestures, from Atli's dream.
Einn skjöldr var lauss, er á var markat crucifixum. Sá var Sturla ætlaör, en hann tók eigi við. (p. 431)

A shield lay loose which was marked with a crucifix. It was intended for Sturla but he did not take it with him.

Sturla Pórdarson seems to be suggesting that Sturla Sighvatsson feels himself unworthy of the insignia when he is going to his death. 1

This presentation is balanced by the rather different reaction of Sturla Sighvatsson's father. At the outset, Sighvatr too advances recklessly, as if hurrying toward certain death:

Maðr mælti til hans, sá er gekk þar kvinni: "Gakktu eigi þar fram, Sighvatr, þar eru óvinir fyrir." Hann svarar engu ok gekk sem áður, (p. 433)

A man spoke to him as he was going from the pen: "Don't rush out there, Sighvatr, your enemies are out there." He answered nothing and advanced as before.

But later, when he is down and threatened, he is understandably anxious to talk his way to quarter, 2 even though his plea is ignored:

Sighvatr mælti: "Höfumst orð við, þér munuð nú ráða skiptum varum." Sighvatr spoke: "Let's discuss it - you must now decide our differences."

Þá hjóp at Einarr dragi ok hjó í hófuð Sighvati, ok var þat ærit banasár... (p. 434)

Then Einarr dragi ran up and struck Sighvatr in the head and that was sufficient for a death wound.

1. Glendinning, op. cit., pp. 212-13, connects this cross and Sturla Sighvatsson's refusal of the shield with a dream the author himself tells to Sturla Sighvatsson before the battle at Örlygstaðr (p. 422). In this dream Sturla Pórdarson notices a large cross up on a mountain crag, just before an avalanche of stones, all of them small but one, which causes several fatalities among the dreamer's companions.

2. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, The Age of the Sturlungs (Ithaca, N.Y., 1953), pp. 77-78, remarks several instances in Íslendinga Saga where men are tempted to beg for their lives after capture in battle, even though they fought bravely. He offers as a contrast the gallant behaviour of Sighvatr's eldest son Tumi, killed by the bishop's men at Hólar in 1222 (Sturl. 1, p. 228).
Other incidents during the Örygsstaðar battle some of them already mentioned (see above, pp. 404 ff.) are reported with equal seriousness and immediacy. Sturla Pórðarson says nothing of the importance of the attackers' victory or their satisfaction at success, but ends with a long, sobering list of the casualties, 57 men in all, a poignant admonition to his readers of the senseless waste of lives.

The emphasis on the tragedy of such violence is consistent throughout the saga but reaches its climax at the burning of Gizurr Pórvalds- són's farm at Flugumýrr in 1253. In this account immediacy is heightened by details presenting the preparation for the attack, the reactions of onlookers, private exchanges among the attacked, the setting and the quality of light, and the aftermath.

The climax of the saga: the Flugumýrarbrenna

Sturla Pórðarson had both motive and means for the special attention he gives in the saga to the Flugumýrarbrenna. The event has national significance because the object of the attack is Gizurr Pórvaldsson, King Hákon's agent in establishing Norwegian royal control over Iceland. But Sturla had a personal interest in the burning as well:

1. See, for instance, the killing of the Pórvaldssons in 1232, chapters 84-85; the attack on Grímsey, chapter 44; Kolbeinn Tumason's attack on the bishop, chapter 21.

2. Gunnar Benediktsson, op. cit., p. 178, points to the masterly presentation of scenes from this happening: "Í allri þeirri frásögn munu vandfundin smíða-lýti."
he was allied with Gizurr at the time, even though his own family are bent on taking vengeance on Gizurr for the killing of Sturla Sighvatsson; and his daughter was then staying at Flugumýrr, having just been married to Gizurr's son Hallr as a token and incentive to the new rapprochement between Gizurr and Sturla. In fact, Sturla himself had only left Flugumýrr the morning before the attack. These associations gave him easy access to first-hand accounts from participants on both sides of the conflict. He has used these facts to convey the happening with dramatic reality and from diverse points of view and to give vent to his own intense feeling about the incident.

Sturla provides all the basic historical information, yet the informative nature of the facts is subordinated to their emotionally evocative function. Rather than merely listing the men in the attacking party and stating the total, Sturla carefully records the number and time of arrival at the rendez-vous of each group. This practice not only emphasises the swelling of the force, but, by its precision and repetitive structure, conveys the controlled tension of the men. The leader, Eyjólfr Þorsteinsson, spurred on by the mockery of his wife (p. 481), sends his first summons to his fellow supporter of Þórór kakali Sighvatsson, Þóri Koðránsson. Þóri leaves Flatey on Monday evening ("aðra nótt vikunnar", p. 484) and arrives at Eyjólfr's farm, Móruvellir, with seven men on Tuesday:

1. Pétur Sigurðsson, op. cit., p. 114, remarks this as well.
3. Pétur Sigurðsson, op. cit., p. 37, remarks the lengthy listing of participants as a characteristic practice of Sturla's. See also, above, Chapter Four, p. 319.
Sturla then lists the seven men who accompany Hrani, beginning with the phrase:

Pessir menn váru með Hrana. These men were with Hrani.
(p. 484)

A list of Eyjólfur's men follows, but is so structured as to imply that four of the men, including Eyjólfur himself were already at Möðruvellir when Hrani arrived and that the others came one by one or in separate groups later. Sturla creates this impression by referring to individuals as the fifth or sixth, and by pausing after listing the members of an arriving group to add their numbers to the total. The reader thus imagines them arriving at Möðruvellir all during the day, until what began as a handful of men becomes a sizeable raiding party:

Pessir menn váru með Eyjólfur: Ásgrímr, bróðir hans, Kolbeinn grón ok Ari Ingimundarson, fimmti Eiríkr Brandsson, sétti Ingjaldr skart Eyjólfsson, Kvistungar tveir, Steindórr ok Jón, þeir bræðr Hámundr ok Kollgrím - ok eru nú tíu -, Þorgeir káti, Ófeigur Eiríksson, Andrés Brandsson, Jón af Bakka ok Ljótr, sonr hans, - ok eru nú fimmtán...ok eru nú tuttugu; ...ok er nú hálfir þriði tigr.
(pp. 484-485).

These men were with Eyjólfur: Ásgrímr, his brother, Kolbeinn grón and Ari Ingimundarson, the fifth Eiríkr Brandsson, the sixth Ingjaldr skart Eyjólfsson, the two Kvistungar, Steindórr and Jón, the brothers Hámundr and Kollgrím - and now there are ten -, Þorgeirr káti, Ófeigr Eiríksson, Andrés Brandsson, Jón of Bakki and Ljótr his son - and now there are fifteen... and now there are twenty... and now there are twenty-five.
Finally, when Sturla has named everyone who comes to Möðruvellir, he
gives the total, including Hrani's group, and also mentions how they
were equipped:

Tveir menn fóru ins fimmta tigar,¹ Forty-two men came and thirty
ok varu þrír tigir manna í hring-
(b)ringbrynjum - ok tvænnar tveyjur með. (of them) were in ring mail
and two with jerkins.

(p. 485)

The speed with which this gathering takes place (in less than one
day) indicates that the men must have been ready for the summons. Their
commitment is implied in the way in which they subordinate their
individuality to the group and become mere numbers. But Sturla makes
plain that such singleness of purpose is not universal. Several men
met on the way to Flugumýrr decline to join the attackers, notably
Björn, the brother of Kolbeinn grön (Hann vildi þat vist eigi (p. 485)),
and Þorvarðr from Saurbær:

Leitat var ok við Þorvarðr ór ¹ Þorvarðr from Saurbær's aid
Saurbær, ok var þar þvert nei was sought also and it was
fyrir. (p. 485) flatly refused.

(p. 485)

When these men turn back, Þorleifr Fagrðsóll goes with them:

¹ It is curious that this total is incorrect. After he says "ok
er nú hálfri þríði tigur", i.e. twenty-five including Eyjólfur,
Sturla mentions only nine more men, making thirty-four. Adding
Hrani's party of seven this comes to forty-one. Someone has
been left out of the naming.
Porleifr sneri aftr með þeim.¹ (p. 485) Porleifr turned back with them.

The indirect presentation of the conversation avoids any show of favour by the author for one side or the other. Sturla displays an equal neutrality and candour in reporting how Helgi Þorvaldsson, Gizurr's second cousin, attempts to run along the fells to warn Gizurr, but abandons the effort abruptly when he cannot keep up to the riders:

Tóku þeir þá at ríða mikinr... Then they began to ride hard.
treystist hann þá eigi, at He did not believe he could
hann gæti fylgt þeim. Var keep up with them. It was
þá mjök svá í dagsátr. Sneri then advanced evening. He
hann þá brátt aftr. turned back at once.

The adverb "brátt" here suggests that Helgi has washed his hands of the whole business, overcome with sudden terror and perhaps too ashamed to let anyone know of his abortive attempt at a warning. Sturla does not mention any attempt on Helgi's part to gather men to assist Gizurr. Yet he must have talked about his run later, for clearly Sturla has learned of it and there can have been no witness.

Sturla is also candid about the second thoughts of some of Eyjólfr's men during their journey. Not even Eyjólfr's threats can persuade Þorvaldr kampi Sveinsson to continue after a stop to place spies:

1. The "þeim" seems to mean here the whole group Eyjólfr has just met at Öxnadalsheiðr. The four men mentioned by name are probably the leaders whose men will turn back with them. Only one of these four is not mentioned as refusing to accompany Eyjólfr, Guðmundr from Hrafnagil, but he is not mentioned anywhere in the burning account and appears only later, in chapter 176 (p. 498), when he offers Gizurr Þorvaldsson and his men hospitality during their pursuit of of the burners. This later opposition to Eyjólfr indicates that Guðmundr must have turned back with others here at Öxnadalsheiðr.
The reader may interpret from his stubbornness that Porvaldr is
either cowardly or sceptical of the ethics of the plan. Either way,
his desertion is not flattering for Eyjólfr.

Caught up unwittingly into events which they cannot oppose as
individuals, the dilemma of these men will be familiar to most
readers, so that Sturla's record of it heightens the authenticity
of his account. He records, too, that they seek release for the
conflict they feel in the customary way, through action: they spur
their horses. In the word "allgott", Sturla suggests that they
take the best path for their horses' and for themselves as they
ride down swiftly over the heath, breaking the stillness of the
evening with the thunder of the horses' hooves, afterwards recalled
by the local people:

1. Flosi remarks a similar dilemma before the burning at Bergþórahvall
in Njáls saga, op. cit., p. 329: "Eru nú tveir kostir til, ok er
hvárrgi góðr, sá annarr að hverfa frá, - ok er þat værr bani -,
hinn annarr að bera at eld ok brenda þá inni, ok er þat stórr
ábyrgðarhlutr fyrir guði."
Now they begin hard riding and it was very good riding down along the district. Men have also reported since how quickly it happened, those who had some suspicion of the ride.

Sturla's silence on the matter suggests that those who were aware of the expedition made no attempt to help or even warn Gizurr and that his popularity was not overwhelming in the district. On this subject, Sturla's moral neutrality gives way briefly to marked irony when he describes a little later how Gizurr's neighbours, observing the flames against the night sky, run to tell each other, but take him no help:

Men then saw the fire from there and widely throughout the district. Everywhere men ran together, when they became aware of it, but none of them in such a way that it was of any use to those who were in trouble.

In the account of the attack itself, references to the passage of time constantly recur in terms of the changing light during Tuesday evening, night, and Wednesday morning. These combine with other details to create visual effects and to measure human endurance against the dark and the half-light of dusk and early morning. Many of the men, drawn into action from their beds, fight only in their linen, and the women, too, are described wearing night dress. The smoke and heat are said to tire them and the night time setting implies that these conditions are exaggerated by lack of sleep:
Gizurr went into the south porch, and it was then very difficult for him both from smoke and heat and it was then in his mind to make his way out rather than be suffocated inside any longer... He was in his linen and a bernie, a steel helmet on his head, the sword Brynjuabito in his hand. Groa was only in a night dress.

The author repeats how they fought long into the night in spite of this oppression of fire and smoke:

Deir börðust lengi náetr...
(p. 488)

Ok þá börðust þeir enn lengi.
(p. 489)

and that even during lulls in the attack they were as tense and alert as opponents in a tug-of-war:

ok töku hvíldir sem við skinnleik. (p. 488)

and they took rest as in the hide-pulling game.

So Sturla insists upon their perseverance in a trial encapsulated by the darkness, with no respite for anyone but death, until at dawn the night and the attackers depart together:

Pá var í dagan. Stigu brennumenn þá á bak ok riðu út ór garði. (p. 493)

Then it was daybreak. The burners jumped on horseback and rode out of the enclosure.

Throughout the three chapters recording the attack, the focus shifts between groups of men and individuals, both inside and outside the farm house. Except for the passage about Gizurr's narrow escape...
(pp. 492-493), attention never dwells very long in one place, producing a swiftly moving narrative to match the pace of action. The serious and radical nature of the participants' activity is suggested by the plain diction Sturla uses and by his refusal to break his concentrated documentation with much dialogue. In addition, the sheer length to which this piece of writing is sustained forces the reader to persevere with the burning account even as the participants persevered with the burning.

In several places Sturla heightens authenticity by including explicit testimonies of eye-witnesses to the fierceness of the fighting:

> þeir menn hafa sagt, er þar várú, at eldru þótti af hrjóta, er vápnin mættust. (p. 488)

> those men who were there have said that fire seemed to spring out where weapons clashed.

or to the bravery of the defence:

> Ok svá sagði Þorsteinn Guðmundarson síðan, at hann kvaðst þess hvergi komit hafa, at menn hefði jafnfreknliga varízt. (p. 488)

> And so said Þorsteinn Guðmundarson later, that he declared he had never experienced men defending themselves so bravely.

> Ok allir hafa vörn þá ágætt, er varð á Flugumýri, þáði vinir ok óvinir. (p. 488)

> And all hold that defence excellent which was at Flugumýr, both friends and enemies (of the defenders).
For the passage about Gizurr’s escape, it is clear that Gizurr himself is the informant and that it is the suspense he felt which Sturla attempts to convey. This is the only place in the account which might be described as adventure, but it is the adventure of escape, almost of comic escape, rather than the adventure of warriors. The suspense depends upon Sturla’s meticulous presentation of detail which forces the reader to see everything through Gizurr’s eyes and concentrates attention upon Gizurr’s reactions. We first follow his gaze around the skyr-room as he sizes up the position of various barrels and recognises a good hiding place:

Gizurr sa, at þar var ker í jörðu hjá lítt, ok var í syra, en skyrkerit stóð þar yfir ofan ok hulði mjök syrukerit, þat er í jörðunni var. Þar var rúm þat, er maðr mätti komast í kerit. (p. 492)

Gizurr saw that there was a barrel on the ground beside him, a little one and sour whey was in it, but the skyr barrel stood over and in front of it and much hid the sour whey barrel, which was on the ground. There was room enough for a man to get into the barrel.

Sturla then reminds the reader of the scantiness of Gizurr’s clothing for an October night, so that the following reference to his reaction as he steps into the barrel, amounts to wry understatement:

...ok fór Gizurr þar í kerit, þat er í jörðunna var, ok settist niðr í syruna í líknleðum einum, ok tók honum síran í geirvörtur. Kalt var í sírunni. (p. 492)

...and Gizurr got into the barrel which was on the ground and sat down in the sour whey in only his linen, and the sour whey reached up to his nipples. It was cold in the sour whey.

1. See Pétur Sigurðsson, op. cit., p. 114, for a discussion of other individual sources, including the author’s daughter.
The orders which Gizurr overhears given to the searchers - that each of them is to give one blow, but not hastily, so that they may see how he reacts - focuses the source of danger for him and for us. At the same time, the precise intentions of his enemies reveal the depth and bitterness of their desire for vengeance and indicate that the search will be thorough and diligent. Gizurr's apprehension when they enter the skyr-room is therefore well founded. The intensity of his concentration is suggested by the minute details with which Sturla records the searchers' entrance, words, and actions. They bring in lights for the search:

Nú komu þeir í búrit
með ljósi ok leituðu allt. (p. 493)  
Now they came into the store room with lights and searched all around.

They approach the barrel in which Gizurr hides, thrust in spears and fall to arguing - here is the comic element - about whether or not anything is there:

Þeir komu at kerinu, er
Gizurr sat í kerinu, ok
lögðu í kerit þrír menn
með spjótum eða fjörir.
Þeir þrættu um. Sögðu
sumir, at fyrir yrði,
en sumir ekki. (p. 493)  
They came to the barrel where Gizurr sat in the barrel and three or four men thrust into the barrel with spears. They fell into disagreement. Some said that they hit something, but some not.

They search the room twice:

Tvisvar leituðu þeir um
búrit, ok fór svá í
hvárt tveggja sinn.
(p. 493)  
Twice they searched the store room and it went the same way both times.
Interspersed with these details, Sturla records Gizurr's thoughts and actions in order to hold the perspective to Gizurr's and to draw out the suspense fully by delaying the outcome. Gizurr gently deflects the spear points as they graze him:

Gizurr hafði lófana fyrir kvíði sír sem höglígast, at þeir skyldi sem sízt kenna, at fyrir yrði. Hann skeindist á lófunum ok svá framan á beinum á sköfnungunum. Váru þat líftið sár ok mörg. (p. 493)

Gizurr protected his stomach with the palms of his hands as gently as possible so that they should be as little aware as possible that they struck anything. He was grazed on the palms of his hands and the skin of his shins. They were small wounds, but many.

According to what appears as his own testimony, Gizurr is so completely absorbed by his danger, that he forgets his discomfort from the cold, an authentic reaction:

Svá hefur Gizurr sagt sjálfr, áðr þeir kamí í búrit, at hamskalf af kulda, svá at svaglæði í kerinu, en er þeir kómu í búrit, þá skalf hann ekki. (p. 493)

So has Gizurr said himself, that before they came into the store room, he shivered with cold so that it swilled in the barrel, but when they came into the store room, then he didn't shiver.

After the second search, the author lifts the suspense abruptly with a sudden acceleration in pace, so that the departure from the skyr room merges into the general departure of the attackers:

Eptir þat gengu þeir í brott ok út ok bjuggust í braut. Gengu menn þá til griða, þeir er lífs váru... Þá var í dagan. Stigu brennumenn þá á bak ok riðu út ör garði. (p. 493)

After that they went away and prepared to depart. Then men received quarter, those who were still alive... Then it was daybreak. The burners jumped on horseback and rode out of the enclosure.
Sturla adds one more brief moment of tension by recording that the last man to leave sees a man being helped into the church and suggests the burners go back, suspecting correctly that it is Gizurr. But nothing comes of this threat to Gizurr's safety:

Varð ok ekki af, at þeir sneri afr. (p. 493)

Gizurr recovers from his ordeal in the church, warmed between the thighs of a woman:

ok vermði sú kona hann á lærum sér,...Ornaði honum brátt. (p. 493)

and this woman warmed him between her thighs...he became warm quickly.

In his final remark on Gizurr's condition, Sturla balances the two extremes of the ordeal, cold and fire:

Hann var háss orðinn mjök af reyk ok kulda. (p. 493)

He had become very hoarse from smoke and cold.

Although Sturla's account of the preparation, attack, and escape scene, all contribute to the actuality and the immediacy of the Flugumýrarbrenna passage, we are most gripped by the concentration on personal encounters between various people in the farmhouse. These scenes reveal loyalty and tenderness in marked contrast to the violence and destruction surrounding them. The first of these encounters occurs towards the end of chapter 172 (p. 490), just after Eyjólfr Porsteinsson has had his men set fire to the house. Gizurr and his

1. Notice that nothing gratuitous has been brought into this presentation of Gizurr's escape; there is no suggestion that the escape is miraculous. This contrasts with Sturla's presentation of some of King Hákon's narrow escapes. See above, Chapter Four, p. 279.
wife Gróa meet at the south door to escape the heat and smoke and are joined there by Ingibjörg Sturludóttir. Sturla's brief description of her betrays his fatherly hand as he takes obvious pride in her young womanhood:  

Hon var þá þrettán vetra gómul ok var hæði mikil vexti ok sköruðig at sjá. (p. 490)  

She was then thirteen years old and was both very tall in stature and imposing to see.

He also touches with detail her naivety in keeping with her all her wordly wealth, it seems in a child-like attempt to behave as a married woman:

Pá kom þar til Gróu í anddyrit Ingibjörg Sturludóttir ok var í náttserk einum ok berfatt...Silfrbelti hafði vafízt um fær henni, er hon komst òr hvílunni fram, var þar á pungðr ok þar í gull hennar morg, hafði hon þar þar með sér. (p. 490)  

Then Ingibjörg Sturludóttir came to Gróa in the porch and was only in a night dress and barefoot...Her silver belt had wound itself about her feet as she got herself out of the bed, and there was a purse and much of her gold in it which she had with her.

Before shifting the focus away from Ingibjörg, Sturla mentions Gróa's reception of the girl, which has poignant significance later in the account. Here Gróa promises her new daughter-in-law that they will share the same fate, but in Gróa's death this prophecy will fail, as will Gizurr's prophecy that he and not his wife will die.  

As Gizurr parts from Gróa for the last time, Sturla says nothing specific about her response, but notes Gizurr's observation that she was greatly moved:

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1. Pétur Sigurðsson, op. cit., p. 111, has commented on this passage to the same effect, but more briefly.

2. See above, p. 444.
Both instances display a reticence, not because the author disdains or fears deep feeling, but because he respects it and does not wish to undervalue it or his own sincerity with effusiveness.

The narrative returns to Gróa and Ingibjörg at the beginning of chapter 173. Here it is important to bear in mind an earlier passage in chapter 172, in which Gizurr gliði refuses quarter when he is denied permission to bring another man, probably Gizurr, with him. It appears Ingibjörg has witnessed this act of loyalty, for Sturla shows that she tried to imitate it. When called out by her relative, Kolbeinn grön, she refuses to go unless Gróa is allowed to go with her. Even when Gróa makes the excuse that she must stay and search for her young nephew, Ingibjörg remains adamant, and must be carried out by Kolbeinn:

Kolbeinn grön hljóp inn í eldinn eftr Ingibjörgu ok bar hana út til kirkju. (p. 491)
Though Kolbeinn was one of the first of the burners to be killed by Gizurr in revenge, he may have been able to tell the author his version of this incident before his death. In any case, Ingibjörg herself is the obvious source for his information.

The most intensely emotional of these personal encounters occurs in chapter 174, where Sturla records Gizurr's reactions to the bodies of his wife and son on the day after the burning. Gizurr is met by his friend Páll Kolbeinsson as the charred bodies are borne out on shields. Characteristically, Sturla makes no attempt to soften the grisly horror of the spectacle:

Dá var borinn út á skildi Ísleifr Gizurarson, ok var hans ekki eftir nema búkrinn steiktr innan í brynjunni. Dá fundust ok brjóstin af Gróu, ok var þat borit út á skildi at Gizuri. (p. 494)

Then was borne out on a shield Ísleifr Gizurarson, and there was nothing left of him except his torso roasted in the armour. Then was found also the breasts of Gróa and that was carried out on a shield to Gizurr.

In Sturla's account, Gizurr seems at first strong, almost stoic:

Dá múelti Gizurr: "Páll fremdi," segir hann, "hér máttu nú sjá Ísleif, son minn, ok Gróu, konu mín." (p. 494)

Then Gizurr spoke: "Páll, kinsman," he says, "here now you may see Ísleifr, my son, and Gróa, my wife."

But Sturla makes plain by his imagery that the horror and the loss overcome Gizurr suddenly and fiercely:
And Páll noticed, that he looked away, and there sprang out from his face (tears) as if they were hailstones.

This evocative image is set in sharp relief by the abrupt transition in the next sentence of the saga to a matter-of-fact statement of the material losses resulting from the conflagration:

At Flugumýrr much property was burned which many men possessed, those who were there.

Most emphasised are Gizurr's material losses and those of Ingibjörg Sturludóttir, her wedding gifts.

It is the final moment in the Flugumýrarbrenna account that is probably most often overlooked, being deceptively plain and brief, yet betraying the author's primary personal interest. His statement begins with the details of Ingibjörg's activities after the burning in a tone comparable to the matter-of-factness of the list of losses. But he cannot constrain himself from closing with words expressing a father's concern, looking back to his earlier description in which he mentions her extreme youth:

1. In a different context, this image also occurs in Víga-Glúms Saga, ed. G. Turville-Petie (Oxford, 1940) pp. 13-14. It may have been in the back of Sturla's mind as he wrote.
Halldóra, the daughter of Snorri Bárðarson, her kinswoman who then lived at Oddi, invited Ingibjörg to stay with her after the burning. She went there and her companions with her. She was quite exhausted, but a child in years.

The impact of the Flugumyrarbrenna account is not dependent upon an intellectual fascination, either with content or with style, but upon its immediacy and authenticity. Jón Jóhannesson has said that the theme of Islendinga Saga is "um fjörbrot þjósveldisins"¹ - the breaking up of the life of the republic. Sturla's Flugumyrarbrenna conveys that theme through his presentation of individual participants' responses and reactions to crisis. The cumulative pathos of the happening characterises the whole period the saga records.

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¹ Jón Jóhannesson, op. cit., vol. 2, p. xli
VII Conclusions

In one of his T.S. Eliot memorial lectures, W.H. Auden suggests that prose works may be arranged according to the tendency of their authors towards fictional or factual narrative:

When we compare works of literature, we find that we can assign them positions along as it were, a spectrum, according to the part played in their composition by the Poet and the part played by the Historian. This spectrum is continuous, except that one can perhaps observe a critical point, on the one side of which the work is written in verse, and on the other side in prose.

A work dominated by the Poet presents a created or Secondary world, while the Historian offers a view of the actual or Primary world, according to Auden's schema. Taking as his context the whole of prose literature in every language, he quite justifiably cites Njáls Saga and Islendinga Saga as works in which the Historian is dominant. But if the context of Auden's spectrum is restricted to thirteenth century Norse prose, the two sagas cease to be closely positioned. Instead they occupy opposite extremes of the spectrum, since Sturla Dóðarson offers in Islendinga Saga a view of actual happenings, while the author of Njáls Saga has created a mere semblance of actuality. Along the line of the spectrum defined by these extremes, it is then possible to range the other Norse sagas discussed in this dissertation and to represent the whole diagramatically, though without assigning precise points to each of the sagas:


2. Auden does not mention that of the two sagas, only Islendinga Saga is a contemporary record.
Hákonar Saga, although restricted to events relating to King Hákon, is nevertheless nearest to Islendinga Saga in its factual fullness. Sverris Saga follows after as another contemporary king's saga for which actual events have been selected and in this case undoubtedly adjusted by the writer or his source (King Sverrir) to emphasise the adventure of the king's political and military career. Heimskringla is placed next because, although it contains much that is clearly fictional, the writer takes a more rational approach and includes a greater variety of figures and historical occurrences than does Knytlinga Saga. This interpretation of the history of Danish kings is so narrow and stylised that the world it presents approaches a Secondary world more closely than any of the other historical sagas considered here.

The image of the spectrum might also be used to advantage to arrange these thirteenth century sagas between sets of extremes other than factuality and fiction, though not without extensive preliminary study beyond that offered here. What this dissertation has attempted to make plain is that any such literary exploration must depend upon close, comparative analysis.
APPENDIX A  Decisive events in Íslendinga Saga

1183  The saga begins.

1185  Einarr Þorgilsson dies.

1201  Bishop Guðmundr Arason chosen.

1208  Attack on Bishop Guðmundr by Kolbeinn Tumason at the see.

1209  Further attack on Bishop Guðmundr by Þorvaldr Gizurarson, Arnórðr Tumason, Sighvatr and Snorri Sturluson, Þorvaldr Snorrason.

1217  Sturla Sighvatsson tries to take the sword from Miklagarðr by force.

1218  Arnórðr Tumason captures the bishop and treats him roughly.

1219  Eyjólfr Kársson rescues the bishop.

1220  Arnórðr Tumason and Sighvatr Sturluson attack the bishop at Helgusetr; the bishop goes to stay with Sæmundr Jónsson.

1220-1221  Quarrel between Björn Þorvaldsson and Loftr Pálsson.

1222  Tumi Sighvatsson killed at Hólar by the bishop's men.
1222 Sturla Sighvatsson and Sighvatr Sturluson avenge Tumi; Eyjólfur Káðisson is killed. Sæmundr Jónsson dies at Oddi. Alliances among Snorri, Þórir, and Sighvatr Sturluson, Sturla Sighvatsson, and Þorvaldr Vatnsfirðingr are tense and shifting.

1227 Hrafn Sveinbjörn's sons kill Þorvaldr Vatnsfirðingr by burning.

1228 Attack on Sturla Sighvatsson's farm at Sauðafell by the sons of Þorvaldr Vatnsfirðingr in revenge for their father's death.

1231 Kolbeinn ungi Arnórsson takes up the quarrel with the bishop after his father Arnórr Tumason and uncle Kolbeinn Tumason; this is settled.

1232 Sturla Sighvatsson attacks and kills the Þorvaldssons.

1233-1234 Kolbeinn Arnórsson and Órekja Snorrason are at odds with Sighvatr Sturluson; this is settled by the bishop; Snorri Sturluson and Órekja plan to attack Kolbeinn Tumason.

1234 Death of Bishop Guðmundr.

1235 Kolbeinn Arnórsson goes abroad and leaves Sighvatr Sturluson in charge of his estate.
1235  Þorvaldr Gizurarson dies.

1236  Sturla Sighvatsson takes over Snorri Sturluson’s estates; Snorri goes to the south of Iceland; Órækja is captured by Sturla Sighvatsson and maimed.

1237  Óðrör Sturluson dies; Sturla Sighvatsson attacks Þorleifr of Bær (followed by private conversation in which Sturla’s father reproves him for his recklessness) because of enmity arising out of the maiming of Órækja.

1238  Battle at Órlygsstaðr: Gizurr Þorvaldsson and Kolbeinn Arnórsson vs. Sturla Sighvatsson and Sighvatr Sturluson - both father and son are killed.

1241  Kolbeinn Arnórsson and Gizurr Þorvaldsson kill Snorri Sturluson ostensibly on King Hákon’s orders; Órækja is tricked by Gizurr and forced to go to Norway.

1243-1245  Omitted from Islendinga Saga (recorded in Þórar Saga kakala and Svínfellings Saga).

1248  Eyjólfr Þorsteinsson attacks Gizurr Þorvaldsson in vengeance for his father-in-law, Sturla Sighvatsson: Flugumyrarbrenna.
1255 Eyjólfr Þorsteinsson kills Gizurr's agent Oddr Þórarinsson while Gizurr is in Norway; Eyjólfr Þorsteinsson is killed by Þorgils skarði.

1258 Gizurr Þorvaldsson returns to Iceland.

1262-1263 Break in the manuscript, see above, p. 411, 413. Starke was in Norway for part of this time.

1264 Gizurr tricks the Andréassons after their attack on him and has Þórar Andréasson executed; the saga ends (Although this part of the saga only occurs in one of the manuscripts, it seems to be part of the intended design of Gizurr's career in the saga. See above, pp. 412.
Index of terms used in descriptions of persons in:

Biskupa Sögur - B
Hákonar Saga - H
Heimskringla - Hkr 1, 2, 3
Íslendinga Saga - I
Knytlinga Saga - K
Njáls Saga - N
Sverris Saga - S

The descriptions selected for this index are the formal portraits of kings, bishops, and other major figures, except in the case of Íslendinga Saga, for which it has been my aim to include all personal descriptions. For the most part, the descriptions occur when a figure is first introduced; in some cases, the portrait is set at the end of the saga, for example in Sverris Saga and Hákonar Saga. Beside each term the names of figures so described are given together with the key letter and page number of the text where the description occurs.

The figures included in this index are:

Biskupa Sögur: Arni
Aron Hjörleifsson
Gizurr
Ísleifr
Jón
Klængr
Magnús
Páll
Þorlákr inn helgi
Hákonar Saga: Hákon Hákonarson
Skúli Bárdarson

Heimskringla: Erlingr skakki
Eysteinn Haraldsson
Eysteinn Magnússon
Hákon inn góði
Hákon herðubreiðr
Hákon Jarl
Haraldr gilli
Haraldr gráfeldr
Haraldr hárfragri
Haraldr Sigurðarson
Ingí Haraldsson
Magnús bláindi
Magnús Erlingsson
Magnús Öláfsson
Ólaf Haraldsson
Ólaf kyrri
Ólafr Magnusson
Ólafr Tryggvason
Sigurðr Haraldsson
Sigurðr Magnússon
Islendinga Saga:

Arnórr Tumason
Atli Hjálmsson
Björn Þorvaldsson
Einarr (no patronymic given)
Eyjólfur Kárrsson
Gízurr Þorvaldsson
Guðmundr Arason
Gunnarr kumbi
Halla-Geirr Fagranessmaðr (no patronymic given)
Jón Markússon
Kolbeinn Arnórsson
Oddr Þórarinsson
Ormr Jónsson
Sighvatr Sturluson
Skúmi inn litli
Snorri Loftsson
Snorri Sturluson
Snorri Þorvaldsson
Sámundr Jónsson
Tanni Bjarnarson
Þorður Heinreksson
Þorður Þorvaldsson
Þorkell Magnússon
Þormóðr Hjálmsson
Þorsteinn Gellisson
Knytlinga Saga: Eiríkr Sveinsson
        Gormr inn gamli
        Haraldr Gormsson
        Haraldr Sveinsson
        Knútr Sveinsson
        Sveinn Haraldsson
        Sveinn Óláfsson

Njáls Saga: Bergþóra +
        Gunnarr
        Hallgerðr +
        Hildigunnr +
        Hrútr
        Mórðr
        Njáll
        Skarpheðinn
        Þjóóstólfurr

Sverris Saga: Erlingr skakki
        Magnús Erlingsson
        Sigurðr Haraldsson
        Sverrir Sigurðarson

+ These are the only women who receive formal descriptions in the
  sagas under discussion.
I Terms descriptive of physical appearance or constitution

allbrekligr Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson

andlit

Hkr3.331 Ingí Haraldsson (fegrstr í andliti)
I351 bóor Þórvaldsson (vel fallinn í andlití at Íðru)
I351 Snorri Loftsson (vel farit í andliti)
S194 Sverrir (vel farit andlitinu)
I516 Oddr Þorarinsson (vel andlitsfarinn)

atgörvimaðr Hkr3.278 Magnús blindi

augu B154 Jón (eygðr maðr bezt)

Hkr3.203 Óláfr kyrri (eygðr maðr bezt)
B66 Gizurr (bjarteygðr)
Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (bláeygðr)
N53 Gunnarr (bláeygðr)
I516 Oddr Þorarinsson (bláeygðr)
B76 Magnús (fagreygðr)
B127 Páll (fagreygðr)
Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (fagreygðr)
K54 Knútr Sveinsson (fagreygðr)
B127 Páll (fasteygðr)
I351 bóor Þórvaldsson (fasteygðr)
Hkr3.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (eygðr forkunnarvel)
H235 Skúli Bárðarson (eygðr forkunnarvel)
I351 bóor Þórvaldsson (eygðr mjök)
H347 Hákon (eygðr mjök ok þó vel) cf. also eygðr vel
B66 Gizurr (opineygðr)
I351 Þorsteinn Gellisson (opineygðr)
Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (nökkut opineygðr)
S194 Sverrir (rauðlituð augun)
I402 Gizurr Þorvaldsson (snareygðr)
N53 Gunnarr (snareygðr)
K54 Knútr Sveinsson (snareygðr)
Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (snareygðr)
Hkr3.267 Haraldr gilli (svarteygðr)
N70 Skarpheðinn (eygðr vel)
I351 Þórðr Heinreksson (eygðr vel)
baraxlaðr Hkr2.412 Erlingr skakki
bjartan líkam Hkr3.203 Óláfr kyrri (in death)
bræðgørr Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (at öllum próska)
breiðleitr Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson
S194 Sverrir
bringubreir I351 Atli Hjálmsson
digr I352 Þorkell Magnússon
Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson
dökkligaðr Hkr3.331 Eysteinn Haraldsson
cf. also dökk hár
eljunarmaður mikill við vás ok vökur S194 Sverrir
cf. also section II
ermligr N302 Skarpheðinn
fagr Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon (ekki fagr)
farinn vel I357 Jón Markússon "well proportioned"
fegra mann Hkr3.203 Öláfr kyrri (engi maðr hafa sét)
feiknligr N304 Skarpheðinn
fimleik S104 Magnús Erlingsson (umfram alla menn at fimleik)
fóthvatastr N70 Skarpheðinn
fótlangr H357 Hákon (ekki fótlangr)
fótlegginn skammt S194 Sverrir
fótr Hkr3.331 Ingi Haraldssón (tregliga mátthann ganga einn samt,
svá var visinn annarr fótrinn) cf. also útskeifr
fráligr Hkr3.267 Haraldr gilli
frammynttr I351 Bóðr Ór Hreinreksó “with protruding mouth” cf. also munnr
freknóttr mjök I351 Bóðr Ór Hreinreksó
friðr Hkr3.385 Hákon herðibreiðr (friðr sýnum)
   S104 Magnús Erlingsson (friðr maðr sýnum)
   Hkr2.3 Öláfr Haraldsson (friðr sýnum)
   Hkr3.256 Öláfr Magnússon (friðr sýnum)
   Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (friðastr sýnum)
   Hkr1.213 Hákon Jarl (allra manna friðastr sýnum)
   N29 Hallgerðr (kvenna friðust sýnum)
   Hkr1.94 Haraldr hárfagrí (friðastr sýnum)
   N238 Hildigunnr (kvenna friðust sýnum)
   K54 Knútr Sveinsson (manna friðastr)
   K63 Sveinn Óláfsson (allra manna friðastr)
frækn S194 Sverrir
   I351 Snorri Pórvaldsson (fræknigró)
   Hkr1.333 Öláfr Tryggvason (fræknleik í orrostum)
fölleitr N70 Skarpheðinn (also N298, N299, N301, N302, N304)
glöttir við tönn N299 Skarpheðinn
görvastr í máli Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson
görviligr Hkr2.3 Óláfur Haraldsson (snímma)
hagr I259 Snorri Sturluson (hagr á allt þat er hann tók höndum til)
B127 Páll (hagr á hvívetna því er hann gjörði)
N238 Hildigunnr (hög)
cf. also section II
hálslangr Hkr3.267 Haraldr gilli
hár B154 Jón (bleik á hár)
"hair"
Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (bleikhárr)
Hkr3.267 Haraldr gilli (dökkhárr)
N29 Hallgerðr (fagrhár)
Hkr1.94 Haraldr hárfagri
K54 Knútr Sveinsson (fagrhárr)
B127 Páll (fagrhárr)
I351 Þórór Þorvaldsson (fagrir lokkarnir)
N304 Skarpheðinn (greitt hárir aptr um eyrun)
Hkr3.331 Ingi Haraldsson (gult hár)
Hkr3.203 Ólífur kyrri (gult hár sem silki ok fór afar vel)
Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (hrökkinhárr)
B127 Páll (hrökkinhárr)
Hkr3.331 Ingi Haraldsson (hrökk mjök)
Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson (jarpr á hár)
Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon (jarpr á hár)
N70 Skarpheðinn (jarpr á hár) also N301
I351 Þorsteinn Cellison (líðaðið hárit)
Hkr 2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (ljóssjarpr á hár)
H235 Skúli Bárðarson (ljóssjarpr á hár)
I351 Þormóðr Hjálmssson (ljóssjarpr á hár)
I351 Þórrr Þorvaldsson (ljóssjarpr á hár)
Hkr 3.107 Magnús Óláfsson (ljóss á hár)
I351 Snorri Þorvaldsson (ljóss á hár)

N53 Gunnarr (hárit mikill ok fór vel ok vel litt)
N29 Hallgerðr (svá mikit hárit at hon máttri hylja sik með)
also N44 (hárit tók ofan á bringuna tveim megin, ok drap hon undir belti sér)
N85 (hárit tók ofan á bringu henni ok var bæði mikit ok fagrt)

I351 Snorri Þorvaldsson (réthárr)
I351 Þórrr Heinreksson (skrofhrór - hrokkínhrór)
N70 Skarpheðinn (sveipr í hárinnu)
Hkr 3.330 Ingí Haraldsson (hár heldr þunnt)
H235 Skúli Bárðarson (hérðr manna bezt)
K54 Knútr Sveinsson (hérðr mjök)
H357 Hákon (hérðr vel)

hár "tall"
Hkr 3.412 Erlingr skakki (hár maðr)
Hkr 3.256 Óláfr Magnússon (maðr hár)
I351 Þórrr Þorvaldsson (hár maðr)
Hkr 3.384 Hákon herðibrejðr (hár ok mjör)
H235 Skúli Bárðarson (heldr hár maðr)
Hkr 1.213 Hákon Jarl (ekki hár maðr)
cf. also vaxinn
hár í setunni S194 Sverrir
   H357 Hákon (heldr hár í sessi)
hárðgörr í öllu N53 Gunnarr
   cf. also section II
harðlígr N298 Skarpheðinn
hárr "hoary" Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki (gerðisk hárr mjök)
herðibreiðr H357 Hákon
   Hkr3.384 Hákon herðibreiðr
I351 Bórrr Perpalsson
herðum Hkr3.330 Ingí Haraldsson (knýttr var hann á herðum ok á bringu)
ermaðr mikill K29 Haraldr Gormsson
   K54 Knútr Sveinsson
   Hkr3.107 Magnús Ólafsson
   K32 Sveinn Haraldsson
   Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki (ermaðr inn mesti ef ófriðr var)
   Hkr1.213 Hákon Jarl (ermaðr inn mesti)
   K72 Haraldr Sveinsson (engi var hann ermaðr)
   N70 Skarpheðinn (hermannligastr)
   N304 Skarpheðinn (allra manna hermannligastr)
hjó báðum hóndum ok skaut N53 Gunnarr
   Hkr1.333 Óláfr Tryggvason
cf. also skjóta
hljóp meira en háð sína N53 Gunnarr (með öllum herklaðum ok eigi
   skemmra afrn en frá fyrir sík)
hraustasti K63 Sveinn Ólafsson
   I272 Skúmi inn litli (hann var hraustr)
höfuðit Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki (bar halt höfuðit nökkut)
hörund S194 Sverrir (fegrstr á)
hörundsljóss B127 Páll
illiligr N301 Skarpheðinn
illmannlígr N304 Skarpheðinn
í próttamaðr mikill Hkr1.213 Hákon Jarl
   Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson
   Hkr1.333 Óláfr Tryggvason
   B680 Arni (aktaði mjök ýmisligir í próttir)
   I516 Oddr bórarísson (bezt at í próttum)
klæða Hkr3.412 Erlingr Skakki (forneskju klæðabúnað)
   Hkr3.267 Haraldr gíllí (létt klæðdr)
   Hkr3.267 Haraldr gíllí (stutt klæði)
knáligr I352 Þormódr Hjálmsson
   I351 Þorsteinn Gellisson
knár I379 Einarr bóni
   I262 Eyjólfur Kársson
knýttr Hkr3.330 Ingó Haraldsson cf. herðum
kvíkliðr B80 Klængr
lág maðr I351 Þorsteinn Gellisson cf. vaxinn
langleitr Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki
   Hkr3.267 Haraldr gíllí
   B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
leika Hkr1.333 Óláfr Tryggvason (Hann lék at þrímr handsóxum, svá at
   jafnan var eitt á lópti, ok hendi æ
   meðal kaflann)
cf. also Gylfaginning, chapter 2 (lék at
   handsóxum ok hafði vii som á lópti)
léttrá á sér H357 Hákon (hverjum manni léttrá á sér)
límaðr vel I402 Gizurr Porvaldsson

B76 Magnús
Hkr3.203 Óláfr kyrri
B127 Páll
S104 Magnús Erlingsson (ok fagrliga)
litbjartr B127 Páll
litgóðr H357 Hákon
lítill maðr I351 Snorri Loftsson
cf. also vaxinn
liðmannaðastr B154 Jón
ljóss í andliti H235 Skúli Bárðarson

Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson
ljósjarpr B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
I516 Oddr Þórarinsson
cf. also hár "hair"
ljósleitr Hkr3.107 Magnús Óláfsson
ljóslitaðr Hkr 3.412 Erlingr skakki
N53 Gunnarr
K54 Knútr Sveinsson
mestr Hkr1.94 Haraldr hárfagri (allra manna)

K63 Sveinn Úlfsson (hverjum manni meiri)
miðmjör S104 Magnús Erlingsson
mjör Hkr 3.256 Óláfr Magnússon

Hkr 3.384 Hákon herðibreiðr (hár ok mjör)
mikill maðr N298 Skarphedinn, also N304
I352 Þormóðr Hjálmsson

cf. also vaxinn

mikilleitr í andliti H357 Hákon

munnr I351 Dórðr Hreinreksson (frámyndur)

Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson (munnljótr ok vel at öðrum andlitssköpum)
S104 Magnús Erlingsson (nökkut munnljótr)
N70 Skarphedinn (nökkut munnljótr)

nef N53 Gunnarr (hafit upp í framanvert)

I351 Dórðr Hreinreksson (langnefjaðr)
N70 Skarphedinn (liðr á nefi)
I351 Atli Hjálmsson (nefljótr nökkut)
I351 Dórðr Porvaldsson (nefljótr)
K54 Knútr Sveinsson (nema nef hans var þunt ok eigi lágt ok nökkut bjúgt)
N53 Gunnarr réttnefjaðr

nýtr B265 Þorlákr helgi

B90 Þorvaldr viðförlí

nærslýnn I351 Dórðr Hreinreksson

ógurhligr (ef hann var reiðr) H357 Hákon cf. also section II
ógæfusamligr N298 Skarphedinn. also N304

raddmadr mikill B127 Páll
rammr at afli B66 Gizurr
rauðlitið augun S194 Sverrir cf. augu
réttleitr Hkr3.107 Magnús Óláfsson

H235 Skúli Bárðarson

rjóðr í andlitinu Hkr2.4 Óláf r Haraldsson
rói í kinnum N53 Gunnarr

róskleik Hkr1.298 Hákon Jarl (þar með...róskleik í orrostum)
samagóðr I352 Atli Hjálmsson
skapat skegg S194 (optast) cf. also skegg
skartsmaðr mikill S104 Magnús Erlingsson
skarpleitr Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki

N70 Skarpheðinn. also N299, N304

skegg S192 Sverrir optast skapat skegg cf. skapat

N57 Njáll (öx eigi skegg)

skjóta N53 Gunnarr (skaut manna bezt af boga ok hafði allt þat, er hann skaut til)

Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (kunni vel boga ok syndir vel, skaut manna bezt handskóti)

Hkr1.333 Óláfr Tryggvason (skaut ii spjótum senn)

skjótligr Hkr3.267 Haraldr gilli

N302 Skarpheðinn (skjótligr til karlmennsku)

skjótt N53 Gunnarr (vá skjótt með sverði at þrja þóttu á lofti at sjá)

skörungr mikill Hkr1.94 Haraldr hárfagri

N57 Bergþóra (kvenskörungur mikill)

N238 Hildigunnr

sterkr N53 Gunnarr

Hkr3.118 Haraldr Sigurðarson

N6 Hrútr

Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson

S104 Magnús Erlingsson (heldr sterkr maðr)

B154 Jón (sterkr at aflí)

K54 Knútr Sveinsson (sterkr at aflí)

Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (sterkr at aflí)

S194 Sverrir (sterkr at aflí)

I1516 Oddr Þórarinsson (ekki mátti hann sterkan kalla at aflí)

Hkr1.213 Hákon Jarl (vel sterkr)

K63 Sveinn Ólafsson (hverjum manni meirí ok sterkari)

Hkr1.94 Haraldr hárfagri (sterkastr)
styrkr N53 Skarfheðinn
N30 Bjóstólfr
sundrgerðamaðr S104 Magnús Erlingsson
Hkr1.333 Óláfr Tryggvason (sundrgerðamaðr mikill)
svartr maðr Hkr3.331 Eysteinn Haraldsson
I351 Snorri Loftsson
I351 Þorsteinn Gellison
sæmirlegr höfðingi S194 Sverrir
syndr sem selr N53 Gunnarr
N70 Skarfheðinn
Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (syndr vel)
söngmaðr mikill B127 Páll
tanggarðrinn N70 Skarfheðinn (lá hátt tanggarðrinn)
tíguligr H357 Hákon
B53 Ísleifr
Hkr3.203 Óláfr kyrri
B66 Gizurr (í yfirbragði)
tröllsligr N298 Skarfheðinn
útskeifr nökkut H357 Hákon
vakrari H357 Hákon (hverjum manni vakrari)
vápndjarfastr Hkr3.118 Haraldr Sigurðarson
K54 Knútr Sveinsson
S104 Magnús Erlingsson
Hkr3.107 Magnús Ólafsson
vápnfíastr I516 Oddr Bórarinsson
vápnoférr Hkr3.118 Haraldr Sigurðarson
vaskligr maðr I397 Einarr bóndi

Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson
I262 Eyjólfur Kársson (vaskasti um alla hluti)
I351 Þórðr Heinreksson (vaskasti um alla hluti)

vaxinn B66 Gizurr (bolsvexti)
I353 Þórmóðr Hjálmsson (ferstrendri vexti)
Hkr2.267 Haraldr gilli (grannvaxinn)
H235 Skúli Bárdarson (grannvaxinn)
Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki (harðvaxinn)
S104 Magnús Erlingsson (harðvaxinn)
B76 Magnús (hellgr hár maðr vexti)
S104 Magnús Erlingsson (hellgr hár maðr á vöxt)
I351 Þórir Hjálmsson (lágri vöxt)
S194 Sverrir (lágri vöxt)
I352 Þórkell Magnússon (lágri vöxt)
Hkr3.331 Ingí Haraldsson (litill var hans uppþvöxt)
I272 Skúmi inn litli (eigi svá ungr sem hann var litill vexti)
B80 Klængur (meðal maðr vexti)
B127 Pál (meðal maðr vexti)
B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson (meðal maðr vexti)
I402 Gizurr Þorvaldsson (meðalmaðr á vöxt)
Hkr3.107 Magnús Ólafsson (meðalmaðr á vöxt)
Hkr2.3 Ólafr Haraldsson (meðalmaðr á vöxt)
I351 Snorri Þorvaldsson (hár meðalmaðr at jöfnim aldri)
Hkr3.331 Eysteinn Haraldsson (helli hár meðalmaðr)
Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (ekki hár meðalmaðr)
H357 Hákon (ekki hár meðalmaðr)
Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (ekki hár meðalmaðr)
K54 Knútr Sveinsson (mestr vexti)
B619 Aron Hjörleifsson (mikill maðr vexti)
I262 Eyjólfur Kársson (mikill maðr vexti)
B66 Gizurr (mikill maðr vexti)
N53 Gunnarr (mikill maðr vexti)
B154 Jón (mikill maðr vexti)
I526 Oddr Þórarinsson (mikill maðr vexti)
Hkr3.256 Sigurður Magnússon (mikill maðr vexti)
N70 Skarpheðinn (mikill maðr vexti)
Hkr3.203 Óláfr kyrri (maðr mikill á allan vôxt)
Hkr3.330 Sigurður Haraldsson (gerðisk maðr mikill)
N6 Hrútr (mikill ok sterkr)
H357 Hákon (vaxinn mjök á þann hátt sem verit hafði Sverrir konungr)
I351 Þórar Heinreksson (raðvaxinn "shakily built")
I351 Atli Hjálmssson (vel vaxinn)
H357 Hákon (vel vaxinn)
Hkr3.384 Hákon herðibreiðr (vel vaxinn)
Hkr3.203 Óláfr kyrri (vel vaxinn)
Hkr3.256 Sigurður Magnússon (vel vaxinn)
I351 Snorri Porvaldsson (vel vaxinn)
vega N53 Gunnarr (vá skjótt með sverði at þrja þóta á lofti at sjá)
Hkr1.333 Óláfr Tryggvason (Hann vá jafnt háðum höndum)
vígr vel N6 Hrútr

N70 Skarpheðinn
N30 Þjóstólfr
N53 Gunnarr (manna bezt vígr)
vænn "handsome" N6 Hrútr

B53 Ísleifr

I351 Snorri Þorvaldsson

B80 Klangr (vænn maðr at áliti)

B127 Páll (vænn maðr at áliti)

N57 Njáll (vænn at áliti)

N53 Gunnarr (vænn at yfirliti)

B154 Jón (vænstr)

B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson (ekki vænn maðr)

vænn til "promising" I271 Björn Þorvaldsson (vænn til hofðingja)

I311 Sighvatr Sturluson (vænn til hofðingja)

þykkir S194 Sverrir
II Terms descriptive of personality and mental qualities

afskiptalitill I402 Gizurr Þorvaldsson
cf. óafskiptasamr
ágætr Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnusson
K61 Sveinn Úlfsson (ágætr konungr)
ákaflýndr S194 Sigurðr Haraldsson
ákafaðmaður mikill I271 Björn Þorvaldsson
I402 Gizurr Þorvaldsson
Hkr1,333 Óláfr Tryggvason
algjörr at sér (um alla hlúti) B66 Gizurr
allskörurgr B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson (né allskörurgr) cf. also skóraligr
astsbæll K194 Eiríkr Sveinsson
Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnusson
S104 Magnús Erlingsson cf. vinsæll
S194 Sverrir and Sigurðr Haraldsson
K61 Sveinn Úlfsson
athugasamr S194 Sverrir

atkvæðamaður K72 Haraldr Sveinsson (litill atkvæðamaður um þá hlúti er þurfa þótti)
aðigr at fé N53 Gunnarr
N57 Ñjáll (vel aðigr at fé)
I243 Ormr Jónsson (vel aðigr at fé)
aðráður B265 Þorlákr helgi
B90 Þorvaldr viðförlri
auðveldr B265 Þorlákr helgi
B90 Þorvaldr viðförlri
blíðr H357 Hákon
  Hkr1.333 Óláfr Tryggvason
  H235 Skúli Bárðarson
  Hkr3.203 Óláfr kyrri (blíðmaðr)
  K194 Eiríkr Sveinsson (blíðr við vini sína)
  I351 Dórör Porvaldsson (blíðr við vini sína)
blíðmaðr I402 Gizurr Porvaldsson
  Hkr3.331 Ingi Halldórsson
  K63 Sveinn Óláfsson
benahaldsmaðr B72 Porrákr Runólfsson
djarfr Hkr2.4 Óláfr Halldórsson
  S194 Sverrir
djúpvitr Hkr3.118 Haraldr Sigurðarson
drengr göðr N57 Bergþóra
  N238 Hildigunnr
drenglyndr N57 Njáll
drengr inn bezti I287 Arnórr Tumason
drjúglisti til ráðagerðar I402 Gizurr Porvaldsson (inn)
einarðarmaðr mikill I287 Arnórr Tumason
eljunarmaðr mikill við vás ok vökur S194 Sverrir cf. section I
fáfróðr S194 Sigurðr Halldórsson
fagrorðr I351 Snorri Porvaldsson
fálátr B619 Aron Hjörleifsson
  K72 Haraldr Sveinsson
  B265 Porrákr helgi
  B90 Porvaldr viðförli
fályndr S194 Sverrir
B265 Þorlákhi helgi
B90 Þorvaldr viðförli
fámálugr optast Hkr3.203 Óláfur kyrri
fámeltr Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnusson
farmaðr mikill B66 Gizurr
fáskiptinn við almenning B880 Árni
fastorðr S194 Sverrir
fastúðigr Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnusson
féðjarn Hkr3.278 Magnús blindi
Hkr3.331 Eysteinn Haraldsson
Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson (féðjarnastr)
fémildr N53 Gunnarr cf. also mildr af fé
fimari Hkr1.333 Óláfur Tryggvason (hverjum mannin var hann...fimari)
fjölrmör S194 Sigurðr Haraldsson
forsagnir I269 Snorri Sturluson (hafði inar beztu forsagnir á öllu því, er gera skyldi)
forsjáll B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
framgjarn I442 Halla-Geirr Fagranessmaðr
framliðr I352 Þórkell Magnusson
friðsamm Hkr3.203 Óláfur kyrri
fróðr Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (at öllu fróðr)
B76 Magnús (margfróðr)
frendríkr I402 Gizurr Þorvaldsson
frendrekinn B76 Magnús
B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
fullreðasamm B76 Magnús
gagnorðr N70 Skarphedinn
gildr maðr I289 Gunnarr kumbi

glaðr S104 Magnús Erlingsson

Hkr3.203 Óláfr kyrri
Hkr3.256 Óláfr Magnússon
Hkr1.163 Hákon góði (allra manna glaðastr)
Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (glaðastr)
Hkr1.333 Óláfr Tryggvason (glaðastr)

gleðimaðr mikill Hkr1.212 Haraldr gráfeldr

Hkr3.412 Magnús Erlingsson

góðgjarastur B66 Gizurr

góðr við alþýðu I516 Oddr Þórarinsson

grímur Hkr2.412 Erlingr skakki

Hkr3.278 Magnús blindi
K194 Eiríkr Sveinsson (grímur við óvini sína)
Hkr1.333 Óláfr Tryggvason (allra manna grímmastr)

grimmligr ef hann var reiðr H357 Hákon

göfgastr í máli Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson

görviligr snimma Hkr2.3 Óláfr Haraldsson

hagr B127 Páll (á hvívetna því er hann gjörði)

I269 Snorri Sturluson (á allt þat, er hann tök höndum til)

N238 Hildigunnr (högð)

hamingjumaðr mikill K54 Knútr Sveinsson

harðgörr í öllu N53 Gunnarr

harðráðr Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki

N6 Hrútr (harðráðr við óvini sína)

harmdauði S195 Sverrir

K194 Eiríkr Sveinsson (mjök harmdauði)

H235 Skúli (múrgum manni harmdauði)
heilhugaðr B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
heilrúð B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
N57 Njáll
heitfastr I351 Snorri Þorvaldsson
hirðprúður S194 Sverrir and Sigurðr Haraldsson
hlutdeilinn I351 Snorri Þorvaldsson (öhlutdeilinn)
hlýðinn B265 Þorlákr helgi
B90 Þorvaldr viðförli
högvarð I238 Guðmundr prestr
N6 Hrútr
N57 Njáll
hófi B619 Aron Hjörleifsson (med hófi)
hugatlátr Hkr3,412 Erlingr skakkr
H357 Hákon
hugþekkr Hkr3,256 Eysteinn Magnússon
Hkr2,4 Óláfr Haraldsson
B265 Þorlákr helgi
B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
B90 Þorvaldr viðförli
hverfráður S194 Sigurðr Haraldsson
heðarskastr H235 Skúli Bárðarson
hegð við fókkit K72 Haraldr Sveinsson
hætur S194 Sverrir and Sigurðr Haraldsson (vóru þeir mestir vinir hvorútveggja er kunnuzstír vora)
högvarð I238 Guðmundr Arason
N6 Hrútr
N57 Njáll
illa til frenda sinna N70 Mörör
illgjarn í ráðum N70 Mörör
írskan Hkr3,267 Haraldr gilli (mjök búnað írskan)
jafningi N53 Gunnarr (engi var á hans jafningi)
kappsamr B619 Aron Hjörleifsson
   Hkr2.4 Ólafur Haraldsson
kátr Hkr3.278 Haraldr gilli
   Hkr3.384 Hákon herðibreiðr
   K194 Eiríkr Sveinsson (kátr við vini sína)
   H357 Hákon (hverjum manni kátari)
kennimannaskapar B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
knár I379 Einnarr bóndi
   I262 Eyjólfr Kársson
   I516 Oddr Þorarinsson (knasti)
kurteiss I351 Snorri Þorvaldsson (kurteiss í ferð)
   I351 Snorri Loftsson (kurteiss um hendr sínar)
   N53 Gunnarr (kurteissastr)
   B127 Páll (kurteissastr)
   H235 Skúli Bárðarson (kurteissastr)
kvennamaðr mikill Hkr1.290 Hákon Jarl
   S104 Magnús Erlingsson
   Hkr3.412 Magnús Erlingsson
   Hkr1.290 Hákon Jarl ("hann var ósiðugr um kvennafar")
kyrrlátr S194 Sverrir
   K72 Haraldr Sveinsson (kyrr við fólk)
karr B154 Jón (bæði guði ok góðum mönnum)
kænleikr Hkr1.298 Hákon Jarl (par með...kænleik at fara með ríkðóminum)
látgóðr H357 Hákon
leika S104 Magnús Erlingsson (þótti gott at leika) cf. also section I
leikinn Hkr3.278 Haraldr gilli

Hkr3.412 Magnús Erlingsson

Hkr3.384 Hákon herðibreiðr (leikinn ok hafði ungmennis æði)

Hkr1.333 Óláf Tryggvason (leikinn mjök)

lettlátr Hkr3.278 Haraldr gilli

Hkr3.412 Magnús Erlingsson

léttr B154 Jón

linr B154 Jón

B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson

lítillátr Hkr3.278 Haraldr gilli

B76 Magnús

S104 Magnús Erlingsson

Hkr3.256 Óláf Magnússon

Hkr1.333 Óláf Tryggvason

K63 Sveinn Óláfsson

B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson

Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (lítillastastr)

Hkr1.163 Hákon góði (lítillastastr)

Hkr3.384 Hákon herðibreiðr (í máli)

liðmanligastr B154 Jón

ljúfr B76 Magnús

lærðr vel B127 Páll

lærðómsmaðr B80 Klængr

lög H358 Hákon (lét þá setja lög ok landsrétt)

Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon (helt vel löginn)

Hkr1.163 Hákon góði (lagði mikinn hug á lagasetning)

lögmaðr mikill N57 Njáll

málreðinn Hkr3.203 Óláf kyrri

málsnjállr B80 Klængr
B76 Magnus
H235 Skúli Bárðarson
Hkrl.163 Hákon góði (málsnjallastr)
cf. also snjallr
mataðist jáfnan einmalt S194 Sverrir
mildr af fé Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnusson
Hkr3.107 Magnus Óláfsson (mildasti af fé)
cf. also fémildr
miskunsamr B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
mislyndr S194 Sigurðr Haraldsson
mjúklátr B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
mjúkastr I516 Oddr Bórarínsson
námgiarn B265 Þorlákr helgi
B90 Þorvaldr viðförli
nýtr B265 Þorlákr helgi
B90 Þorvaldr viðförli
cf. section I
nám B127 Páll
óafskiptasamr B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
cf. also afskiptaltíll
ótirinn Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson
ofsamaðr mikill I311 Kolbeinn Arnórsson
ofstopamaðr mikill Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson
óguðlígr ef hann var reiðr H357 Hákon cf. section I
óhlutdeilinn I351 Snorri Þorvaldsson
ómálagr K72 Haraldr Sveinsson
orðillr I262 Tanni Bjarnarson
orðsnjallr Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson
orðspakr Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon
orrustumaðr mikill Hkr3.118 Haraldr Sigurðarson
óþýðr Hkr3.278 Magnús blindi cf. also þýðr
raðsnjállr Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon
          Hkr3.118 Haraldr Sigurðarson
ráðugr S194 Sverrir
ráðuandr S194 Sverrir
refsingasamr Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon
réttlaðr K63 Sveinn Ólfsson
ríkr Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki
          K29 Haraldr Gormsson
          Hkr3.118 Haraldr Sigurðarson
          Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon
          K32 Sveinn Haraldsson
          K195 Eiríkr Sveinsson (enn rékasti konugr)
          K33 Sveinn Haraldsson (enn rékasti konungr)
rómrinn I402 Gizurr Þorvaldsson (mikinn rómrinn)
          S194 Sverrir (svá mikill yfir málinu, þó at hann þætti eigi hátt
          tala, þa skildu þó allir, þó at fjæri veri)
samgøðr I352 Atlí Hjálmsson
siðr S104 Magnús Erlingsson (mjök í síð ungra manna)
cf. hættir and leikinn
siðláttr Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon
          B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
sigursæll K54 Knútr Sveinsson
          K61 Sveinn Ólfsson (ekki var hann sigursæll)
sínr Hkr 3.331 Eysteinn Haraldsson

Hkr 3.330 Sigurr Haraldsson (sínkastr)

skáld I269 Snorri Sturluson (hann gerðisk skáld gott)

B80 Klængr (skáld mest)

skaphörð N29 Hallgerðr

N57 Bergþóra (nökkut skaphörð)

Hildigunnr (skaphöðust)

skapmíkill I351 Þórir Þorvaldsson

skaprúðr B619 Aron Hjörleifsson

skapstórr I442 Halla-Geirr Fagranessmaðr

Hkr 3.278 Magnús blindi

skjótígr Hkr 3.267 Haraldr gilli

skjótr í skilningum B72 Þorlákr Runólfs

skjótorðr N70 Skarphéinn

skjótraðr Hkr 3.107 Magnús Óláfsson

N70 Skarphéinn

skrautligastr B76 Magnús (allr manna skrautligastr í öllu yfirbragði
ok látgæti)

skynsamr Hkr 3.331 Eysteinn Haraldsson

B72 Þorlákr Runólfs

skýrr B619 Aron Hjörleifsson

skýrt orðakí S194 Sverrir

skörulígr B619 Aron Hjörleifsson (allt skörulígr)

B80 Klængr

Hkr 3.256 Sigurr Magnússon

B76 Magnús (skörulígrastr Óllu yfirbragði)

cf. also allskörugr
skörunglyndr Hkr3.107 Magnús Ólafsson
cf. section I skörungr

snjallmæltr Hkr3.107 Magnús Ólafsson

snjallr H357 Hákon

S194 Sverrir (snjallastr)

Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (inn snjallasti)
S104 Magnús Erlingsson (snjallr í máli)
Hkr2.4 Óláfr Haraldsson (snjallr í máli)
K63 Sveinn Úlfsson (snjallr í máli)
Hkr3.330 Sigurðr Haraldsson (snjallastr í máli)
B76 Magnús (málsnjallr) cf. málsnjallr

snaefyrliogr Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon

spakr Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki (at viti)

Hkr3.213 Hákon Jarl (at viti)

spekingr Hkr3.256 Eysteinn Magnússon (at viti)

K54 Knútr Sveinsson, Sveinn Haraldsson, Haraldr Gormsson,
Gormr (þeir váru engir spekingar at viti)
Hkr3.118 Haraldr Sigurðarson (mikill at viti)
I242 Ormr Jónsson (mikill at viti)
Hkr1.298 Hákon Jarl (þar með speki...at far með ríkðóminum)

staðfestr B76 Magnús

S194 Sverrir

stilltr vel N53 Gunnarr

S194 Sverrir

N70 Skarpheðinn (lóngum vel stilltr)
stórgjöfull Hkr1.333 Óláfur Tryggvason
stjórn K72 Haraldr Sveinsson (stóð lítil stjórn af honum)
stjörnsamr Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki
   Hkr3.118 Haraldr Sigurðarson
   S104 Magnús Erlingsson
   K63 Sveinn Ólafsson
stórráð S194 Sverrir
   S194 Sverrir and Sigurðr Haraldsson
stórvit Hkr1.163 Hákon góði
   K54 Knútr Sveinsson (ekki var hann stórvit)
cf. vitr
sundrgerðarmaðr S104 Magnus Erlingsson
Hkr1.333 Óláfur Tryggvason (sundrgerðarmaðr mikill)
sæmiligr höfðingi S194 Sverrir
talaðr H357 Hákon (vel talað á þingum)
   H235 Skúli Bárðarson (vel talað á þingum)
   K72 Haraldr Sveinsson (ekki talaði á þingum urðu aðrir mjök at haftungu fyrir honum)
Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon (ekki talað mjök)
tálhlýðinn S194 Sigurðr Haraldsson
tíðarekinn B265 Þorlákr helgi
tillagagóðr N6 Hrótur (inna størri mála)
trúr B265 Þorlákr helgi
umstilli B154 Jón (með góðu umstilli)
ungmenni Hkr3.384 Hákon herðibreiðr (hafði ungmenni síði)
   S104 Magnús Erlingsson (mjök í síð ungra manna)
cf. hættir, leikinn, síðr
vakrari H357 Hákon (hverjum manni vakrari)

varúðigr S194 Sverrir

veglátr H357 Hákon

Hkr3.412 Erlingr skakki

Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon

viðræmis I351 Póður Porvaldsson (góðar viðræmis)

vígr N53 Gunnarr (manna bezt vígr)

N6 Hrútr (vígr vel)

N70 Skarpheðinn (vígr vel)

N30 Pjóstólfur (vígr vel)

vingóðr Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon

vinfastr N53 Gunnarr

vinir S194 Sverrir and Sigurðr Haraldsson (hugir við vini enn striðir við úvini)

cf. also blíðr and kátr

vinavandr N53 Gunnarr

S194 Sverrir (vinvandr)

vinsæll K195 Eyþór Sveinsson

I402 Gizurr Þorvaldsson

I238 Guðmundr Árason

Hkr3.278 Haraldr gilli

S104 Magnús Erlingsson (vinsæll oc astsæll við lanzfolkit)

Hkr3.256 Óláfr Magnússon

H235 Skúli Bárðarson (vinsællastí; vinsæll)

K61 Sveinn Ólafsson

Hkr3.384 Hákon heróibreiðr (vinsæll var hann við alþýðu)

Hkr3.331 Ingí Haraldsson (vinsæll við alþýðu)

B53 Ísleifr (vinsællastr)

Hkr3.107 Magnús Ólafsson (vinsællastr)
virð B66 Gizurr (mikils virð hvar sem hann kom)

vitr Hkr3.331 Eysteinn Haraldsson

I402 Gizurr Þorvaldsson
Hkr1.94 Haraldr hárfagri
I367 Jón Markússon
H357 Hákon (vitraztr þæði til laga ok ráðagjörðar)
H6 Hrútr (vitraztr)
Hkr1.163 Hákon góði (stórvitr)
K54 Knútr Sveinsson (ekki var hann stórvitr)

Þekkiligr B76 Magnús

B154 Jón (Þekkiligsti)

Þekkr B154 Jón

Þokkagóðar B72 Þorlákr Runólfsson
Þolínmóðr K63 Sveinn Óláfsson

Þýðr B76 Magnús

Hkr3.256 Sigurðr Magnússon (ekki þýðr)
Hkr3.278 Magnús blíndi (óþýðr)

Órlynd N29 Hallgerðr

Örr Hkr3.278 Haraldr gilli

S104 Magnús Erlingsson
K54 Knútr Sveinsson (örr maðr)
Hkr3.331 Ingí Haraldsson (örr af fé)
I516 Oddr Þórarinsson (örr af fé)
K63 Sveinn Óláfsson (manna örvæstr)
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