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THE OLD NORSE VERSION OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA¹

Those of us who sometimes find ourselves defending the retention of Old Icelandic in English departments tend to fall back on the standard argument that Old Icelandic helps our understanding of Old English poetry. Urged further, we link Njáls saga and The Battle of Maldon as illustrations of the Germanic heroic code. But recent criticism has taken us away from the links between these two literatures, and has concentrated much more on the relationship of the vernacular, and even the apparently secular, to Latin Christian culture. "Typological" and "allegorical" are more fashionable words than "Germanic" or "heroic". In Old English there will soon be no secular poetry left to us, since The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message are being read as translations of The Song of Songs and it has been posited that The Ruin is a poem on Doomsday. Allegorical interpretations of the risqué riddles will shortly be with us.

It is time to move in the opposite direction: to take Old English and Old Norse religious translations and paraphrases of Latin models and see how these models

are adapted and altered. If instead of looking at the learning and latinity of a saga-writer, we see how the Old Testament has been modified in a northern version, we have moved into an area where the evidence can be calculated with precision. There is much disputation over what is "native" and what is "foreign" in family sagas. There can be less argument where we are dealing with the relationship of a vernacular text to its Latin source. In apparently straightforward translation, the translator can do a good deal to alter the emphasis of his original, and the writer of paraphrase has freedom to tamper with structure as well as with idiom. The Anglo-Saxon poets turn the stories of Judith and Exodus into epic poems; and an Old Norse version of the Book of Joshua reads like an Icelandic saga. If we isolate the features that distinguish these Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian versions from their originals, we can (having looked at the influence of foreign learning on native literature) assess the extent to which native culture imposed itself on foreign learning. This may help us to clarify our ideas about both.

The Old Norse version of the Bible known as Stjórn² is found in a number of manuscripts. Of these I am dealing exclusively with two in the Arnarnagnæan collection, AM 226 folio and AM 227 folio, to which I refer as

A and B in the traditional manner. Both these manuscripts have a preface explaining how Stjórn came to be written. King Hákon Magnússon of Norway, who reigned from 1299 to 1319, had had translated for the benefit of his household, who could not understand Latin, a work called Heilagra Manna Blómstr to be read on the feast days of saints - aa þeirra haatidum ok messudogum. For Sundays and other days when God himself rather than one of his saints should be celebrated, it seemed appropriate that there should also be a translation of the Bible. King Hákon had therefore commanded the vernacular version of the Bible to be written, based not only on the scriptures, but also on such well-known learned works as the Historia Scholastica and the Speculum Historiale.

There are other references in the manuscripts associating Hákon with the work, and we may take it that in its present form it was put together in Norway at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The two manuscripts I am dealing with however are both dated c.1350 and both associated with the Skálholt diocese in Iceland, AM 226 specifically with the monastery at Helgafell³. At first sight we appear to be concerned with mid-fourteenth-century Icelandic transcriptions of an early fourteenth-century Norwegian translation.

This is of course an over-simplification. It is in the highest degree unlikely that the translations for Hákon were new and original. In the Introduction to the facsimile edition of B the editor, D.A. Seip, points out that early Norwegian works quote a text of the Bible that is identical with that in Stjórn⁴. Clearly, if there are verses of the Bible occurring in early vernacular works it cannot be pure co-incidence that the phrasing is the same as the phrasing in Stjórn. Equally clearly, the compiler of Stjórn is not drawing on scattered quotations. He is presumably therefore revising an earlier version. This is also suggested by the extent to which the vocabulary of translation is consistent from the early religious texts onwards. That the words for "patriarch", "promised land", "synagogue" etc. should regularly be translated by the same Norse compounds, indicates the existence of a tradition in translation. Seip, after dealing more fully with the evidence, concludes that part of the Bible was translated into Norse before 1150. "It has been preserved partly in quotations in many Norwegian and Icelandic writings, and partly in a fourteenth-century revision of a portion of it."

The two manuscripts A and B of Stjórn have large parts of the text in common. Genesis and Exodus contain only normal manuscript variants as far as Exodus

chapter 18. The pattern is a simple one of Biblical translation interspersed with comment, interpretation and information from the works Hákon had apparently specified, the Historia Scholastica of Petrus Comestor and the Speculum Historiale by Vincent of Beauvais. From Genesis Stjórn translates: Ok þa sagði guð sua. Verði lios. From the Historia Scholastica is added the explanation that the division between the light and the darkness signifies the division between Lucifer and his following, and the good or unfallen angels. We do not need to search for the sources, the manuscript specifies them. Chapter headings are explicit: Her segir af fiörda degi er guð skapadi sol ok Öll onnur himintungl. af speculo hystoriale. The next chapter heading mentions two sources: Her segir fra þi er guð skapadi fiska ok fugla. scolastica historia ok speculum historiale. The compiler has also made use of Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Isidore of Seville, still with full acknowledgement.

It is probably this early part of the work that we should specifically associate with Hákon's instructions. At Exodus chapter 18 manuscripts A and B diverge. B goes on directly to The Book of Joshua, A has some inserted leaves of a later date which complete those parts of the Pentateuch (Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers) that are missing in B, and then also goes on to

Joshua. The redactions of The Book of Joshua in A and B seem almost entirely unrelated. The one in B is contained in one other fourteenth-century manuscript of Stjórn but the one in A is not found elsewhere except in the late copies of A itself. Neither redaction follows precisely the same pattern as the earlier books. The recension in A is probably nearer to it, since it is based on Petrus Comestor's Historia Scholastica rather than on the Vulgate. The version in B is based directly on the Vulgate, and though it occasionally has explanatory comment as in A, neither the Historia Scholastica nor the Speculum Historiale are mentioned throughout, and the comment is of a fairly simple kind. For example mention of the Dead Sea is followed by a reminder that it is called "Dead" because that is where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha stood. Interpretation of The Book of Joshua is reserved for a final chapter which is identical in A and B but which is not from either of the two sources we have come to expect, nor from the Historia or the Speculum. There is also a divergence from previous practice in that no source is mentioned in the manuscripts.

Gustav Storm has suggested that the Book of Joshua in A (that is the one based on Petrus Comestor) had its origin in Iceland at the end of the fourteenth century,

and that the text in B (mainly from the Vulgate) was based on an earlier Norwegian translation. Later scholars, including Einar Ól. Sveinsson, think that B also is of Icelandic origin. Selma Jónsdóttir has shown that there are reasons for connecting B with Þingeyrar monastery, and possibly with the work of Bergr Sökkason⁵. What we can say definitely about Joshua in B is that although it is transcribed in the same manuscript as a fourteenth-century revision of a vernacular Bible, it does not share the distinguishing marks of that revision. The B redaction is the one I wish to examine further, making occasional reference to Old English material on Joshua.

In the opening chapter of Joshua in B the translation is close to the Vulgate, but the very first lines suggest a change of attitude. The emphasis is not loqueretur Dominus ad Iosue, but that Joshua is now leader of the Israelites. The word used for leader is hertogi and the Old Norse phrasing and vocabulary here close to the Old English of an Ælfric homily⁶. Stjórn tells us that Moses by God's counsel hafðe ... sett þann mann hertogha yfer allan Gyðinga lyð er heet Josue. Ælfric's homily on Joshua says that God gesette Iosue þam folce to heretogan. There is no other departure from the Vulgate in Stjórn for the rest of

the first chapter, but this is an indication of the way in which the Scandinavian translator approaches his material. As he becomes more involved in the story the changes become more noticeable. The Old Testament narrator has his own formal structure, and relies for his effects very much on the device of ritualistic repetition. The translator's changes are towards greater drama, greater variety of presentation, and greater realism. Dialogue is heightened, stylistic devices rhetorical and alliterative are employed, episodes are re-shaped either to prolong the suspense element, or to bring them to a more sharply defined climax, incidents are dramatised and humanised where the original offers bare factual outlines. This is seen both in matters of detail and matters of general structure. The whole book of Joshua becomes centred on the activities of its hero. This necessitates selection from the Vulgate of only that material which is relevant to the personal story of Joshua. Lists of names are omitted. The Vulgate describes the division of the land of Canaan among the children of Israel. The description is full of unfamiliar names and incomprehensible geography. The translator ignores it.

There are three episodes in the Stjórn B version of Joshua which seem to me most clearly to illustrate the translator's re-shaping of his material. All of

them show his humanising of the bleak Biblical narrative. In the first he demonstrates his narrative and structural techniques.

In the first part of Joshua there are a number of campaigns fully described, notably the overthrow of Jericho. Towards the end of the book there are a number of lesser campaigns dealt with briefly each in almost exactly the same idiom. Joshua 10, 28-39 are as follows:⁷

28 eodem die Macedam quoque cepit Iosue et percussit
in ore gladii

regemque illius interfecit et omnes habitatores eius non
dimisit in ea saltem parvas reliquias

fecitque regi Maceda sicut fecerat regi Hiericho

29 transivit cum omni Israhel de Maceda in Lebna et
pugnabat contra eam

30 quam tradidit Dominus cum rege suo in manu Israhel
percusseruntque urbem in ore gladii et omnes habitatores
eius

non dimiserunt in ea ullas reliquias

feceruntque regi Lebna sicut fecerant regi Hiericho

31 de Lebna transivit in Lachis

et exercitu per gyrum disposito obpugnabat eam

32 tradiditque Dominus Lachis in manu Israhel et cepit
eam die altero atque percussit in ore gladii omnemque
animam quae fuerat in ea sicut fecerat Lebna

33 eo tempore ascendit Hiram rex Gazer ut auxiliaretur
Lachis

quem percussit Iosue cum omni populo eius usque ad
internecionem

34 transivitque de Lachis in Eglon et circumdedit

35 atque expugnavit eam eadem die

percussitque in ore gladii omnes animas quae erant in ea
iuxta omnia quae fecerat Lachis

36 ascendit quoque cum omni Israhele de Eglon in
Hebron et pugnavit contra eam

37 cepitque et percussit in ore gladii

regem quoque eius et omnia oppida regionis illius
universasque animas quae in ea fuerant commoratae
non reliquit in ea ullas reliquias

sicut fecerat Eglon sic fecit et Hebron

cuncta quae in ea repperit consumens gladio

38 inde reversus in Dabir

39 cepit eam atque vastavit

regem quoque eius et omnia per circuitum oppida
percussit in ore gladii

non dimisit in ea ullas reliquias

sicut fecerat Hebron et Lebna et regibus earum

sic fecit Dabir et regi illius.

In the Old English translation of Joshua,⁸ which
is almost certainly by Ælfric, he manages exact

translation of this passage for the first half, but then pity breaks through and the Vulgate's percussit in ore gladii ... universas animas becomes acwealdon eal ðæt hi ðær fundon ðæs earman folces. But the translator of the Stjórn B Joshua abandons the formal patterning of his original, and treats each of these campaigns as a separate event. At first he does not add much to the Biblical narrative, but he varies the wording, rejecting the repetitive idiom of the Vulgate, and substituting a more vivid and dramatic phrasing. In the Maceda campaign omnes habitatores is changed to the alliterative sva konur sem karla. In the next campaign, Lebna, omnes habitatores becomes hvert mannz barnn. By Gazer the Stjórn translator is seeing the potentialities of his material. With the Vulgate version of Joshua 10, 33 (see above) we can compare Stjórn B: J þann tíma samnaði Jram konvngur af Gazer at ser miklvm her. for síðan oc ætlaði at hialpa Lachis monnvm. Enn þat varð æigi sva. hellingr hefir Josve af hans ætlan niosn. snyr þa i mot honvm. oc æiga orrosto beði langa oc harða striða oc stranga. sva at æigi liettir fyrr enn þar fellr konvngur Jram oc allr hans herr. sva at engi maðr var eptir vðrepinn af hans liði⁹.

Stjórn B has provided Hiram with a great army; stressed the ironic contrast between Hiram's well-

intentioned support of Lachis, and its destined failure; provided Joshua with the warning of Hiram's intention, and finally described the battle in alliterative and well-balanced phrases. Instead of Biblical idiom we have what one might loosely call saga idiom.

Joshua's next campaign is against Eglon. Stjórn B expands again, but this time with a different type of detail: oc kringði þegar vm borgina með bardaga oc atsokn sva harðri. at hann vann hana a einvm degi oc drap allt þat er þar var mannkyns. oc æyddi allt þat herað er þar la til borgarinnar. The Scandinavian translator started his description of the campaigns by following the Bible closely in the first two, though with slight alteration of the wording. He built up the two campaigns of Gazer and Eglon into major events. He ends by saying briefly that Joshua conquered also Ebron and Dabir. The whole account has moved away from Old Testament structure and patterning to read more like a piece of Norse history.

The second episode I wish to examine is Joshua's earlier campaign against the city of Ai (Joshua 8, 1-29 in the Vulgate). Here the source itself provides fairly detailed information. In Stjórn the whole story is reorganised, including the geography¹⁰. In the original

there is mention of a valley between Ai and the main body of the Israelite army. In Stjórn this is utilised for a second ambush landnorðr of the city. In the Vulgate Joshua gives instructions to part of his army beforehand that they shall run from the enemy in order to draw the pursuit after them. In Stjórn these instructions are placed at the critical point in the action, not outlined as part of the preliminary strategy. When the plan has worked and all the men of Ai have come out to chase the fleeing Israelites, those who were concealed in ambush behind the city enter it and set fire to it. The Biblical wording implies utter demoralization of the enemy. Viri autem civitatis . . . respicientes et videntes fumum urbis ad caelum usque conscendere non potuerunt ultra huc illucque diffugere. Stjórn's wording is less contemptuous and more ironical, in an understatement characteristic of saga-technique: Nv sem borgarmenn sa reykr oc loga til hvssa sinna. varþ þeim seinna vm eptirsoknina. As in the Gazer incident the antithesis between expectation and outcome is pointed - when the men of Ai see the Israelites running from them they þickiaz hafa i hendi sigrinn. Where the Vulgate with usual brevity says that all the inhabitants were killed, Stjórn inserts a sentence with an alliterative climax on the fate of the city itself: Eptir þat brendo þeir borg alla Hay at kavlldvm kolvm.

In the third episode I wish to look at the Stjórn translator makes no basic alterations to the structure of his material. This one is not a campaign, it is the description of how the men of Gabaon, knowing that Joshua intends to exterminate all inhabitants of the Promised Land, obtain a peace treaty with him on false pretences. On the whole the qualities of humour, drama and warmth are alien to the Biblical narrative, but here even the Vulgate version has a touch of them. Joshua 9, 3-6 are as follows:

3 at hii qui habitabant in Gabaon audientes cuncta quae fecerat Iosue Hiericho et Ahi 4 et callide cogitantes tulerunt sibi cibaria

saccos veteres asinis imponentes et utres vinarios scissos atque consutos

5 calciamenta que perantiqua quae ad indicium vetustatis pittaciis consuta erant

induti veteribus vestimentis

panes quoque quos portabant ob viaticum duri erant et in frusta comminuti

6 perrexeruntque ad Iosue qui tunc morabatur in castris Galgalae et dixerunt ei atque omni simul Israheli de terra longinqua venimus pacem vobiscum facere cupientes.

Stjórn B opens this episode in typical saga manner: Gabaon het ein miog mikil borg.¹¹ The way in which the Gabonites prepare for their plot is given in much greater detail than in the source. Where the Vulgate has one adjective, Stjórn has two, preferably alliterating with each other, and if possible alliterating with the noun they qualify as well. The saccos veteres of the Vulgate become secki savrga oc slitna. The Vulgate does not trouble to describe the donkeys carrying the sacks, but in Stjórn they are carefully chosen to aid the deception: hvarki hófðv þeir asna feita ne feliga. helldr þa er þeir fengv herfiligsta. The bread was not merely mouldy, it had reached the stage of being almost inedible; the garments were not just old, they were slitinn af fyrnskv, and the old and rent wine-skins are transformed into vinberla brotna oc bvanna saman. Ælfric, more restrained in his enjoyment of the incident, merely describes the plotting of the Gabonites as gamenlice¹².

When these Gabaonites meet Joshua, the Stjórn B translator extends and rewords the conversations between them. His eloquence becomes most noticeable when the Gabaonites draw attention to their faked evidence. Joshua 9, 12 reads: en panes quando egressi sumus de domibus nostris ut veniremus ad vos calidos sumpsimus nunc sicci facti sunt et vetustate nimia comminuti.

In Stjórn B this becomes: Nv með þi at þer trvið æigi varvm orðvm. þa litið á fargagn vart. se her bravð vart er ver tokvm nybakat aðr ver hæiman forvm. enn þat er nv harðt oc af mikilli fyrnsko myglat oc mað i gegnvm, sva at æigi er manna matr. The real distress of the Stjórn translator is reserved for the condition of his wine-barrels. In the Vulgate we have only wine-skins, once new but now torn, whereas in the Norse version: Pa lietvm ver oc nytt vin i nyia berla. enn sakir sva langrar læiðar er vinit rotið enn leglar lekir oc lavggstocknir. Ælfric austerely refrains from comment on the wine, but in his description of the bread he also chooses the translation nigbacene for calidos.

This episode is also interesting in that it seems to show the Stjórn translator re-interpreting behaviour in the light of his own code of ethics. The emphasis in his source here as elsewhere in the Old Testament is on the Israelites' relationship with God rather than their relationship with their neighbours. The anger of the Israelites is because they have sworn an alliance with the people they had been divinely commanded to kill rather than anger at the trick that has been played on them. But to the Stjórn translator it is clearly the element of stealth and treachery in the Gabaonites' behaviour that is the cause of the Israelites' anger.

When he recounts their final submission to the Israelites he gives it, in contradistinction to his original, something of the dignity of a saga episode. Joshua 9, 25 reads: nunc autem in manu tua sumus quod tibi bonum et rectum videtur fac nobis. The Stjórn translator by the slightest of syntactical adjustments removes the self-abasement from this: Gerit nu við oss sem yör likar oc þo somir yörvm rikdomi oc réttlæti. He adds also a sentence for which there is no basis in his source. Síþan var þat dǫmt oc lavgtekit með swardavgvm hinna beztv manna or hvarra tveggja liði. The matter is, in fact, ratified as a decent and respectable treaty.

It is difficult in dealing with these shifts of attitude to be sure how much is conscious or unconscious on the part of the translator. Certainly in Ælfric's translation, when Joshua is urged to behave in the manner befitting a thane, ðegenlice,¹³ we feel we are moving more in the Anglo-Saxon than the Old Testament world, and in the same way when Stjórn B enumerates the conquests of the Israelites, the vocabulary suggests a Scandinavian rather than a Hebrew landscape: borgir oc bði. kastala oc kavptvn . . . a heðvm eða hæiðvm¹⁴. Later in Stjórn, in the first book of Samuel, a chapter concerning David's victory over the Amalekites is given the chapter heading Dauid sigraði vikinga¹⁵. The word obviously means no

more than "raiders" but it can hardly have shaken off all its northern associations. In the early part of Joshua when the Israelites are getting ready for the march round the walls of Jericho, the Stjórn translator evidently feels that the presence of trumpets in the luggage needs some explaining, and he brings it into line with Germanic ideas of music and festivity by describing the trumpets as the ones which they were accustomed to use til gleði oc gamans¹⁶. Ælfric in his homily on Joshua also becomes very alliterative about trumpets: on ðam sefoðan dæge swiðlice bleowan seofon sacerdas mid sylfrenum bynum¹⁷.

The translator of the Stjórn B Joshua depends very much for his effectiveness on alliteration linked with balancing of phrases and especially with doubling, whether of nouns, adjectives or verbs. There are sections of his work which show no sign of it, but in dialogue, especially where eloquence is required, it marks sentence after sentence. This is one of the features which distinguish most clearly Joshua in Stjórn B from Stjórn A. When the woman Rahab asks Joshua's spies that she and her household may be spared by the conquering Israelites, her cadences in the B text become more and more rhythmic and alliterative, but in the A text, based on Comestor, there is no trace

of this deliberate rhetoric¹⁸. We can compare the B version again with Ælfric who records the killing of men, women and children of Jericho in the plaintive and alliterative phrase weras ond wifmen ond ða wepende cild¹⁹.

The pleasure Ælfric takes in both dramatic and rhetorical effect, mainly in his homily but also in his translation, is very like that of the Stjórn translator. But the points for comparison are among the minutiae of semantics and stylistics, and in order to compare Old Norse with Old English treatment of Biblical material in the wider areas of structure or attitude, we need to leave Ælfric and turn to the Old English poems of Exodus and Judith. Here the Old Testament is to some extent re-written in the Anglo-Saxon image. These poems re-organise Vulgate material in the same way that the Stjórn B Joshua does, and they provide many parallel examples of structure altered, dramatic detail added, the local and familiar introduced, the alien and less comprehensible omitted.

The Biblical Exodus covers a whole range of material on the Israelites in Egypt and later their wanderings in the wilderness. The Anglo-Saxon poet restricts himself to the central event, the flight from Egypt across the Red Sea. The Bible builds up the quarrel between

Israelites and Egyptians through the long chapters on the ten plagues. The poet ignores the first nine of these, dealing only with the affliction which actually brought about the Israelites' departure, the killing of the Egyptian first-born. This, as well as allowing for a more coherent cause-and-effect structure, is of course the most dramatic of the afflictions, and lends itself most fully to imaginative description. Even though the Egyptians are the enemy, the poet's account of the angel of death visiting the Egyptian homes is tempered by sympathy. The description of men mourning the loss of kin is so much a part of Old English poetry that it can scarcely be expressed without poet and audience feeling involved in the lament. Lines such as Wæron hleahtor-smiðum handa belocene, or swæfon seledreamas²⁰ not only imply loss and deprivation in the Anglo-Saxon rather than Egyptian context, they also demonstrate the poet's response to that suffering. As in the Stjórn account of the Gabaonites, foreigners are no longer seen solely as enemies of the Israelites.

This humanising of the situation continues. The Israelites leave Egypt and the hosts of Pharaoh pursue them. There is no suggestion in the Bible that the reason for the pursuit is the Egyptians' desire to be revenged for the death of their "brothers". As in

Joshua, the Biblical account is God-centred, and the Egyptians pursue the Israelites because God hardened Pharaoh's heart. But the motive of revenge brought in by the Exodus poet makes sense in terms of human relationships for those to whom vengeance for kin was a primary obligation.

When the poet sees or seems to see a battle approaching, we are again in a northern landscape, where wolves sing evensong in the hope of feasting. The waves of the Red Sea also become, like more northerly seas, sincald. The Israelites are sæmenn and sæwicingas. The poet of Exodus and the translator of the Stjórn Joshua move in terrain that their audience will recognise.

In the introduction to his edition of Judith Dr Timmer wrote "Holofernes has a retinue of warriors ... who are called eorlas and beornas; Holofernes' feast is distinctly reminiscent of the revelry in a Germanic hall ... The warriors are called bencsittende and fletsittende; their armour is that of the Germanic warriors: byrne, helm, sweord, scild etc. ... We even find the Germanic method of fighting in a scildburh."²¹ On the other hand Dr Timmer noted that the feast, though Germanic, is disorderly, and that there is no indication

of the comitatus idea in the behaviour: "when the warriors find Holofernes dead, they take to their heels."

These points need to be thought through more carefully. It is doubtful if the poet could entirely have avoided words suggesting the Germanic heroic atmosphere even had he wished to do so. What else can a sword and a shield be but a sweord and a scild or their synonyms? We ought not to impose semantic limitations because the amount of surviving material is small, and has conditioned our responses to certain words. In Ælfric's translation of Joshua Joshua campaigns with his fyrð, a word which inevitably reminds the modern reader of Alfred in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. But it would be absurd to assume that it was used with intent to remind, or to think that Ælfric saw Joshua as a type of Alfred.

Nevertheless, though some of Timmer's examples may be open to query, his general point is a valid one. All the trappings of the comitatus are there but not the spirit of it. What Timmer does not make clear is that the poet deliberately points this contrast. In The Battle of Maldon²², when Byrhtnoð dies, the Anglo-Saxons encourage each other to thoughts of revenge now their gold-giver lies dead. When the Assyrian in Judith finds his goldgifa dead, he falls to the ground, tears his hair and laments. In Maldon the knowledge that their leader

lies cut down by the sword, is used as incitement to go on fighting in the face of certain death. In Judith the Assyrian tells his comrades:

Her lið sweorde geheawen
beheafdod healdend ure.

The reasonable reaction within the comitatus literary tradition would be to seize their weapons and to utter speeches of heroic import. Instead:

Hi ða hreowigmode
wurpon hyra wæpen ofdune, gewitan him werigferhõe
on fleam sceacan.

There is similar irony in the drinking scene. Not all Anglo-Saxon feasts may have been as graciously decorous as the heroic poetry would suggest. It was perhaps not unheard of for a lord to drench his followers with wine until they all lay unconscious on the floor. But when the description of such behaviour in poetry is dignified by the vocabulary of the comitatus, the effect achieved is not of the heroic code, but of the mock-heroic. The nouns referring to Holofernes have a familiar ring: sinces brytta, se stiðmoda, goldwine gumena. The verbs are incongruous. This worthy character styrnde ond gylede, hlyneðe ond dynede, oferdrencte his duguðe. The tone is close to that of the anti-drink riddles, where those who have drunk too

deeply are shown to be deprived of their senses, like the followers of Holofernes agotene goda gehwylces. It is clear too that descriptions such as sinces brytta have not become so familiar as to have lost all impact. In a single speech the Judith poet calls God tires brytta and Holofernes morðres brytta. The poet's play on the term would be pointless unless he could rely on the connotations of the more familiar phrase being fully present in his audience's mind. That Holofernes after death finds himself wyrmum bewunden in a wyrmsele is the more ironic in that he has been pictured in terms of an Anglo-Saxon chieftain occupying a winsele and doubtless golde bewunden. The poet enjoys the incongruous juxtaposition, just as the translator of the Norse Joshua plays with the comic aspects of the Gabaonites' plot.

Old English poetry has received more attention from critics than Stjórn has, and the structure of Exodus and the irony of Judith are dealt with in various articles²³. It is not necessary to examine them fully here. But the parallels between Old English and Old Norse Biblical translation have not been explored and are worth exploring. The main question which should be asked, and which I have not asked so far, is whether we are simply dealing with comparable developments in the two cultures, or whether we have a case of English

influence on Scandinavian attitudes to translation of religious material. The former seems likely at first glance. But we know of the work of English missionaries in Iceland in the eleventh century, and many service books, books of homilies and general material for ecclesiastical use must have been imported from England. Ælfric's work was known in Iceland. Mr A.R. Taylor has shown in a recent article the use which the Hauksbók compiler made of Ælfric's homilies²⁴. Englishmen teaching and preaching in Iceland, even if using Latin service books, must themselves have been educated within the Anglo-Saxon vernacular tradition. The heavily alliterative and rhetorical style of Joshua B, and indeed much of the hagiographic material in Icelandic, so often reminds me of the rhythmic and alliterative prose of Ælfric and Wulfstan that I am tempted to suggest the influence of English vernacular. It is interesting in this context that Selma Jónsdóttir has demonstrated that the illustrations of AM 227, the Joshua B manuscript depend on English models²⁵. But for such a hypothesis to be substantiated very much more work would need to be done not only on these two vernacular traditions but on other, possibly related, ones. Hans Bekker-Nielsen and

Ole Widding have demonstrated Iceland's debt to Low German hagiography²⁶. All I have tried to do in this paper is to indicate a range of material and a type of evidence which I do not think has yet been adequately explored.

NOTES

1. I wish to record here my debt to the late Gerd Wellejus. She first drew my attention to the Stjórn version of Joshua, and I think she would have worked on this herself if she had lived. Had she done so her contribution to this subject as to others would have been both scholarly and perceptive.
2. C.R. Unger (ed.), Stjórn. Gammelnorsk Bibel-historie fra Verdens Skabelse til det babyloniske Fangenskab (Christiania 1862).
3. Ólafur Halldórsson, Helgafellsbækur fornar (Studia Islandica 24, Reykjavík 1966), p.37.
4. Didrik Arup Seip (ed.), Stjórn AM 227 fol. A Norwegian Version of the Old Testament transcribed in Iceland (Corpus codicum Islandicorum medii aevi 20, Copenhagen 1956), pp.16 ff.
5. Gustav Storm, "De norsk-islandske Bibeloversættelser fra 13de og 14de Aarhundrede og Biskop Brandr Jónsson", Arkiv for nordisk Filologi 3 (Christiania 1886), pp.252-3.
Einar Ól. Sveinsson, "Athugasemdir um Stjórn", Studia Centenalia in honorem memoriae Benedikt S. Þórarinsson (Reykjavík 1961), pp.17-32.
Selma Jónsdóttir, Illumination in a Manuscript of Stjórn (Reykjavík 1971).

6. Benjamin Thorpe (ed.), The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church (London 1846), II, 212 ff.
7. All quotations from the Vulgate are from the following edition: Biblia Sacra Iuxta Latinam Vulgatam Versionem (Rome 1939), IV.
8. S.J. Crawford (ed.), The Old English Version of the Heptateuch (Early English Text Society O.S. 160, 1922, reprinted 1969).
9. Unger, p.371.
10. Unger, pp.364-6.
11. Unger, p.366.
12. Crawford, p.391.
13. Crawford, p.378.
14. Unger, p.372.
15. Unger, p.489.
16. Unger, p.359.
17. Thorpe, p.212.
18. Unger, pp. 351-2.

19. Crawford, p.386.
20. Edward Burroughs Irving Jr. (ed.), The Old English Exodus (Yale University Press 1953, reprinted 1970), pp.45-6.
21. B.J. Timmer (ed.), Judith (Methuen's Old English Library, London 1952, 2nd.ed. 1961), pp.11-12.
22. E.V.Gordon (ed.), The Battle of Maldon (Methuen's Old English Library, London 1937, reprinted 1957).
23. Robert T. Farrell, "A Reading of OE. Exodus", Review of English Studies New Series 20 (1969), pp.401-17. Fredrik J. Heinemann, "'Judith' 236-91a: a Mock Heroic Approach-to-Battle Type Scene", Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 71 (1970), pp.83-96.
24. Arnold Taylor, "Hauksbók and Ælfric's De Falsis Deis", Leeds Studies in English New Series 3 (1969).
25. Selma Jónsdóttir, op.cit.
26. Old Widding and Hans Bekker-Nielsen, "Low German Influence on Late Icelandic Hagiography", The Germanic Review 37 (1962).