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ELEMENTS OF LEARNING AND CHIVALRY IN FÓSTBRÆÐRA SAGA

Fóstbræðra Saga belongs to the category of Icelandic sagas known in their homeland as Íslendingasögur, i.e. sagas of Icelanders, a term intended to signify that these sagas deal primarily with Icelandic characters, in contrast to sagas whose scene is laid in other countries, such as Sagas of Kings (konungasögur), Heroic Sagas (fornaldarsögur), or the southern Romances of Chivalry (riddarasögur). In English, sagas of this category are commonly known as Family Sagas, although they are, in fact, no more peculiarly concerned with family history than other kinds of sagas.

If we wish to categorize Fóstbræðra Saga more particularly, we can assign it to the sub-class of Sagas of Icelanders sometimes referred to as Sagas of Poets (skáldasögur), for one of the two heroes of the saga is Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld, and verses attributed to him are woven into the narrative of the saga. It thus has a place among such sagas as Egils Saga, Gunnlaugs Saga, Bjarnar Saga, Kormaks Saga, and Hallfreðar Saga. But in one respect Fóstbræðra Saga stands in sharp contrast to all of these sagas: it contains a number of digressions from the main thread of the narrative. As regards their subject matter, these digressions are chiefly of three kinds:

1) Information about the organs of the human body and various character traits associated with them.

2) Theological reflections.

3) Poetic stretches in an ornate rhetorical style.

These passages have long been looked at askance by scholars, who regard them as offending grossly against the "classical" Icelandic saga style. Árni Magnússon, the great manuscript collector and a perspicacious scholar, describes Fóstbræðra Saga in the Flateyjarbók as dragging "a train of nonsensical verbiage" - cum ineptissimo verborum syrmate.

Fóstbræðra Saga is preserved, in whole or in part, in five vellum manuscripts or copies of such manuscripts, and one paper manuscript is also of some independent value for the last part of the saga. The manuscripts, in probable chronological order, are as follows:

Hauksbók, written shortly after 1300.

Möðruvallabók, written about the middle of the fourteenth century.

Codex Regius or Membrana regia, a vellum manuscript from the same time, now lost, but the text preserved in paper copies.

Flateyjarbók, written shortly before 1400.

Bæjarbók, written about the same time, now lost, but the text preserved in paper copies.

Codex Holmiensis, a paper manuscript of the first half of the seventeenth century.

In Hauksbók the text of Fóstbræðra Saga is shorter and more concise than in the other manuscripts, and it is also mostly free from the digressions which have been considered so damaging to the saga style. It is therefore no wonder that Hauksbók was for a long time regarded as the best and most original of the manuscripts of the saga. Finnur Jónsson argued in favour of this view in the introduction to his edition of Hauksbók (1892-96), and his position is shared by C.F. Hofker in his dissertation De Fóstbræðrasaga (1908) and Björn K. Þórólfsson in his edition of the saga (1925-27).

Björn K. Þórólfsson did, however, observe that Hauksbók is not entirely free from the characteristics which were felt to spoil the saga style of the other manuscripts. In his introduction he remarks that "Hauksbók's mode of expression [is] in a few places somewhat unsagalike", and that the influence of the translated romances can be traced here and there. He goes on to give some examples, such as the author's comment on Þorgeirr Hávarsson's last fight: váru honum lengi sín högg bæði fyrir skjöld og brynju - "his blows served him a long time as both shield and armour" - and the words of Þórdís of Löngunes who wants to capture Þormóðr and launa honum með ljótum dauða - "repay him with a repulsive death". In conclusion he says, "These passages also occur (frequently altered and expanded) in the other recensions."

In his book Om Olaf den helliges Saga (1914) Sigurður Nordal tries to determine the relations between Fóstbræðra Saga and the various sagas of St Olaf. Based on this hypothetical relationship, Nordal and other scholars have concluded that the saga was written about 1200 or in the first years of the thirteenth century; and this has become a kind of corner-stone for the dating not only of Fóstbræðra Saga but of other Sagas of Icelanders - a terminus a quo for this literary genre. Björn K. Þórólfsson seems to accept Nordal's dating. He must therefore assume that the Hauksbók text of the saga represents an altered and expanded version of the original, since, according to him, it contains "unsagalike" elements and shows the influence of translated romances, which is not supposed to have made itself felt until about the middle of the thirteenth century. Now, these supposedly altered and expanded readings are also found in the other principal manuscripts - Möðruvallabók, Flateyjarbók and Regius - and frequently in a more expansive phrasing than in Hauksbók. Following Björn K. Þórólfsson's apparent reasoning we would thus have to assume that the saga was twice expanded in the same peculiar fashion in the same places. Some people have been inclined to regard this as not very probable.

A German scholar, Vera Lachmann, was the first to challenge the old faith in the superior merit of Hauksbók. In her book Das Alter der Harðarsaga (1932), she touches

briefly on Fóstbræðra Saga and gives examples - though fewer than one might wish - to show that the unusual stylistic features found in the other manuscripts also occur in Hauksbók, even though the latter uses a more concise phrasing. From this she concludes that the Hauksbók text represents a reworking of the other version: "da es nämlich kaum anzunehmen ist, dass zwei Menschen sich eine so ausserordentliche Abirrung von sagagemässer Sprache erlauben, so spricht die Wahrscheinlichkeit dafür, dass der Text der Flateyjarbók (FMR) mit seinen krasseren Erbauungsformeln die ursprünglichere Gestalt hat, die von dem Schreiber der Hauksbók wenigstens in gewissem Masse beschnitten und abgedämpft wird."

This brief but acute observation of Vera Lachmann at first went unobserved by scholars. But when Sigurður Nordal took up the idea in the series Íslenzk fornrit, first in the introduction to Borgfirðinga sögur (1938) and later in greater detail in the introduction to Vestfirðinga sögur (1943), it at once gained wide acceptance. Moreover, Sven B.F. Jansson demonstrated in his book Sagorna om Vinland (1945) that Fóstbræðra Saga is abridged in Hauksbók, not expanded in the other manuscripts. This is especially true of the first part of the saga, which Lawman Haukr Erlendsson wrote in his own hand; in the middle of the saga his scribe took over, and after that there is little abridgement.

Even so, there were those who remained unconvinced of

the originality of the digressions. Thus Hannes Pétursson, in an article in Tímarit máls og menningar (1957), professes to find a discrepancy between the digressions and the saga itself in their characterization of Þorgeirr Hávarsson, and therefore maintains that the two cannot be the work of a single author. This theory is supported by J.M.C. Kroesen in her book Over de compositie der Fóstbrœðra Saga (1962). She claims, moreover, to have observed that the digressions have the appearance of being of relatively late date, and this opinion is more forcefully urged by Einar Ól. Sveinsson in his book Ritunartími Íslendingasagna (1965). Both of these scholars accordingly doubt whether the digressions formed part of the original saga. But Miss Kroesen has also observed that the same ideas and the same stylistic features occur elsewhere in the saga, so she goes a step further than other scholars and divides the whole saga between two authors of different dates.

In a monograph on Fóstbrœðra Saga which I hope to publish before long the problem of the digressions is once again taken up for detailed consideration. I believe I have been able to demonstrate conclusively that the digressions are original in the saga, the work of the author himself. Various arguments can be adduced in support of this view.

(1) It has never been clearly specified by scholars where in the saga digressions are to be found. The two

scholars who have cited the largest number of instances are Rudolf Meissner in his book Die Strengleikar, und Björn K. Þórólfsson in the introduction to his edition of the saga. Between them they list 26 different digressions, but of these only 16 are common to both lists. Whether all the passages cited can properly be regarded as digressions remains a matter of opinion, and there are, moreover, other passages, cited by neither Meissner nor Björn K. Þórólfsson, which could with equal justice be counted among the digressions. There seems to be no possible way of establishing a common criterion for all the supposed digressions or of drawing a clear line of demarcation between digressions and saga.

(2) The four main manuscripts fall into two classes, consisting on the one hand of Möðruvallabók and Flateyjarbók and on the other of Hauksbók and Regius. This was demonstrated by Hofker, and I have found additional evidence to support his classification. It may be regarded as certain that the differences between the two groups of manuscripts are due to Hauksbók and Regius going back to a separate prototype, for several of their readings appear to be less original than the corresponding readings in Möðruvallabók and Flateyjarbók. Since the digressions are found in Regius, it follows that they must have been in this prototype and thus also in the archetype of all the manuscripts of the saga.

(3) Copyists objected to the digressions and abridged them or even omitted them altogether. But their practice suggests the same difference of opinion and judgement regarding the digressions as we find among scholars of later times. The elimination of digressions is carried to its farthest point in Hauksbók. Yet even there we find traces of two of the digressions listed by Meissner and Björn K. Þórólfsson, and the subject matter of a third one is retold by Haukr Erlendsson in fewer and different words.

(4) Various connecting threads, both verbal and thematic, run from the digressions to other parts of the saga which must be original. I shall here discuss only one example of this. In one of the best-known digressions we are told how after the slaying of the great champion Þorgeirr Hávarsson his heart was cut out because people

> wanted to see what it was like, he having been such a valiant man. And it is said that it was very small, and some hold it for true that the hearts of valiant men are smaller than of the cowardly, for they say that there is more blood in a large heart than in a small one and that fear goes with the heart-blood, and they say that the heart sinks in men's breast for this reason, that then the heart-blood moves the heart. [1]

This passage certainly runs counter to our conception

of popular Icelandic saga style, but it must nevertheless be original in the saga. In Hauksbók it is reproduced in a condensed form: "They cut open his body and wanted to see his heart, and it was no bigger than a walnut and hard as a callus and no blood in it." [2] And the passage is linked to other ideas and similes of the saga in a variety of ways. When Þorgeirr Hávarsson has avenged his father and slain the first of the thirteen men he was to kill in the course of his brief life, his mother speaks to him "with a joyful breast". Of an indigent farmer, distressed at the arrival of guests, we are told that "his heart shook", and when still more guests arrive, "fear came into Þorkell's breast, and his heart dropped". And the idea of Þorgeirr's hard and bloodless heart recurs several times:

> The most high maker of things had created and placed in Þorgeirr's breast so trusty a heart and hard that he did not fear.
>
> His heart was not like the gizzard of a bird; it was not full of blood so as to tremble with fear, but tempered in every hardihood by the most high maker of things.[3]

The first discussion of the theories in Fóstbræðra Saga about the constitution of the heart seems to have been that of I. Reichborn-Kjennerud in Festskrift for Hjalmar Falk (1927). The matter has since been touched upon by

Lars Lönnroth, in his article Kroppen som själens spegel, and Einar Ól. Sveinsson, in Ritunartími Íslendingasagna. Both of them think that the author of Fóstbræðra Saga (or of the digressions) formed these theories himself on the basis of ancient Northern or Germanic ideas. As evidence they cite two passages in old poems: Sá hafði hilmir / hart móðakarn ("that king had a hard mind-acorn") in Helga kviða Hundingsbana I, and Bjarki átti hugarkorn hart ("Bjarki had a hard mind-grain") in Málsháttakvæði. They also refer to Snorri's words in his Edda, where he tells us that in kennings the heart may be called "a grain or a stone or an apple or a nut or suchlike". But these poetical terms listed by Snorri apply to the heart in general, and their use is therefore not limited to the hearts of valiant men. The heathen poetry of the North does not show that a valiant heart was believed to be small, and there is just as much reason to assume that it was thought to be great. Hugr, which means both "mind" and "courage", has its seat in the heart. And the minds of brave men are hard and great, as is shown by such adjectives as harðhugaðr, harðgeðr, "hard-minded", and hugstórr, hugumstórr, stórgeðr, "great-minded". The hearts harbouring such minds are described as being hard and may therefore be presumed to have also been great.

On the other hand, it so happens that in learned southern works we come across the belief that courage goes

with a small heart and cowardice with a large one. In his Historia naturalis the elder Pliny has this to say about the heart: Bruta existimantur animalium quibus durum riget, audacia quibus parvum est, pavida quibus praegrande; that is to say, "Those animals are considered stupid that have a hard heart, those brave that have a small one, those cowardly that have a large one." He then goes on to enumerate various animals whose hearts are large in proportion to their body-size - hares, asses, bulls, leopards, weasels, hyenas - and tells us that they all have this in common, that when frightened they are either cowardly or dangerous. Pliny differs from Fóstbræðra Saga in attributing dullness or stupidity to creatures with hard hearts - though, as a matter of fact, Þorgeirr Hávarsson is better endowed with other qualities than intelligence, so that there is no inescapable conflict between our two authorities. Pliny no doubt has his information from some older author, although probably not from Aristotle, who appears to have been the chief authority for the section on animals in the Historia naturalis. And the author of Fóstbræðra Saga in all probability did not draw directly on Pliny but on some medieval work where this doctrine was set forth in a manner similar to that of the saga.

In Fóstbræðra Saga we find the idea that fear dwells in the heart-blood, which seems a reasonable conclusion, since the hearts of the cowardly are large and therefore hold a

large quantity of blood. No doubt this was stated in so many words in the author's foreign source. But elsewhere in the saga we find various other qualities spoken of as having their seat in particular organs or parts of the body, and there a particular foreign model - or parallel, at any rate - can be pointed out.

When Þormóðr is staying at Brattahlíð in Greenland, where he has gone to avenge the slaying of his sworn brother, a woman is assigned the chore of pulling off his clothes, as was the custom in Iceland well into the present century. Her companion, Loðinn by name, finds that she tarries rather too long in Þormóðr's sleeping quarters, and, in the words of the saga:

"It seemed to him that she laid her ten fingers around his neck less often than before. Then his anger rose somewhat in its dwelling place, and each man's

anger is in the bile,
life in the heart,
memory in the brain,
pride in the lungs,
laughter in the spleen,
lust in the liver." [4]

Þormóðr's attendant in Greenland is named Egill the Fool. After Þormóðr has killed Þorgeirr's slayer, a chieftain of the Greenlanders, he contrives to have Egill

pursued instead of himself. When Egill is caught, we are told:

> he quaked in every limb for fear. All his bones shook that were in his body, and those were two hundred and fourteen. His teeth chattered; they were thirty. All the veins in his flesh shivered; they were four hundred and fifteen.

This passage, while pretty certainly original in the saga, is actually found in only one manuscript. We therefore cannot turn to other manuscripts for help in correcting conceivable scribal errors, such as the number of teeth being short by two. In other comparable works, foreign and native, the full number of adult teeth is correctly given as thirty-two. But it may, of course, have seemed appropriate to the author to have Egill the Fool lack two wisdom-teeth.

This lore about the seat of the various faculties and the number of bones, teeth and veins is found in a number of classical and medieval works. The earliest enumeration of the centres of the affections that I have come across is in Lactantius, but no doubt all these things derive from one or another of the natural histories of antiquity. In his De opificio Dei Lactantius says:

> Adfectum iracundiæ in felle constitutum putant pavoris in corde, lætitiæ in splene. Timidiora plus cordis, salaciora plus iecoris, lasciviora

plus splenis habuissent.

That is: "The affection of anger is believed to be settled in the bile; that of fear, in the heart; that of gladness, in the spleen. The cowardly have a large heart, the lecherous a large liver, the merry a large spleen."

Isidore has this information in much the same form in his Etymologiæ, while Bede gives the number of bones, veins and teeth in his De nativitate infantium. Both of these authors, it may be pointed out, were well known in medieval Iceland. But the work most likely to have promoted the dissemination of this kind of learning in Iceland is the medical poem Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum.

The Regimen Sanitatis is a poem, or collection of poems, on medical theory and practice, going back to the school of medicine at Salerno. Its nucleus is formed by the so-called Epistola Aristotelis ad Alexandrum de conservatione corporis humani, which is a partial translation of an Arabic medical work, made by John of Seville in the first half of the twelfth century. From this nucleus the poem gradually grew by accretion; in S. de Renzi's edition in the first volume of Collectio Salernitana (1852) it consists of 2130 verses. The poem soon gained a wide circulation and was translated into many vernacular tongues and finally printed; in vol. V of Collectio Salernitana (1859) de Renzi lists 246 editions. In the fourteenth century the poem was certainly

known in the northern countries, for from that time we have two fragments of manuscript containing the Latin text, one of them from Iceland, the other from Norway.

The passages in Regimen Sanitatis that are related to Fóstbræðra Saga run as follows:

Cor sapit, pulmo loquitur, fel commovet iram,
Splen ridere facit, cogit amare jecor.

The heart understands, the lungs speak, the bile stirs up anger, the spleen causes laughter, the liver impells to love.

Ossibus ex denis bis centenisque novenis
Constat homo; denis bis dentibus et duodenis,
Ex tricentenis decies sex quinque venis.

Man is made up of two hundred and nineteen bones, thirty-two teeth, and three hundred and sixty-five veins.

The correspondence of the poem with Fóstbræðra Saga is not perfect. According to the saga, life resides in the heart and pride in the lungs, whereas the Regimen assigns to these organs understanding and speech respectively. (As a matter of fact, another version of the poem agrees with Fóstbræðra Saga in making the heart the giver of life.) It is of less significance if the numbers of bones, etc., differ, for Roman numerals are apt to be copied wrong in manuscripts. Indeed, Lars Lönnroth has shown how the figures given in the saga are likely to have resulted from a misreading of the corresponding figures in the Regimen.

He assumes, like other scholars, that the saga dates from about 1200, but states on the authority of Karl Sudhoff that the poem probably did not come into existence until the middle of the thirteenth century - and then in a form containing only a fraction of the verses printed in de Renzi's edition. And if Sudhoff and others are right about the probable age and evolution of the poem, it cannot have influenced Fóstbræðra Saga, even if the latter was not written until late in the thirteenth century, as I think most likely.

The same teachings about the number of bones, teeth and veins and the seats of the emotions are found in various Icelandic works dealing with natural history or of an encyclopaedic character. Two of them have all the items from the Regimen quoted above and in the same order, and the conclusion is hard to avoid that these are instances of the immediate influence of the celebrated poem. On the other hand, one of these two works cites Sæmundr Sigfússon the Learned, which seems to suggest that his writings included something on this subject.

In the saga, the statement that God had placed a brave heart in Þorgeirr's breast is followed by this comment:

> And as all good things are made by God, so courage is made by God and placed in the hearts of valiant men, and with it freedom to use their strength for what they will, good or evil...but [Christ] will requite each one as he merits.[5]

Some scholars appear to take this as an instance of a kind of free will on the part of the author, his original inference and independent judgement of Þorgeirr. But as Hermann Pálsson has pointed out in his writings on Hrafnkels Saga, this was an exceedingly common idea in medieval religious works. St Augustine wrote a separate work on the question of free will, De libero arbitrio, and among later works on the subject, one might mention the De gratia et libero arbitrio by St Bernard of Clairvaux.

One of the digressions in Fóstbræðra Saga tells of the founding of Rome; the story is the familiar one of Romulus and Remus, and it is found in a similar form as an interpolation in one of the manuscripts of Rómverja Saga. There is, however, one element in the account in Fóstbræðra Saga which I have so far not come across in any other work, foreign or Icelandic, and it would be interesting to know whether anyone present is familiar with the source of the passage, which is undoubtedly some medieval Latin work. The passage runs as follows:

> The city was modelled on the fearless beast [i.e., the lion]. The [shape of the] beast was incised on the ground, and thereon were erected city walls. The head of the beast is north of the river. That part of the city is called Romè, but the part that is across the river is called Latransborg, or Latran or Latera, which means flanks.

As already mentioned, Björn K. Þórólfsson considers that both in Hauksbók and in the other manuscripts Fóstbræðra Saga shows signs of the influence of the translated romances. He refers in particular to the style and diction of certain passages, but he also cites the following exaggerated description of Þormóðr's conduct at the battle of Stiklarstaðir:

> Men have highly praised the manner in which Þormóðr fought at Stiklarstaðir, where King Ólafr fell, for he had neither shield nor coat of mail. He constantly wielded his broad-axe with both hands and waded through the enemy's ranks, and none of those who crossed his path was pleased to have his night-quarters under his axe.

But if Þormóðr acquitted himself well at Stiklarstaðir, Þorgeirr showed himself to be no less proficient at manslaughter during his last fight at Hraunhöfn, where the saga tells us he killed thirteen men. Such ebullitions of valour are comparable to those of late-born champions like Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi or Kári Sölmundarson, who unquestionably are of chivalric extraction.

In their attitude towards women the sworn brothers differ considerably, but both of them exhibit chivalric traits. Þormóðr is fond of women, easily infatuated, and inconstant. The authentic gentleness of chivalric love

marks the description of Þórdís's love for Þormóðr after he has transferred to her the verses originally written in praise of Þorbjörg Kolbrún. But not all knights were ladies' men; some of them refused to squander their vital energies in too close an association with women. This of course had a motive different from the ordinary Christian mortification of the flesh; the object was to have more energy left for killing enemies. Thus Dínus the Proud despised all ladies and damsels in the world and covered his face with a mask in order that they should not see his beauty. The Lay of Guigemar (Norwegian Guiamarsljóð) was composed by a woman, who cannot contain her wonder at the hero's curious behaviour. "But this was the strangest thing in his nature," she says, "that he utterly refused to love women." It is his kind of chivalry that we find in Þorgeirr Hávarsson. "It is said," the saga tells us, "that Þorgeirr was not much given to women; he called it a debasement of his strength to crawl around women. He seldom laughed."[6]

If the author of Fóstbræðra Saga has gone to foreign works of learning and southern romances for elements of subject matter, influences of this kind are no less evident in the language and style of the saga. It is customary, ever since Nygaard's time, to distinguish between two styles in Old Icelandic literary works: "lærd stil" and "folkelig stil", learned style and popular style. Briefly, the

learned style is Latinized, while the popular style is largely free from Latin influence, and therefore thought to come closer to the contemporary spoken language. As a third variety we have what has been called "hövisk stil", court style; this style is a kind of offshoot of the learned style and closely related to it, but with certain characteristics of its own, which are especially associated with the chivalric romances and other works of a like nature. Furthermore, as the thirteenth century draws on, the learned style gradually begins to undergo a change which reaches its culmination in the fourteenth century. The result is a style which, at least in the hands of some authors, becomes very diffuse and pretentious, loaded with emotionally coloured adjectives and adverbs, compound nouns, and verbs in the present participle. The evolution of this style has been described by Ole Widding, in the book Norrøn Fortællekunst and elsewhere, and he has named it "den florissante stil" or the florid style.

The style and diction of the digressions in Fóstbræðra Saga show a decided affinity with the learned style, particularly with its sub-types, the courtly style and the florid style. The very custom of introducing digressions into a narrative is typical of the learned style of the middle ages. "Digressio ... ampliat et decorat materiam," says Geoffrey of Vinsauf. Digressions are found in various other Old Icelandic works of history, although Fóstbræðra

Saga is without parallel among the Sagas of Icelanders. But digressions were always felt to be an offence against the popular saga style. A good instance of this feeling is provided by Alexanders Saga, where the translator is constantly apologizing for and explaining the digressions of his original.

In individual passages from Fóstbræðra Saga already quoted in illustration of other matters, we have seen some of the family features of the learned varieties of style. It is not possible to deal exhaustively with this question here, but I should like to touch upon a few more characteristics of the same kind.

Among the clearest signs of court style in Fóstbræðra Saga are similes involving the lion, and other references to it óarga dýr, or the fearless beast, as it is also called.

> Þorgeirr warded them off with great agility and attacked them with great strength and boldness, intrepid as the fearless beast.
>
> He was as undaunted in all perils as is the fearless beast.
>
> Everyone feared them as cattle the lion, when he comes into the herd.
>
> It was a greater peril to advance under the rain of Þorgeirr's blows than against the lioness when her whelps are taken from her, which is when she is fiercest in her nature.[7]

Lions are, of course, found in literature before the arrival of the romances, but they are, nevertheless, above all chivalric creatures. And in Old Icelandic literature we very rarely find brave men being compared to lions except in the romances and related works. Such comparisons are, on the other hand, quite common for instance in Tristrams Saga, Karlamagnús Saga (especially Agúlandus Páttr B), and Alexanders Saga. The same is true of the literary device of giving such heroes of olden times as Óláfr Pái shields emblazoned with images of lions; this idea seems to have found its way to Iceland only in the company of other chivalric ideas during the thirteenth century.

It is more difficult to establish clearly the connections between Fóstbræðra Saga and works composed in the florid style, among other things because this variety of style has never been precisely defined and to some extent shades into the ordinary learned style. Still, there is no doubt that some of the digressions of the saga exhibit unmistakable features of the florid style. I shall illustrate this with a few examples, taking first a digression in Fóstbræðra Saga and then comparable passages from works in the florid style.

(1) I have already referred to the following poetic description of Þórdís's love for Þormóðr:

> And as a dark squall comes from the sea and
> a light snowfall overlays the ground, and then

the snow melts in a mild breeze and is followed by bright sunshine and pleasant weather, so the poem lifted all umbrage and darkness from Þórdís's mind, and the inner light of her ardent love returned to Þormóðr with gentle warmth.[8]

Parallels:

Klárus Saga (describing Princess Serena's anger when the prince drops the egg on his chest): Here there was a sudden change, as if a fierce snowstorm met gentle sunshine or contrary winds a ship till then running before a fair breeze.

Tveggja Postula Saga Jóns ok Jakobs: The western world flourished nobly in those times on account of the precious jewel who took up his abode in those regions, shedding all around the rays of power and miracles, until the fog of the unrighteousness of his cruel enemies covered the rays so densely that they could not shine.

Jóns Saga Baptista II (by the priest Grímr Hólmsteinsson): The son of God who from on high...rose to illuminate all the world with spiritual brightness, as the sun rises to illuminate the world with physical radiance, for this reason visited the hearts of those who sat in darkness, that is, in the thick fog of black sins, and were confined in

> blindness of heart and the shadow of sins...that the road to heaven might be opened to them.

(2) Þorgeirr's reaction to the news of his father's slaying is thus described in Fóstbræðra Saga:

> He did not redden, for anger did not enter his flesh; neither did he pale, for anger did not enter his breast; neither did he turn blue, for anger did not enter his bones, but instead he altered his mien in no wise at the tidings; for his heart was not like the gizzard of a bird; it was not full of blood so as to tremble with fear, but tempered in every hardihood by the most high maker of things.[9]

Parallels:

> Maríu Saga: He who assents to this will not be tossed by the wind of vainglory, neither will he be wrecked on the reef or skerry of contrary things, nor will he be drowned in the vile vortex of carnal lust, but he will happily reach, safe and sound, the eternal rest of a joyful harbour.
>
> Jóns Saga Postula I: After that the whole populace looked at the Blessed Apostle John for three hours of the day, and never did they see him redden or pale or in any way alter in his appearance, but instead he remained unchangingly gentle and cheerful and pleasant in his appearance.

> And finally, Tómas Saga I (a description of the saint's dead body): His countenance did not pale from such great blows and great wounds, neither did it wither, nor did heavy wrinkles furrow his brow, nor did the eyes in any way shrivel, neither did they settle or sink, nor did any kind of fluid run from his nostrils or mouth, nor was the neck shrunken nor did the shoulders droop, neither was the body itself stiffer nor its skin looser, and in no part or limb of his body was there any kind of sign to be seen that it withered or shrank or pressed in on him.

Fóstbræðra Saga uses a number of other rhetorical figures characteristic of the learned style and the court style, such as, for instance, personification, and even kennings, as in the skaldic poetry.

> Frost and Snow chant deadly spells over the house roofs and show those who look outside their rough games with little fatigue and terror aplenty. [10]

In the heart of Þorkell of Gervidalr "Stinginess and Low-mindedness forgathered".[11]

And Egil the Fool is often "the plaything of Self-deception and Misjudgement - those daughters of Dullness". [12] Such personifications are, of course, common in foreign

learned works, but northern authors and translators were averse to their use at first, and they do not appear with any frequency until about or after the middle of the thirteenth century, as for instance in Konungs Skuggsjá and, even more, in Alexanders Saga, where they are derived from the Latin original.

Kennings are found in two places in the story:

> The daughters of Rán tested the young men and offered them their embraces.
>
> The dog of the alder-tree howled all that night with untiring jaws and gnawed the ground far and wide with fierce fangs of cold.[13]

The "daughters of Rán" are, of course, the waves, but "the dog of the alder-tree" is here used of the storm, although it is more commonly a kenning for fire. In prose, such genuine kennings do not occur at all except in late works in the court style; the oldest known examples are in the Agúlandus Þáttr of Karlamagnús Saga. Let me conclude this part of my discussion with one illustration from this work. It has a particular relevance to the digressions of Fóstbræðra Saga, for in it occur not only kennings but also a bold heart and a lion.

> All the French fought gallantly, so that they often redden their bright weapons in red streams of blood, but most of all was it to be admired

> what prowess Roland showed in this battle, for he had as bold a heart as the lion, the fiercest of animals. He rode from troop to troop, wielding his sword in such wise that the hard battle-wand stoutly cleft many a man's heart-fortress asunder.

The stylistic features so far dealt with are primarily found in passages which can either be described as digressions or else as being on the borderline between digressions and the narrative proper. These passages, of course, constitute only a small fraction of the saga, while the major portion of it bears the stamp of the popular Icelandic saga style. Still, I wanted to examine whether the learned scholar might not be concealed under the innocent-looking surface of popular language. To that end I made a list of certain words and expressions in the saga and checked it against dictionaries and other scholarly works of reference. Among other things I made use of the great card index of the Old Norse dictionary now in preparation in Copenhagen under the editorship of Dr Widding. It turned out that quite a number of these words and expressions are limited to the learned style, or court style, and that some of them are only found in late works. I shall mention some of the words of this kind, which do not occur in the digressions but in the saga itself.

Hráskinn occurs twice. Outside the sage it only occurs in two learned works of the fourteenth century: Stjórn (the youngest part) and Vitæ Patrum. The word means "protection", "shelter", or "refuge" and is used to translate Latin refugium or perfugium. Its etymology is uncertain.

The adjective kurteiss occurs once, as also the noun kurteisi. These French loan-words are found in very old northern works, but they are naturally commonest in the romances.

The following words occur once each:

The verb lykna, "give at the knees", which is found in two places outside the saga - in a late learned work and a romance: Maríu Saga and Vilhjálms Saga Sjóðs.

Samvitandi, a present participle of an active verb, used as a predicate adjective: at vér sém samvitandi þessa illvirkis - "that I am an accessory to (or have connived at) this evil deed". Such a use of the present participle is counted by Nygaard among the characteristics of the learned style. The word itself, moreover, belongs to the learned style, like most compounds with sam-, as Nygaard points out.

The verb sortna, "turn black", which occurs in Völuspá, whatever the age of that poem may be. In prose, all the instances, some twenty in all, are found in learned works or romances. The construction in question - sortnar um

einhvern - is found only here and in the Vitæ Patrum.

Vandlæti, of which something over forty instances are known, and also the verb vandlæta. Practically all the instances outside Fóstbræðra Saga are in religious works. In translated works vandlæti is used to render Latin zelus.

I expect that my listeners are by now beginning to doubt whether Fóstbræðra Saga can be as old as it has been thought to be, that - along with Heiðarvíga Saga - it is the oldest of all Sagas of Icelanders and written about 1200. The saga shows clearly the influence of the romances, both on its subject matter and, especially, on its language and style. It is generally believed that such chivalric elements do not begin to appear in Sagas of Icelanders until close to the middle of the thirteenth century or even a little later. Many considerations concur to support this belief.

(1) The influence of chivalric culture grows rapidly in Norway during the time of Hákon the Old, or from the third decade of the thirteenth century. This appears clearly from Sturla Þórðarson's Hákonar Saga.

(2) One element in King Hákon's efforts to direct the current of European civilization to Norway consisted in having various French romances translated into the Norwegian tongue. In the manuscripts of many romances it is expressly stated that they were translated at his instigation, but it is considered likely that he was also responsible for the

translation of a number of other works. In addition, he was presumably behind the composition of Konungs Skuggsjá, a work permeated with the chivalric spirit.

(3) In Iceland, chivalric influences begin to make themselves felt in earnest from 1240 on, which accords fully with developments in Norway. A new era may be said to begin when Þórðr Kakali Sighvatsson returns from Norway in 1242 with his head full of chivalric ideals, according to what Sturlunga Saga tells us.

(4) In the Sagas of Icelanders which for one reason or another give the impression of being old, no influence from the translated romances is to be seen.

But it seems possible to assign a still more precise date to the elements of the court style and the learned style that we find in Fóstbræðra Saga. They derive chiefly from late works, composed in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Particularly noteworthy are the stylistic features characteristic of that variety of the learned style which I have been calling the florid style.

According to Widding, the florid style first appears in Norwegian manuscripts dating from the second half or the last quarter of the thirteenth century. As one of the oldest of these he lists the principal manuscript of Barlaams Saga og Jósafats, i.e. Perg. fol. No. 6, in the Royal Library in Stockholm. This manuscript is Norwegian, and the translation is also thought to be Norwegian, made about

the middle of the thirteenth century.

One of the works Widding cites as a typical example of the florid style is Jóns Saga Baptista II, by the priest Grímr Hólmsteinsson. This work was composed some time between 1264 and 1298, the latter being the year of the author's death. The florid style had thus certainly begun to be used in Iceland in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. And Jóns Saga Baptista is precisely one of the works with which I had occasion to compare Fóstbræðra Saga a moment ago. But the flowering of the florid style comes in the first half of the fourteenth century. This is the time of Abbot Bergr Sokkason, and in all the numerous works ascribed to him by Peter Hallberg the florid style is prominent. Fóstbræðra Saga cannot, however, be the work of Abbot Bergr, for he was still a child when the saga was written down in Hauksbók just after 1300. The likeliest time of writing for the saga is thus during the last decades of the thirteenth century.

But now many will surely ask: What about Sigurður Nordal's dating of the saga? I shall now try to answer that question very briefly.

In his Über die Ausdrücke (1867) Konrad Maurer dealt with the relationship between Fóstbræðra Saga and the sagas of St Ólaf. To this day no one has tampered with his theories on the subject. Sigurður Nordal took them up in his doctoral dissertation, Om Olaf den helliges Saga, and at the same time assigned Fóstbræðra Saga a place in a system

of relationships between the various sagas of St Ólaf; this system was in turn largely based on the theories of Gustav Storm. As already indicated, Nordal concludes from this evidence that the saga was written about 1200 or in the first years of the thirteenth century.

In the National Archives in Oslo there are some scraps of parchment containing fragments of a very old saga of St Ólaf. Storm took these fragments, tacked on to them two leaves from an old book of the miracles of St Ólaf, which are preserved in the Arnamagnæan Collection (AM 325 4to), and published the whole under the title of Otte Brudstykker af den ældste Saga om Olav den hellige (1893). The leaves in the Arnamagnæan Collection date from the fourteenth century, but from the names of persons and the events referred to Storm deduced that the saga must have been written shortly after the middle of the twelfth century, most likely during the years 1160-1180. According to Sigurður Nordal's theory, this so-called Oldest Saga of St Ólaf and Fóstbræðra Saga were independent of each other, although both had things to tell about Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld. On the basis of the Oldest Saga, but with additions from Fóstbræðra Saga, there was then supposed to have been composed the so-called Middle Saga of St Ólaf; but the difficulty with this saga has always been that not one jot or tittle of it is in existence. From the lost Middle Saga two other sagas of St Ólaf were in turn supposed to be derived: the so-called

Legendary Saga, which is preserved in its entirety, and the Saga of St Ólaf by Styrmir the Learned, of which only fragments have survived. Finally, Snorri's Saga of St Ólaf was thought to be in all probability based on Styrmir's work. The Legendary Saga is exceedingly muddled, and this was blamed on the large number of additions incorporated into the saga from other sources, mainly in the composition of the Middle Saga.

By now, however, this old structure is beginning to totter on its foundations. Gustav Storm believed that the leaves in the Arnamagnæan Collection (fragments 7 and 8 in his edition) had been copied from the Oslo manuscript while it was still intact. In a recent edition of the fragments, Jonna Louis-Jensen demonstrates that Storm's arguments will not hold up at all. She doubts whether fragments 7 and 8 have anything at all to do with the Oldest Saga, and I believe these doubts are reinforced in my forthcoming book on Fóstbræðra Saga. The Arnamagnæan fragments are, as Árni Magnússon states in a note, ex Miraculis Sancti Olavi. The fragments of the Oldest Saga are thus only six in number. On them and on the Legendary Saga we must base our ideas about the Oldest Saga.

Now the fact is that all the significant arguments relating to the age of the Oldest Saga were based on the Arnamagnæan fragments. On their evidence, the Oldest Saga truly deserved its name and was indeed the oldest preserved

saga of a Norwegian king, older than both Theodoricus and Ágrip af Nóregskonungasögum. But with the Arnamagnæan fragments ruled out of consideration, it has become necessary to re-examine the question of the age of the Oldest Saga this time with reference to the Oslo fragments alone. And there seems to be no evidence that the work represented by these fragments is older than from about 1200.

One of the principal differences between the Oldest Saga and the Legendary Saga was supposed to be that the latter contains additions taken from Ágrip; according to the traditional dating, the Oldest Saga could not have included such additions, since Ágrip had to be of a younger date. But if the Oldest Saga was not written until about 1200, there is no reason to think that it differed from the Legendary Saga in this respect. It is true that the few surviving fragments of the Oldest Saga cannot be shown to contain any additions from Ágrip, but neither do the corresponding passages in the Legendary Saga.

Various flaws in the composition of the Legendary Saga have been blamed on interpolations from Ágrip and Fóstbræðra Saga. But it is clear that in the composition of the Oldest Saga there were serious flaws that cannot have been due to interpolations from these works; in many places where comparison is possible we can see that the author or scribe of the Legendary Saga has attempted to mend these flaws, as was indeed demonstrated by Sigurður Nordal in Om Olaf den helliges

Saga. The natural thing to do is therefore to assume that structural flaws in the Legendary Saga are generally part of its inheritance from the Oldest Saga, as long as there is no proof to the contrary.

The stylistic characteristics of the Oldest Saga recur in the Legendary Saga, for instance the persistent tendency to begin sentences with nú. This characteristic is also very noticeable in the passages which Maurer and Nordal believe to have been taken from Fóstbræðra Saga.

The Legendary Saga is most properly regarded as a separate version of the Oldest Saga. In this version the original has been changed especially in three respects:

(1) Its diction has been made more concise: "systematically, from first to last, so that the Legendary Saga appears not to have reproduced unchanged a single passage of any length in the Oldest Saga," as Sigurður Nordal puts it.

(2) An attempt has been made to repair certain serious weaknesses in the composition, as has already been mentioned.

(3) Two Norwegian works have been added to the saga. (The manuscript of the Legendary Saga is Norwegian.) One of these, the so-called Kristni Páttr, dealing principally with St Ólaf's missionary activities, is split up and inserted in two different places. The other, a book of the miracles of St Ólaf, is added at the end. Kristni Páttr is also used

in Snorri's Saga of St Ólaf, in a form largely identical with that found in the Legendary Saga; the form of the book of miracles is the same as in the Norwegian Homily Book. Of course these additions do not exhibit the stylistic features of the Oldest Saga. Nor have they been abridged, which is one indication that they did not form part of the Oldest Saga.

Among Sagas of Kings, the Oldest Saga has its place alongside Oddr Snorrason's Ólafs Saga Tryggvasonar and Morkinskinna. All three of these sagas have served, directly or indirectly, as sources of Fagurskinna and later Heimskringla. The extant versions of Ólafs Saga Tryggvasonar and Morkinskinna differ from the original form of these works, probably no less than the Legendary Saga differs from the Oldest Saga.

Where Fóstbræðra Saga towards the end enters the sphere of the Saga of St Ólaf, the author clearly takes it for granted that the latter is widely known. There are direct literary connections between the Legendary Saga and Fóstbræðra Saga, and by far the likeliest explanation in that the last part of Fóstbræðra Saga is based on some version of the Saga of St Ólaf which in turn was derived from the Oldest Saga. This cannot, however, have been Snorri's Saga of St Ólaf, which exists both as a separate work and as a part of Heimskringla, nor has Snorri made use of Fóstbræðra Saga. Still the position of Heimskringla in relation to the

Legendary Saga is parallel to that of Fóstbræðra Saga. The Legendary Saga is a primitive work from the infancy of saga-writing and gives us an idea of the oral traditions current in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Heimskringla and Fóstbræðra Saga are highly developed works of literature, both of which have improved on the Legendary Saga in comparable ways. Indeed, I have found that Heimskringla and Fóstbræðra Saga have in common many elements not found in the Legendary Saga, which suggests that they both drew on the same version of the Saga of St Ólaf. It is considered certain that Snorri made use of Styrmir's Saga of St Ólaf, which is preserved in fragmentary form, as I have already mentioned. The likeliest thing is, therefore, that the author of Fóstbræðra Saga also drew on Styrmir's work, which is the only "middle saga" of St Ólaf of which we have certain knowledge.

I mentioned earlier that Fóstbræðra Saga has long been the corner-stone for dating the oldest Sagas of Icelanders. When, for instance, scholars have wished to refute Paul Rubow's theories about the origin of these sagas, they have customarily pointed to Fóstbræðra Saga: here at least was one saga that was demonstrably older than the Norwegian translation of Tristrams Saga. If I am right in trying to remove this corner-stone, we must search for another one to replace it. While it still remains to be found, we can toy with the idea that the Sagas of Icelanders as a literary

genre may be rather younger than has been thought. What is certain is that no Sagas of Icelanders are found in a single scrap of manuscript believed to antedate the middle of the thirteenth century. At least it seems to me that without further evidence we can no longer conclude that since Fóstbræðra Saga was written about 1200, then Heiðarvíga Saga must have been written about the same time.

NOTES

1. ...Því at menn vildu sjá hvílíkt væri, svá hugprúðr sem hann var. En menn segja at hjartat væri harla lítit, ok höfðu sumir menn þat fyrir satt at minni sé hugprúðra manna hjörtu en huglaussa, því at menn kalla meira blóð í miklu hjarta en í litlu, en kalla hjartablóði hræzlu fylgja, ok segja menn því datta hjarta manna í brjóstinu at þá hrærir hjartablóðit hjartat.

2. Þeir skáru upp líkam hans ok vildu sjá hjarta hans, ok var þat eigi meira en valhnot ok hart sem sigg, ok ekki blóð í.

3. Inn hæsti höfuðsmiðr hafði skapat ok gefit í brjóst Þorgeiri svá öruggt hjarta ok hart at hann hræddisk ekki.

   Eigi var hjarta hans sem fóarn í fogli; eigi var þat blóðfullt svá at þat skylfi af hræzlu, heldr var þat hert af inum hæsta höfuðsmið í öllum hvatleik.

4. Þykkir honum hon leggja sjaldnar tíu fingr upp sér um háls en verit hafði. Lyptisk þá lítt þat reiði hans í rúmi sínu, en reiði hvers manns er í galli, en líf í hjarta, minni í heila, metnaðr í lungum, hlátr í milti, lostasemi í lifr.

5. Ok af því at allir góðir hlutir eru af Guði gervir, þá er öruggleikr af Guði gerr ok gefinn í brjóst hvötum mönnum, ok þar með sjálfræði at hafa til þess kraptinn er þeir vilja, góðs eða ills... en þat mun hann [Kristr] hverjum gjalda sem til vinnr.

6. Svá er sagt at Þorgeirr væri lítill kvennamaðr. Sagði hann þat vera svívirðing síns krapts at hokra at konum. Sjaldan hló hann.

7. Þorgeirr versk þeim með miklum mjúkleik, en sækir at þeim með miklu afli og öruggleik, óhræddr sem it óarga dýr.

Svá var hann óhræddr í öllum mannraunum sem it óarga dýr.

Váru allir menn hræddir við þá sem fénaðr við león, þá er hann kemr í þeira flokk.

Meiri raun var at ráða at Þorgeiri undir högg hans en at leóni, þá er teknir eru frá henni hvelparnir; er hon þá grimmust í sínu eðli.

8. Ok svá sem myrkt él dregr upp ór hafi ok fellr nökkut föl, ok leiðir af með litlum vindi ok kemr eptir bjart sólskin með blíði veðri, svá dró kvæðit allan órækðar þokka ok myrkva af hug Þórdísar, ok renndi hugarljós hennar heitu ástar aptr til Þormóðar með varmri blíðu.

9. Eigi roðnaði hann, því at eigi rann honum reiði í hörund; eigi bliknaði hann, því at honum lagði eigi heipt í brjóst; eigi blánaði hann, því at honum rann eigi í bein reiði; heldr brá hann sér engan veg við tíðenda sögnina, því at eigi var hjarta hans sem fóarn í fogli; eigi var þat blóðfullt svá at þat skylfi af hræzlu, heldr var þat hert af inum hæsta höfuðsmið í öllum hvatleik.

10. Fjúk ok frost kveða helgaldra of húsþekjur ok sýna þeim er út sjá sinn snarpan leik með lítilli mæði ok mikilli ógn.

11. Í hans hjarta mættusk þær sínka ok lítilmennska.

12. Léku opt at honum dætr heimskunnar, þær dul ok rangvirðing.

13. Reyndu Ránar dætr drengina ok buðu þeim sín faðmlög. Gó elris hundr alla þá nótt óþrotnum kjöptum ok tögg allar jarðir með grimmum kulda tönnum.