

STEFÁN KARLSSON
ICELANDIC LIVES OF THOMAS Á BECKET:
QUESTIONS OF AUTHORSHIP

The following abbreviations are used:

- Bisk. Biskupa sögur, gefnar út af Hinu íslenzka
bókmenntafélagi (Kaupmannahöfn 1858-78).
- CCI Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi (Copenhagen
1930-56).
- DI Diplomatarium Islandicum (Kaupmannahöfn og
Reykjavík 1857-).
- EIM Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile
(Copenhagen 1958-).
- Isl.æv. Islendzk Æventyri ... herausgegeben von Hugo Gering
(Halle a. S., 1882-3).
- MI Manuscripta Islandica (Copenhagen 1954-).
- NRA The Norwegian State Archives, Oslo.
- Ann Íslandske Annaler indtil 1578. Udgivne ved
Dr Gustav Storm (Christiania 1888).
- Th.s. Thomas saga.

I

In his collection of Icelandic tales, Islendzk æventyri, isländische legenden, novellen und märchen (1882) Hugo Gering printed for the first time a tale he called

"Of William the Bastard and his Sons " (No.16).

The oldest manuscript containing this tale was written around the middle of the fourteenth century or a little later, and the tale is one of a group of 36 in Gering's collection that he believed on grounds of common characteristics of style to be composed, translated or retold by the same individual, who must have written at least some of these tales after 1339.

The beginning of this particular tale runs as follows:

Merkiligir tveir kennimenn, Bergr Gunnsteins-son ok Jón hestr, hafa skrifat lífssögu virðuligs herra Thomæ Cantuariensis erkibiskups, hvárr með sínum hætti, hversu hann þreytti fyrir guðs kristni í Englandi allt til þíningar; ok eigi því síðr hefir hvárrgi þeirra túlkat grundvöll sjálfrar sögunnar er stendr í bók þeirri er Speculum historiale heitir, hvaðan leiddi þann úvana ok údæmi er með yfirgirnd var komit uppi í Englandz kristni framarr en í öðrum ríkjum.

In translation:

Two notable clerics, Bergr Gunnsteinsson and Jón hestr, have written lives of the venerable Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, each in his own way, describing how he fought for Christianity in England up to his martyrdom; nevertheless

neither of them has interpreted the basis of the story, which is recorded in the book called *Speculum historiale*, wherefrom had resulted the evil customs and vices that had developed along with excessive greed in the English church more than in any other country.

The oldest manuscripts of this tale are fragmentary and lack the beginning of the tale. Gering uses two manuscripts to supply this: the younger of these, from the early eighteenth century, has the reading Jón Hallzson where Gering prints Jón hestr. The other manuscript used by Gering is from the late fifteenth century, and in this manuscript Gering reads Jón hestr although twenty years earlier Guðbrandur Vigfússon had read the name as Jón holt and printed it thus in a review in Ný félagsrit (1863), p. 148. Understandably Guðbrandur took the appearance of Jón hestr unkindly and pointed out Jón holt to Gering in a letter, saying of Jón hestr that he was "a quite unknown entity, not to be identified under the sun". But Gering kept to his reading and asserted in the volume of notes, 1884, that "das hestr ist jedoch von mir und Verner Dahlerup als factische lesung des codex constatiert" (p. 44). After this scholars had to put up with Jón hestr until 1964 when Agnete Loth did away with him in her introduction to the facsimile edition of *Thomasskinna*, restoring at the same time Jón holt. "It is," she says, "quite certain that

the reading hollt ... is correct" (EIM VI, pp.10-11).

II

Both the venerable clerics mentioned above, Bergr Gunnsteinsson and Jón holt, are known from other sources, but we have little knowledge of them, nor are their literary activities mentioned elsewhere.

In the so-called Prestssaga Guðmundar góða, probably written around 1240, the priest Bergr Gunnsteinsson is mentioned among the travelling companions of the bishop-elect Guðmundr and the chieftain Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson when Guðmundr went to Norway for consecration in 1202 (Bisk. I, p. 481), and another journey of Bergr's is noted in annals for the year 1212 (Ann. IV, V, VIII, IX). Nothing else is known about him with certainty, but it has been conjectured that he was of a notable family, the son of a certain Gunnsteinn Þórisson, who is said to have moved from the north of Iceland to the west, and if this is the case Bergr must have been the uncle of Abbot Lambkár. Þorgilsson, who has been believed to be the author of the Prestssaga Guðmundar góða. According to Peter Foote: "Probably the outside limits for Bergr's life-time are c. 1160-1230" (Saga-Book XV, p. 444).

Jón holt is mentioned in Árna saga biskups, which was probably written in the first years of the fourteenth century. Árni Þorláksson, who was bishop from 1269 to 1298,

fought a hard struggle for the rights of the church against laymen, who had from days of old had power over church farms, and one of the priests who supported the bishop most diligently in this fight was Jón holt. According to the story the farm of Hitardalur was seized from Jón holt by laymen in 1284, when he had lived there for nearly 40 years (Bisk. I, p. 734). If Jón holt was priest there for the whole of this period, which is the most natural interpretation, then he must have been born around 1220. Still, he may have been somewhat younger, for during the winter of 1288-89 Jón holt stays in Norway with King Erik Magnússon the Priest-Hater (Bisk. I, p. 776), and puts his case before the archbishop that spring (Bisk. I, p. 779). In the autumn of 1289 Jón holt is still in Norway (Bisk. I, p. 782), and the date of his return to Iceland is uncertain, but according to annals he died in 1302 (Ann. III, IV, V).

3. Ever since the passage about these two authors (or translators) of the Thomas sagas was printed in Ný félagsrit in 1863, scholars have agreed in attributing to the above-mentioned Bergr Gunnsteinsson the oldest Life of Thomas in Icelandic; but it is only gradually during the century that has passed since then that the nature of this story has become clear.

In 1863 Guðbrandur Vigfússon declared Bergr Gunnsteinsson to be the author of "The Older Thomas saga" (Ný félagsrit, p. 150) as if there were only two sagas in existence, there being no Thomas saga in print at the time.

In 1869 the industrious textual editor C. R. Unger published three versions of Thomas saga, explaining them as follows.

The oldest version, which is only preserved in two fragmentary manuscripts, whose contents do not overlap, was believed by Unger to have been written in Iceland in the early thirteenth century, but he knew nothing of its source or sources (Th.s., 1869, p. iv).

Apart from these fragments Thomas saga exists in two more or less completely preserved versions. Unger showed that the older of these (Thomas saga I) had been translated from the so-called Quadrilogus prior, which is a combination of four Lives of Thomas, those by John of Salisbury, Herbert of Bosham, Alan of Tewkesbury and William of Canterbury, and additional use is made of the Passio of Benedict of Peterborough. Unger thought this to be a Norwegian translation from the latter half of the thirteenth century, probably its final years (Th.s., 1869, pp. i-ii).

The younger of these two versions (Thomas saga II)

Unger believed to be made up of four elements. According to him the main source was a work in Latin by Prior Robert of Cretel, who is frequently quoted in the narrative, but whom Unger failed to identify, and additional use was made of the Quadrilogus translation, Speculum historiale by Vincent of Beauvais, and finally the oldest Icelandic version. Unger believed this youngest Thomas saga to be Icelandic from the early part of the fourteenth century (Th.s., 1869, pp. iii-iv).

After Unger's edition had appeared Guðbrandur Vigfússon could be a trifle more accurate in his pronouncements on the Thomas saga he wanted to attribute to Bergr Gunnsteinsson, and in his Prolegomena to Sturlunga saga (1878) he says that Bergr "compiled a short Life of St. Thomas of Canterbury" (p. cxxxv). Here he must be referring to the version Unger called the oldest and believed to be preserved in two fragments.

In his edition of the youngest Thomas saga in the Rolls Series (1875-83) Eiríkur Magnússon prints the fragments believed by Unger to be from the oldest version and labels them D and E, considering D to be a fragment of two Lives (Vitæ) and E from a third work, Gesta post martyrium. Eiríkur Magnússon thought Bergr Gunnsteinsson had written the Life of Thomas preserved on three leaves of four in D (Th.s. II, 1883, pp. i-lix).

In his edition Eiríkur Magnússon pointed out that Robert of Cretel who is often referred to in the youngest Thomas saga must have been Robert of Cricklade, a twelfth-century prior of the Austin house of St Frideswide's Oxford (Th.s. II, 1883, pp. xcii-xciv). Robert's work on St Thomas is lost, but E. Walberg showed that an Anglo-Norman poem on the Saint, composed by Beneit, a monk of St Albans, derived material from this lost work, and by a comparative study Walberg also discovered that the text of the fragment D was also based on Robert of Cricklade's work, which was probably written in 1173 or 1174, or a few years later (La tradition hagiographique de saint Thomas Becket avant la fin du XIIIe siècle, 1929, pp. 9-33).

In his paper "On the Fragmentary Text concerning St Thomas Becket in Stockh. Perg. fol. nr. 2" in Saga-Book XV (1961) Peter Foote showed that this fragmentary text in Stockh. Perg. fol. nr. 2, which Unger had printed in the second volume of Heilagra manna sögur 1877, was certainly for the most part and probably in its entirety a translation of Robert's work. He also argued that D and E were fragments of a single version, probably from the latter half of the thirteenth century which was based on the translation of Robert Cricklade's work, but with additional material "perhaps from John of Salisbury's Vita and certainly from Benedict of Peterborough's

Miracula". Peter Foote believes that this "D-E recension" was later expanded "by reference to the ... Quadrilogus translation", and he thinks that this second edition of the "D-E recension" was used by the author of the youngest saga along with the Quadrilogus translation itself and other material (Saga-Book XV, p. 445).

Peter Foote thought it probable that the translation of Robert of Cricklade's work was made by Bergr Gunnsteinsson around 1200 (Saga-Book XV, p. 444), and on chronological grounds it seems hardly possible to attribute to Bergr any other known version of Thomas saga, if this is the same Bergr Gunnsteinsson noted in sources from 1202 and 1212, as must be considered highly probable because of the rarity of both the names Bergr and Gunnsteinn. On the other hand it might well be that the author of the 16th tale in Gering's Aventyri, referred to above, actually ascribed to Bergr Gunnsteinsson the expanded version of the Robert of Cricklade translation used by the author of the youngest Thomas saga, but this will be considered later.

3. There has been greater disagreement among scholars about Jón holt's possible contribution to the extant Thomas sagas.

In Ný félagsrit 1863 Guðbrandur Vigfússon suggested that the younger version of Thomas saga could be ascribed to Jón holt, i.e. that version which is best preserved in

the manuscript Thomasskinna (p. 150), and he put this view forward again in his Prolegomena to Sturlunga saga in 1878 (I, p. cxxxv). Finnur Jónsson took a similar view in his literary history of 1901 (II, p. 884) and so did Agnete Loth in her introduction to the facsimile edition of Thomasskinna, but with some reservation (EIM IV, p. 11).

Eiríkur Magnússon had no trouble making one man out of the ghost-figure Jón hestr and Jón holt, but he thought it impossible that he could have been author of the youngest saga. He had two arguments. One was that the youngest saga and Bergr Gunnsteinsson's saga were in fact the same version, as the youngest saga was "a popularised descendant" of Bergr's saga. "No Icelander of old would have classed them as two different sagas," Eiríkur says. The other argument was based on a misunderstanding of the remarks about Bergr's and Jón's saga, which were understood by Eiríkur to mean that "both men wrote a saga of Thomas up to his Passion", i.e. that neither saga contained Gesta post martyrium, and this could certainly not refer to the youngest saga which contains miracles that took place after the death of Thomas. On the other hand Eiríkur Magnússon was "strongly inclined to think" that the translator of the Quadrilogus version was Jón hestr or holt (Th.s. II, 1883, pp. lix-lx). I will come to Eiríkur's view of the nationality of that translation later.

In his paper in Saga-Book XV Peter Foote pointed out that Eiríkur Magnússon misunderstood the remarks he referred to. They were as follows:

Merkiligir tveir kennimenn, Bergr Gunnsteinsson ok Jón holt (or hestr, as EM and PF have it), hafa skrifat lífssögu virðuligs herra Thomæ Cantuariensis erkibiskups, hvárr með sínum hætti, hversu hann þreytti fyrir guðs kristni í Englandi allt til þíningar

and Peter Foote notes correctly that "allt til þíningar (up to his martyrdom) goes with þreytti (fought), not with hafa skrifat lífssögu (have written Lives)". On the other hand Peter Foote says that "it would be easiest chronologically to connect him (i.e. Jón holt) with the D-E recension ... rather than with the Quadrilogus translation or with T (i.e. the youngest saga)" (p. 443, note 95).

I shall now discuss these three theories as to which Thomas saga Jón holt is likeliest to have written.

Eiríkur Magnússon thought that the youngest saga in its present form was not written until after 1299, for it mentions Queen Isabel "er átti Eiríkr konungr Magnússon" (whom King Erik Magnusson had to wife) (Th.s. II, 1883, p. xxxvi). King Erik died in 1299, but as Jón Helgason has pointed out in his introduction to the facsimile edition of Hauksbók (1960), "the preterite is the normal

tense in genealogies" and is not used only of things that have come to an end. When Haukr Erlendsson mentions his wife Steinunn in Landnáma he adds "er Haukr Erlenz sun atti" (whom Haukr Erlendsson had to wife), although both partners in the marriage are still living (MI V, pp. xxi-xxii). Here it is therefore the marriage of Isabel and Erik in 1293 which is the terminus post quem. It is thus possible on account of the dating that Jón holt wrote the youngest saga, although it is unlikely, since he died in 1302, then probably around 80 years old.

But another factor seems to exclude this possibility. In the 16th tale in Gering's Íslendzk æventýri we are told about the sagas by Bergr Gunnsteinsson and Jón holt, that neither of them has

túlkat grundvöll sjálfrar sögunnar er stendr í bók þeirri er Speculum historiale heitir, hvaðan leiddi þann úvana ok údæmi er með yfirgirnd var komit uppi í Englandz kristni framarr en í öðrum ríkjum.

I have understood this rather vaguely worded passage to mean that the author of the 16th tale is criticizing Bergr Gunnsteinsson for not having made clear the state of church administration in England around the time when Thomas became archbishop, namely that the English monarchy was more involved in and had greater influence over church

affairs than was customary in other countries. This "basis of the story" is lacking in the Quadrilogus translation and it is also lacking in Robert of Cricklade's work, as it has been reconstructed on the basis of Icelandic Lives of Thomas and the Anglo-Norman poem of the monk Beneit in Margaret Orme's monograph in Analecta Bollandiana 84 (1966). On the other hand, this "basis of the story" is explained in the 16th tale in Gering's Aventýri and the same is true of the youngest saga of Thomas Becket (Chs. 1-2, 6, 10-11) where there is a short account of the English system of church administration from the time when Pope Gregory brought Christianity to England and of the monarchy from the time when William the Bastard conquered the country.

It follows from this that the criticism of the Lives of Thomas by Bergr Gunnsteinsson and Jón holt in the 16th tale of the Aventýri would be utterly unjustified if it referred to the youngest Thomas saga.

Also it seems clear that the author of the youngest Thomas saga knew and made use of the 16th tale in the Avintýri. There are various similarities in wording between these two texts, but I will let two examples suffice to support my case:

(1) In the 16th tale there is a historical error which is not found in the main source of the tale, Speculum historiale, namely that William Rufus was the eldest son of William the Bastard (ll. 30-31). The same error appears in the youngest saga (Th.s., 1869, p. 296.7, cf. Th.s. I, 1875, p. 4, note 7).

(2) In Speculum historiale there is the following account of this King William: "Tandem exhaustus expensis ad rapinas convertit animum" (Isl. æv. II, p. 39, note 3). This passage is translated and expanded in the 16th tale as follows:

Ok sem þetta kirkjufè var út sóat, þótti kóngi nauðsyn gjöræz til nýrra fèbragða; herjar þó ekki á víkinga ok heiðnar þjóðir, sem aðrir kóngar, helldr á saklausa sveininn Jesum Maríu sun (ll. 158-61)

In the youngest Thomas saga there is this passage:

Enn er fehirðzlan var naliga hreinsut, legz Vilhialmr konungr i hernad at afla fiær i þann stad, ok heriar ægi æ heidinn dom ædr vtlenzka hofdingia, helldr æ hinn saklausa suein drottin Jesum (Th.s., 1869, p. 296. 11-14).

After this the text in the 16th tale is similar to Speculum historiale, but in the youngest Thomas saga it has been shortened, while the following has been inserted:

" ... þuiat hann setr upolligt gjalld æ klaustr ok kirkjur i Englandi." This sentence is found in a different place in the 16th tale, "leggjandi gjalld úpólanligt á alla biskupsstóla, klaustr ok kirkjur í Englandi" (ll. 89-91), and the same is true of a corresponding sentence in Speculum historiale: "Quapropter importabilis pensionis edictum per totam Angliam cucurrit" (Isl. æv. II, p. 37, note 4).

I think, therefore, that there can be no doubt that the youngest Thomas saga is younger than the 16th tale of the Eventyri, and at the same time it becomes impossible that the reference in the 16th tale to the Life of Thomas by Jón holt can be the youngest Thomas saga.

Peter Foote's idea that the D-E version of Thomas saga might be the work of Jón holt can be refuted by the same argument as Eiríkur Magnússon employed to disprove that the youngest Thomas saga could have been ascribed to Jón holt, and it fits this case still better: if the author of the 16th tale had ascribed to Bergr Gunnsteins-son the translation of the Life of Thomas by Robert of Cricklade, he would hardly have ascribed to Jón holt the D-E version, which was the same story slightly expanded, for he says at the same time that Bergr Gunnsteins-son and Jón holt wrote Lives of Thomas "hvárr með sínum hætti" (each in his own way).

My conclusion is that if anything has been preserved of Jón holt's Thomas saga it can only be the Quadrilogus translation.

5. The author of the 16th tale in Gering's Aventyri mentions two Thomas sagas, but uses a third source himself, Speculum historiale. The author of the youngest Thomas saga uses two older Thomas sagas, a translation of Robert of Cricklade with additions, and the Quadrilogus translation, apart from using the Speculum historiale. It would of course be simplest to assume that the two sagas mentioned in the 16th tale are the same as the two sagas used in the youngest Thomas saga. We have already seen that these two texts are related, probably with the youngest Thomas saga derived from the 16th tale, but now it is time for a closer discussion of these two works and their possible authors.

In the introduction to his edition of Thomas saga in 1869 Unger says (in English translation):

There is some probability in Guðbrandur Vigfússon's suggestion that the author of this version of Thomas saga (i.e. the youngest saga) could be Abbot Arngrim of Thingeyrar who died in 1362 and wrote a saga of the Icelandic bishop Gudmund. Bisk. S. II(p. iii note).

Abbot Arngrímur is in all probability identical with

Arngrímur Brandsson, who in his early life was priest in the Skálholt see and a friend of Jón Halldórsson, the Norwegian who was bishop of Skálholt from 1322 to 1339. In 1327 (Ann, p. 397) Bishop Jón sent the priest Arngrímur "sem hann hélt fremstan í sínu biskupsdæmi" (whom he regarded highest in all his see) to Norway to put his affairs before the archbishop (Bisk. I, p. 865, cf. p. 908). Arngrímur stayed there for two winters (Ann, p. 397) and in 1334 he became priest at Oddi (Ann, pp. 207, 349), one of the best livings in the diocese. In 1341 the annals state that Sira Arngrímur joined a monastery (Ann, p. 352) and this was probably the Benedictine one at Þingeyrar. In a document from the north country (1346) "brother Arngrímur" is mentioned accompanying another Norwegian bishop, Ormr Ásláksson of Hólar (DI II, no. 518). During the bishop's absence (1347-1351) Arngrímur was his deputy (officialis, DI III, no. 19), and having returned Ormr ordained Arngrímur abbot of Þingeyrar (Ann, pp. 224, 276, 355, 405). He died in 1361 or 1362 (Ann, pp. 226, 359). Arngrímur wrote his saga of Bishop Guðmundr Arason in 1343 or later (CCII XIX, p. 15), using as his main source a Guðmundar saga which was probably written by his contemporary Bergr Sokkason, abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Munkaþverá. This source is only preserved in young manuscripts (Papp. 4to nr. 4; AM 395 4to) and has not yet been published.

It is undeniably somewhat surprising that Unger quotes Guðbrandur Vigfússon as saying that Abbot Arngrímr could have written the youngest Thomas saga, for both in 1863 and 1878 Guðbrandur had believed Jón holt to be the most probable author of that saga, as I have mentioned above. Unger probably bases his remark on a letter Guðbrandur wrote to him on 21 May 1869 (NRA, Priv. Ark. 59, Unger 1). There Guðbrandur thanks Unger for the first sheet of his edition of Thomas saga, which Unger had sent him while the book was being printed, and says about the youngest Thomas saga: "þar eru mörg góð og skringileg orð, og sagan hefir keim af Arngrími höf. Guðmundar S." (it contains many fine and quaint words and the story has a certain flavour of Arngrímr, the author of Guðmundar saga). Unger's remark should therefore be regarded as a too liberal interpretation of Guðbrandur's words.

In his edition of Thomas saga (II, pp. lxiii-lxix) Eiríkur Magnússon made a thorough comparison of the youngest Thomas saga, and Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga, and he pointed out that Thomas saga had obviously been the model for Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga. He says: "The author's object, though not openly avowed, was evidently to make bishop Gudmund all through æ complete a counterfeit of Thomas of Canterbury as the different framework of the circumstances would allow" (II, p. lxv). He also

points out a clear textual relationship between these two sagas, of such a nature that Arngrím's Guðmundar saga must be a derivative of the youngest Thomas saga, and finally he points out a great number of rare words and phrases common to these sagas.

In spite of this Eiríkur Magnússon did not believe them to have a common author; the explanation must be Arngrím's admiration for the youngest Thomas saga, and he says: "As a natural consequence Arngrim uses the phraseology of T. in the manner of an imitator. To him T. is a Ciceronian classic whom he strives to rival, but whom he fails to reach, because his ideal itself is an imitation of Latin, and thus Arngrim's native idiom asserts itself now and again" (II, p. lxix). Eiríkur Magnússon goes on to say that "He uses words commonly occurring in T. in peculiar senses of his own, entirely foreign to T." I cannot accept this criticism of Eiríkur Magnússon's of Abbot Arngrím's Guðmundar saga and the examples he gives of doubtful usage do not sound convincing to me; I feel that these words from Thomas saga are completely fitting and have an intelligible meaning in Guðmundar saga.

One of the things Eiríkur Magnússon mentions as showing that Thomas saga and the youngest Guðmundar saga cannot be the work of a single author is the fact that the word góðfýsi "devotion" is a "word of exceedingly frequent

occurrence" in Thomas saga, whereas it occurs only twice in Guðmundar saga, in one of the cases probably taken straight from Thomas saga, and on the other hand ölmusa is a very common word in Guðmundar saga in the sense of "alms-man, alms-folk", but the word does not occur in this sense at all in Thomas saga (II, p. lxviii). An alternative explanation can be given for this: góðfýsi is a very frequent word in the Quadrilogus translation. It occurs for example, six times in chapter XI, but only twice in the corresponding text in the youngest Thomas saga, one of these times in the form góðfýst (Th.s., 1869, pp. 33-6, 321-2); and ölmusa in the sense in which it is used in Arngrím's Guðmundar saga is common in the Guðmundar saga version on which he bases his work, though it is not always found in the same positions in these two versions of the saga.

In my opinion Eiríkur Magnússon has by no means succeeded in disproving that the youngest Thomas saga and Arngrím's Guðmundar saga could be written by the same person. On the contrary it seems to me that the close relationship between them both in style and treatment of material can best be explained by assuming a single author.

In this connection I want to quote Margaret Orme's remarks in her article in Analecta Bollandiana 84 (p. 382)

concerning the working methods of the author of the youngest Thomas saga:

The T. editor is relatively self-conscious of his role as narrator and, further, his intervention to express approval or disapproval is more frequent than narrators' comment in the Quadrilogus translation. Since many of the short metaphorical additions he makes to his excerpts from Q are his responsibility, some longer passages showing an interest in more elaborate exegesis may be tentatively attributed to him. Some aspects of St Thomas's life and character are emphasised more than others, probably with the audience, "contemplatives", in mind. Uncompromising devotion to God, manifesting itself in both thought and action, is naturally enough presented as the guiding principle of Thomas's life. In addition, devotion to the Virgin and the virtues of chastity and asceticism are stressed, as is also the value of the spiritual life as opposed to worldly indulgence and secular wisdom.

Having worked on the text of the different versions of Guðmundar saga for a few years I could not find a better or more exact description of Arngrímr's methods in his Guðmundar saga than the words here used by Margaret Orme of the author of the youngest Thomas saga.

It is tempting to bring in a short aside at this point. If it is possible to put forward conclusive arguments to the effect that these two Lives are the work of a single person, then a comparison of Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga with his main source on Guðmundr's life can be of value when we try to judge the probability that individual elements in the youngest Thomas saga are derived from lost parts of Robert of Cricklade's work. Margaret Orme says (p. 384): "Robert may have had an account of Thomas's continued studies at home after his mother's death (T 28-30): the extant Latin lives afford a contrast here, saying that he neglected his studies at this period." This may be compared with what Arngrímr's source has to say after having described the death of Guðmundr's father (Papp. 4to nr. 4, ff. 3v-4r):

Tók Guðmundr þat fyrr en fé í föðurarf at vera barðr til bókar ok náms. Hann var mjök ólátr í fyrstu, ok því var fóstri hans ok frændi mjök við hann harðr ok hirtingasamr. Þótti þat auðsét í hans uppvexti at honum mundi í kyn kippa um ódælleika, því at hann vildi ráða at

sínum hluta við hvern sem hann átti leikunum at skipta. (Earlier than any money Guðmundr received as his paternal inheritance that he was beaten to books and study. At first he was extremely disobedient and on that account his uncle was strict with him and punished him. It seemed obvious in his upbringing that he would inherit his family's unruliness, for he wanted to have his own way, whoever he was playing with.)

This corresponds to the oldest sources on Guðmundur's youth (Bisk. I, p. 416), but in Arngrím's Life all this is turned upside down (Bisk. II, p. 7):

var ... Guðmundr uppfæddr með móðurfrændum sínum, þegar til bækr settr at skilningaraldri, hlýðinn ok auðmjúkr sínum meistara, sem öllum öðrum, er honum vildu gott kenna, því at sú er röksamlig regla ritninganna, at engi rísi fyrr upp til meistaradóms yfir aðra menn, en hann sat áðr hlýðinn lærisveinn fyrir síns meistara fótum. (Guðmundr was brought up with his mother's family, put to studies as soon as he reached the age of understanding, obedient and humble towards his teacher, as well as to all those who wanted to teach him good things,

for it is a reasonable rule of scripture that nobody can raise himself to be a teacher of others unless he has sat as an obedient pupil at the feet of his master.)

In the light of these working methods it seems rather uncertain whether accounts of Thomas's love of study were put on parchment until his youngest Life was composed in Iceland.

I mentioned initially that the 16th tale in Gering's Eventyri collection was one of a group of 36 tales in that collection which Gering ascribed to a single author. This author he called Alpha. Gering made a lengthy analysis of the main characteristics of this author as opposed to three other authors (or translators) whom he believed to have written tales in his collection (Isl. æv. II, pp. xxv-lxiv), and it may be said that the characteristics mentioned by Gering correspond entirely with the youngest Thomas saga and Arngrímur's Guðmundar saga. One of these characteristics is that the author Alpha is much freer in his treatment of material than the other Eventyri authors, wherever it is possible to compare him with his sources. Most of the words characteristic of the Alpha author in contradistinction to other texts in the Eventyri collection also occur in the youngest Thomas saga and Guðmundar saga, and other traits of style that Gering gives examples of can also be found in these two

sagas. Among these may be mentioned alliteration, connective formulae, antitheses, litotes, rhetorical questions and a great number of loan words, and much besides that I have unfortunately not time to exemplify.

Some of the tales Gering ascribed to Alpha are connected with the name of Jón Halldórsson, bishop of Skálholt. Some of these tales are supposed to have been related by him to entertain people, also there is among the Alpha-texts a Jóns þáttr biskups Halldórssonar, an account of the bishop written after his death in 1339. We learned earlier that Arngrímr Brandsson was Jón Halldórsson's dearest friend among the priests, so that for these reasons too no Icelandic author mentioned by name in the early fourteenth century is likelier than he to be the Aventyri-author Alpha.

In his book Stilsignalement och författarskap i norrön sagalitteratur (1968) Peter Hallberg compares the use of a group of words and a few other elements of style and concludes that the three works I have mentioned and ascribed to Arngrímr Brandsson were all the work of a single person, but that this person had written many other works as well and was to be identified as Abbot Bergr Sökkason at Munkaþverá (Bergr is first mentioned in sources from around 1312 and last heard of in 1345), for among the works grouped together in Hallberg's study was the youngest

Nicholas saga, which can with certainty be ascribed to Bergr, and also Michaels saga, which is thought to be his work as well. Hallberg thought that Bergr must have translated Arngrím's Guðmundar saga from Latin, and earlier Björn M. Ólsen had believed that saga to have been originally composed in Latin. This theory of Björn M. Ólsen's is, on the other hand, fairly suspect for a number of reasons and even improbable, although Arngrím's Guðmundar saga is obviously written with an eye to foreign readers.

Hallberg's conclusion is of the greatest importance, for if these three works I have ascribed to Arngrím had not been grouped together by Hallberg's methods it would have been out of the question to regard them as the work of a single person. On the other hand I think that many other factors have to be taken into account, not only factors of style but also the author's treatment of his material, insofar as it is possible to make a comparison with sources, if we are to assume a single author for all the works grouped together by Hallberg in his book and in two later papers in Afmælisrit Jóns Helgasonar (1969) and Einarsbók (1969). I am inclined to think that Peter Hallberg has demonstrated some common characteristics of two or more authors working at the same time, in the first half of the fourteenth century, and at least partially in the same environment, the Benedictine monasteries in

northern Iceland. As an example of differences between works within this group we can mention that two words that occur frequently in Bergr's Nicholas saga, the adverbs stórliga and senniliga, are extremely rare in the youngest Thomas saga and Guðmundar saga, whereas the noun punktr is common in the works I have ascribed to Arngrímr, but does not occur in Nicholas saga (Hallberg 1968, pp. 132-3, 148-9, 156). Also I might mention that alliteration is much more frequent in the "works by Arngrímr" than in Nicholas saga; on the other hand the present participle used in the sources is often changed to a finite verb in the youngest Thomas saga and Arngrímr's Guðmundar saga, whereas frequent use of the present participle is one of the clearest stylistic traits of the Nicholas saga.

My conclusion is that it must be considered probable that Arngrímr Brandsson wrote the 16th tale in Islendzk æventyri and afterwards the youngest Thomas saga.

6. If this conclusion is found credible it becomes obvious that the two Thomas sagas mentioned in the 16th tale are the same two Thomas sagas used in the youngest Thomas saga. Then Arngrímr Brandsson probably ascribed to Bergr Gunnsteinsson the expanded D-E version which he used, i.e. the translation from Robert of Cricklade with

additional material younger than Bergr's Life, and the Quadrilogus translation to Jón holt.

7. As I said before, Unger asserted that the Quadrilogus translation was Norwegian, and this has mostly been taken for granted ever since. Still, there are certain doubts about it in Agnete Loth's introduction to the facsimile edition of Thomasskinna (EIM VI, p.11). Eiríkur Magnússon, the only earlier scholar to ascribe the Quadrilogus translation to Jón holt, attempted to combine these two views by assuming that Jón holt was "really ... a Norwegian, though he was domiciled in Iceland" (Th.s. II, 1883, p. 1x). Sources do not give Jón's patronymic and the use of place-names as surnames was undoubtedly more common in Norway than Iceland. On the other hand it casts some doubt on his Norwegian nationality that in Árna saga biskups the Icelandic chieftain Hrafn Oddsson addresses him as frændi (kinsman; Bisk. I, p. 779). Even if we take this address literally he could have been half Norwegian, but anyhow he seems to have spent all his adult life in Iceland, if what Árna saga tells us is true, that he spent almost 40 years at Hítardalur before 1284.

Unger says of the chief manuscript of the Quadrilogus translation, which was probably written around 1300 or a little later, that it was certainly written in Norway (Th.s., 1869, p. viii), but Eiríkur Magnússon says that

it is "clearly of Icelandic workmanship" (Th.s. II, 1883, p. lx). Eiríkur Magnússon's assertion is wrong, but at the same time Unger's remark is doubtful. The manuscript was clearly written by a Norwegian, but the influence of Icelandic orthography can be traced in a few elements. Unger pointed out that the manuscript must have been in Iceland in later centuries (Th.s., 1869, p. viii) for it contains a great deal of Icelandic marginal scribbling from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but he was mistaken in thinking (as he appears to have done) that the oldest scribbles, which date from the fourteenth century, were Norwegian, for they are also clearly Icelandic.

Unger thought in fact that there were more things in the language of the manuscript than just the orthography which indicated Norwegian origin (Th.s., 1869, p. iii), but they are hardly so important as not to be explained by the fact that the scribe was Norwegian.

The conclusion is then that it may very well be that this oldest manuscript of the Quadriologus translation was written in Iceland by a Norwegian, and there are no objections to ascribing this translation to Jón holt, whether he was wholly Icelandic or of Norwegian origin.

8. In his edition of Thomas saga Eiríkur Magnússon

gathered evidence that accounts of Archbishop Thomas were known in Iceland around 1200, and he also gives a few examples of connections between England and Iceland in the late twelfth century (Th.s., II, 1883, pp. x-xxiv). Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson (1178-93) studied in England a few years before Thomas became archbishop, and his nephew and successor at Skálholt, Bishop Páll Jónsson (1195-1211), also pursued studies there, probably a few years after Robert of Cricklade wrote his Vita et miracula of Thomas. Shortly before the turn of the century the pious Icelandic chieftain Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson went to Canterbury and made St Thomas an offering of walrus ivory, and we know that Hrafn was acquainted with Bergr Gunnsteinson.

Bergr Gunnsteinsson must have made his translation not later than Guðmundr Arason's time as bishop of Hólar (1203-37), when Guðmundr fought a hard struggle to wrest judicial powers in the affairs of churchmen out of the hands of the laity. Bergr may have been at work already in the time of St Þorlákr, who was the first Icelandic bishop to assert the rights of the church to benefices, which were for the most part controlled by laymen. This struggle was brought to an end in the Skálholt see by Bishop Árni Þorláksson (1269-98) with his code of ecclesiastical law, and one of his main supporters in that struggle, Jón holt, priest at Hitardalur, translated

the Quadrilogus into Icelandic during that time. After a hard fight against the laymen Bishop Ormr Ásláksson (1343-55) finally introduced this law in the Hólar see, and his most faithful collaborator, Abbot Arngrímur of Þingeyrar, is the probable author of the youngest Thomas saga.

Thus the accounts of Thomas Becket were a source of inspiration and a weapon for the warriors of the Icelandic church; and they served as models not only for the careers of these Icelandic bishops but also for the works of those who wrote their sagas.

An additional note

In the text quoted from Íslendzk æventyri on pp. 213 and 223 túlkat (interpreted, explained) is Gering's conjecture for his reading túlkt in the oldest manuscript in question, AM 586 4to, where Eiríkur Magnússon (Thomas saga II, p. lviii) read aukit (added). A fresh examination of the manuscript has given the reading tekjt (taken, incorporated), a reading which is found in other manuscripts as well.

This alteration of the previously established text entails a modification of the interpretation given on p. 214, but the meaning of the passage as a whole has not been changed.

The recensions of Thomas saga

