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INTERTEXTURE AND ITS FUNCTION
IN EARLY WRITTEN SAGAS

Intertexture is the expression I have chosen for a well-known stylistic phenomenon which in my opinion is essential to every narrative art. As far as the Icelandic sagas are concerned it has been observed before, but never been discussed in its full scope, and as I believe it to be fundamental to the saga-genre on the whole, I should like to start this discussion. The study of intertexture will serve as a supplement to Th.M. Andersson's book: "The Icelandic Family Saga - an Analytic Reading." Whereas Andersson turns his attention towards the dramatic nature of the saga-genre and uses the technical term of structure with all its structural subelements the term intertexture seems well suited to enable us to come to grips with the epic character of this genre. Most expressions that have been used for the purpose of describing this phenomenon are taken from the technique of weaving, knitting, or plaiting; we speak of the "woof of a plot" (Andersson), of the "threads" and "strands" of a story; the text is "tightly knit" (P. Schach). Equivalent expressions appear in Old Norse in connection with poetry and prose; the word "Páttr", for instance, meaning a small story interwoven in a larger one; or the expressions of weaving and winding, as they are used in Sigrdrífumál, st. 12, which deal with málrúnar (speech-runes):

þær um v i n d r, þær um v e f r,
þær um s e t r allar s a m a n

They are wound, they are woven,
they are all put together.

Other words from the sphere of handicrafts like yrkja and

smíða might be added. ¹⁾ Effects of style brought about by such a use of the narrative art have certain similarities with those produced by the art of weaving or embroidering tapestry (cf. the tapestry of Bayeux!) and also with the Germanic art of ornamented gold and metal work.

For various reasons which will be explained later, this study is based on three sagas which were written down before the development of the 'classical' sagas and may be called archaic in style, two sagas of Icelanders and one Kings' saga.

1. An early saga of Olaf the Saint, represented by the fragments of the "Eldest Saga" (E.S.) ²⁾ and particularly by the so-called Legendary Olafssaga (Leg.s.), ³⁾
2. Heiðarvíga saga (Heið.s.), ⁴⁾
3. Reykdæla saga (Reykd.s.). ⁵⁾

Doubts may be raised as to the dating of Reykd.s.; but D. Hofmann's arguments for a date ca. 1220 seem to be very conclusive and acceptable. ⁶⁾ Heið.s. and Leg.s. are dated about 1200, or even earlier.

Heið.s., like Reykd.s., consists of two parts, the first of which, having unfortunately been destroyed, is only extant in a transcript from memory by Jón Ólafsson. This part is only used when necessary for certain points, while on the whole the study is concentrated on Heið.s. proper. It contains the last stage of a feud between two families, or clans in the southwest of Iceland, in which Snorri goði and Víga-Styrr had been involved on one side and the family of the Gíslungar on the other. In the course of prolonged fights and quarrels, the turn to take

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- 1) cf. G.W. Weber, 'Fact' and 'Fiction' als Maßstäbe literarischer Wertung in der Saga, p.192/93 in: Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, CI. Band, Heft 2, 1972
 - 2) Edition: Otte Brudstykker af Den Ældste Saga om Olav den Hellige, udg. ved Dr. Gustav Storm, Christiania 1893
 - 3) Edition: Olafs Saga hins Helga. Efter pergamenthaandskrift i Uppsala Univ.bibl., Delagardieske samling nr. 8 II. Utg. ved O.A. Johnsen, Kristiania 1922
 - 4) Íslensk Fornrit, bd. III, edited by Sigurður Nordal
 - 5) Íslensk Fornrit, bd. X, edited by Björn Sigfússon
 - 6) cf. D. Hofmann, Reykdæla saga und mündliche Überlieferung, p. 17/18, in: Skandinavistik, Jg. 2, Heft 1, 1972

vengeance had finally fallen on Barði Guðmundsson, who is the hero of *Heið.s.*. He has to avenge his brother Hall who had fallen victim in the feud although innocent rather than not. Barði, in order to achieve a satisfactory vengeance, has to find a victim among the *Gíslungar* in the south, in *Borgarfjörður*; he himself lives in the north, in *Víðidalr*. As he is confronted with a ramified clan he looks for help in his own district before he sets out on his dangerous enterprise.

The narrative technique applied to the whole procedure is what I call the *a d v i c e - a n d - a c t i o n* *s c h e m e*. It is one of the most frequently used devices in the saga literature, its simplest form being that a piece of advice or an order is given by one person to another, either in direct or in oblique oratio, and that the second person acts accordingly. A very simple example from *Leg.s.* may illustrate this:

"Þu skalt fara", sagðe hann, "a fund konongs þess er þer gaf grið i bardaganom, oc XII menn með þer." Oc sva var gort, en siðan foro þeir oc komo a fund konongs. (31, 8-10)

"You shall go", he said, "to meet the King who spared your life in the battle, and twelve men along with you." This was done, and then they went and met the King.

Another, rather developed example in *Leg.s.* is the *Óláfs Þáttr Geirstaðaálfs* where the whole *Þáttr* is covered by the advice-and-action scheme (ch.2-6). But in *Heið.s.* it is the backbone of the largest part in the story and appears here fully developed with all its intricacies. Þórarinn, Barði's fosterfather, steers the whole enterprise by his advice, mostly given in direct speech (ch.14 (*JÓl*), ch.16 and ch.24). The saga-man consciously uses this device; he says that Þórarinn "hefir umbráð um ferð þeira" (282,8), and Þórarinn expects that Barði is "ráðhollr" (280,19),¹⁾ that is: willing to act according to advice.

1) In most dictionaries, the meaning of the word is rendered by "giving good advice". But in *Heið.s.* there are three examples where the meaning is "accepting advice" (286,4 in comparative and 286,8 in superlative).

This consciousness is also shown in certain formulas that connect advice and action, e.g. "sem fóstri hans kenndi honum ok áðr er sagt" (294,6/7). It is quite evident that this technique implies intertexture. Several parts and facts of the story are delivered twofold, or even threefold, for example, the often quoted list of names of Barði's followers in ch.16, which is given mostly in Þórarinn's direct speech, interspersed with information supplied by the narrator. The same persons mentioned here appear again, when Barði actually asks them for help at the Þing (ch.17) and when he collects them for their ride (ch.21). Not only are the names of the persons and of their farms stated, but also their independence, as they are all well-to-do and respectable people. Þórarinn explains this factor circumstantially and says that it is important

at hafa með sér góða drengi,.... þá er sér eigu ein-
kis góðs kosti, ef nokkut hendir til vandræða. (266,
to have good people on one's side,.... people 20-22)
who have a good fortune at their disposal if a
difficult situation should arise.

This points far into the future and is taken up again when the feud is ended and Barði and some of his followers have to leave the country as outlaws.

Er nú til þess at taka, er Þórarinn réð, at menn váru
þeir með Barða, er mikils (váru) verðir ok mikils
áttu kosti. (319,5-7)

It must now be noted what Þórarinn advised, namely that such men were in Barði's party who were of good family and had much property at their disposal.

It is the last time that Þórarinn is mentioned and proved to be right. A full analysis of the advice-and-action scheme in *Heið.s.* which could show how masterfully it is handled is not possible here. The fact that *Njála* imitated it ¹⁾ and that *Grettla* touches upon it with humour and admiration ²⁾ shows that here, at the very beginning of saga literature, a standard was reached that could hardly

1) cf. *Íslenzk Fornrit*, bd.XII, introduction by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, p.LXXII.

2) *Íslenzk Fornrit*, bd.VII, ch. 28 and 31.

be surpassed.

It proved difficult to find categories for the various types of intertexture since this term actually covers a very large field. So my categories must be looked upon as provisional, and my own interests are at present fixed on its stylistic values combined with certain functions. The category called `r e l a t i o n s o f p e r s o n - n e l` has already been entered on and will now be further exemplified by an analysis of Reykd.s. taken from the first part of the saga.

Prominent individuals are Áskell goði Eyvindarson, Vémundr kǫgurr, his nephew, and Steingrímur Örnólfsson, Vémundr's opponent. Vémundr is one of six brothers, sons of Fjórleif, Áskell's sister; they are known as Fjórleifarsynir, because their father died before they had come of age. It is quite obvious that they look upon Áskell as their protector and that Áskell takes responsibility for them, however difficult they make it for him. There is a very complicated system of relations between the persons in the saga, which is difficult to grasp and irritating to the modern mind. Two of the six Fjórleifarsynir are unimportant for the saga; two are "good" boys, Hávarður and Herjólfur; and two are those who always cause trouble, Háls and Vémundr. The sagaman, however, is not really interested in the contrast of "good" and "bad" characters, but in its consequences on the interdependence of people and actions. The "good" boys Hávarður and Herjólfur reflect two aspects of their uncle; the first is going to take over the role of intermediary after his uncle's death; the second is to be an innocent victim in the fights, thus foreshadowing Áskell's lot on a smaller scale, but impressive enough in its own place. The relations between Áskell and his nephew Vémundr dominate the story, and here, the system of interweaving actions, meetings, and judgments is driven to the utmost. Vémundr is inclined to bind himself to inferior characters, because he finds it useful for himself. Yet, he hardly ever does anything without Áskell's knowing; in most cases, however, his meetings

with Áskell take place, because he is already in trouble. Áskell's role is to see conflicts arising from the given situations, to utter exhortations without success, and then to arrange settlements to make the best of the damage done. He warns Vémundr against one of his dubious friends, "at hann myndi af honum nokkut illt hljóta" (160); and the phrase, slightly changed is repeated twice in this connection.¹⁾ The same phrase, now in the negative, appears in the last judgments on Áskell. When he is mortally wounded one of his last wishes is "at hér hlytisk ekki illt af" (201), which is repeated by his son, who says that his father wanted "at engir menn hlyti illt af vígi hans" (201), "disaster results from unhappy constellations" - that would be the gist of this intertextual design. To prevent disaster is the aim of Áskell's life, but he gets entangled himself; the constellations have their own logic, and his death is the result.

His judgment on Vémundr is stressed by another phrasal intertexture, in which the word óspekð (unruliness) is central. It occurs three times:

(Áskell) kvað hann (Vémund) eigi vera meðalóspekðarmann. (181)

ok kvað hann jafnan láta skammt í milli óspekðanna. (194)

Áskell lét illa yfir ok kvað Vémund mundu eigi fyrr af láta óspekðinni en nokkut illt hlytisk af honum. (178)

Áskell expressed his displeasure and said Vémundr would not stop his unruliness before some calamity resulted from it.

All three variations express Áskell's disapproval of Vémundr's behaviour, but through the repetition and perhaps through the use of the substantive instead of an adjective, the quality of unruliness and restlessness seems to be independent of the person; it seems inevitable.

Another detail which occurs repeatedly in their dealings is that both of them do not accept offered gifts from the other. It is easy to understand on Áskell's part; Vémundr offers him part of a whale which he had more or

1) (164): segir nú sem fyrr, at illt mun af honum hljótask.
(165): en mikit illt mun af Hánef hljótask.

less stolen; he offers him the oxen which he had acquired by acts of lawlessness. Áskell's principles do not allow him to accept stolen gifts. He, on the other hand, offers his nephew gifts in order to appease him, once a redress for two slaves, and once a sum of money given to Áskell by Steingrímur. "En hann vill eigi hafa fé Áskels," though he would have accepted it from Steingrímur himself. Vémundr is so headstrong and selfwilled that he does not want any interference in his personal affairs though he accepts Áskell's help as a social support which he may rightly expect from him.

As long as we judge the characters in early sagas from our traditional point-of-view, which actually stems from 19th century philosophy and aesthetics, we get poor results. Andersson speaks of "a lack of subtlety in the characterization (p.270)", and as to Barði's character, he states that "there is not so much a question of a carefully delineated personality"...(p.148) It is not characterization that is intended and attained; the achievement of the early sagas is *i n d i v i d u a t i o n* as I should call it. Intertexture, even in its primitive forms (mere names, family connections, repetitions), more so in its intricate forms (relations between people), produces this effect, which on the part of the audience brings about a process of cognition. There is - in the background - the awareness and the fascination of the real person behind the literary person though nobody in the 13th century ever knew him. This fascination is still there; I sense it in the footnotes, introductions, and *tímatál* of *Íslensk Fornrit*, that excellent work of Icelandic scholarship. But what the sagas made of the real persons is something else, through a literary process of primitive force. Barði Guðmundsson, a figure in so many other sagas ¹⁾ - is he there, because the real Barði was so well-known, or is he a literary success, the result of

 1) Eyrbyggja, Laxdæla, Grettissaga, Vatnsdæla saga, Egils saga, Þorvalds þáttur víðforla. His name is usually referred to as Víga-Barði, though this does not occur in *Heið.s.* *Njála* is also indebted to *Heið.s.* (cf. S. Nordal in his introduction, p. CXXIX).

cognition and recognition in the subsequent development of saga literature? If the latter holds true, what a success for Heið.s., what an achievement of an archaic saga!

Intertexture of a more conspicuous type has been analysed before. There is the vast area of prophecies, dreams, vows, and taunts with their functions for various levels: the semantic level with its cultural, religious, social, and psychological implications, and the more technical level of construction and organisation of the narrative. Examples of every item in this category may be found in the three sagas under debate. A detailed study would show that the early sagas make use of this device as amply and as effectively as the 'classical' sagas.

Another category encompasses *c o n c r e t a* like weapons, valuables, animals, tools, etc. Valuables and weapons are very often connected with the sphere of magic; animals bring the more realistic, often humorous or grotesque tinge. The "steinasórví" in Heið.s. may serve as an example. When Barði and his followers are ready to start, he says good-bye to Kjannok, his old fostermother, and she performs a certain magic ritual to find out whether he will be unharmed in the fights. Then she takes a big necklace (steinasórví mikit) from her neck and fastens it round his neck, where it has its place beside a tygilkníf, a knife on a strap. Then she says:

"Lát vera nú svá búit, sem ek hefi um búit, ok vættir mik, at þá mun hlýða." (282,3-5)

"Leave it as I have arranged it, and I expect that everything will be well."

They spend the first night with a certain Njáll, and Njáll's son, a boy, gives them a whettingstone at their request to whet their swords. As a reward, Barði presents him with the tygilkníf. When he takes it from his neck the text says:

ok þokask þá nokkut steinasórvit, er hon hafði látit á háls honum kerlingin, ok þess verður getit síðar (287, then the necklace which the old woman had put ⁸⁻¹⁰ around his neck moved a bit, and this is going to be mentioned later.

Here are two references, one backwards and one forwards

to the future. The second reference is an intrusion by the author or narrator, which is not considered the best saga-style, but it affords a look into the narrator's workshop. During the battle on the heath, Barði has to endure a hard sword stroke on the neck

ok kom á stein þann í sörvinu, er þokazk hafði, þá er hann tók knífinn ok gaf syni Njáls, ok steiminn brast í sundr, ok dreyrði tveim megin bandsins, en þat beit eigi. (302, 25-28)

The stroke hit the stone-pearl in the necklace that had been moved, when he took off the knife and gave it to Njáll's son, and the stone-pearl burst and there was blood on either side of the necklace, but the sword did not bite.

The protection was secured though there had been some forbidden tampering and consequently some danger. All the references are very circumstantial; the narrator seems to be very fond of his steinasörvi, which probably was a very oldfashioned article, at least in the 13th ct.¹⁾

Another example may be taken from Reykd.s., where in one of its liveliest scenes, a sheep's head plays a decisive role. The opponents Steingrímur and Vémundr meet when the popular entertainment of horse-fighting has attracted a large number of people, among them Áskell and the other Fjórleifarsynir. Vémundr and Háls, the two trouble-makers, go to the men who are doing the cooking, and Vémundr asks them for a white sheep's head (hrúts-höfuð hvítt (181). The men express some curiosity, but as he is a respectable personality they do not object:

Ok nú sviðr hann lítt um höfuðit ok varðveitir síðan sem honum sýndisk. (181)

And now he sings the sheep's head a little and then keeps it for his purposes.

All this is very vivid and circumstantial and arouses the attention of the audience. The next step is that he makes a bargain with Þorgeirr smjörhringr, another little rascal,

at ljósta Steingrím um daginn með sauðarhöfðinu fyrir augum öllum mönnum (182).

to hit Steingrímur during the day with the sheep's head in front of all the people.

1) cf. Snorra Edda, ch.40: Þat var í forneskju kvinna búnaðr, er kallat var steinasörvi, er þær höfðu á hálsi sér.

This is repeated in a more detailed way in direct speech; the sheep's head is to be stuck on a pole and Þorgeirr is supposed to hit Steingrímur on the neck as hard as he can whilst Vémundr is to look at it and appear quite innocent. Here we have another very good example of the advice-and-action scheme in full and lively development with a good portion of saga humour. The deed is done, but Steingrímur, naturally infuriated, kills Þorgeirr on the spot. Neither Steingrímur nor Vémundr agree to a settlement, and Áskell feels very apprehensive about it. It is two years later that Steingrímur is taunted by his foreman,

"at hefna sauðarhöfuðhoggingsins, er þú vart lostinn á leið um sumarit fyrir tveim vetrum af Þorgeiri smjörhring." (184)

"to avenge the stroke with the sheep's head when you were hit by Þorgeirr Buttering at the Þing in the summer two years ago."

The taunt is effective and the feud between the two adversaries goes on. Then the sheep's head is again referred to, just before the bitter end. Áskell, Vémundr, Háls and their followers are on an errand which takes them near Steingrímur's farm. They watch from a distance Steingrímur and some others when they leave a hot spring after a bath. This time it is Háls who cannot refrain from a malevolent caustic remark which is overheard, and meant to be overheard by Steingrímur and his people.

"Við hefir Steingrímur enn leitast at þvá af sér svívirðingina, er þú lézt ljósta hann með sauðarhöfuðinu. Ok þó mun honum þat tregt veita, áðr en hann fái alla af þveggit." (198)

"Once again Steingrímur has tried to wash off himself the dishonour of when you had him hit with the sheep's head. And yet it will be difficult for him to succeed in washing off all the disgrace."

Before the fight starts one day later, it is expressly stated that Steingrímur had heard the remark. In the settlement after Áskell's burial the key-word of this story is mentioned for the last time: hrútshöfuðshoggit. (203)

In Leg.s. an effective example of this category might have been Óláfr's sword, but the pattern has been muddled. Before Óláfr is born, his fosterfather Hrani has a dream vision which causes him to break into a haugr,

a burial mound, take hold of three valuables, a girdle, a ring, and a sword, and then help with Óláfr's birth, using the magic girdle. He gives Óláfr the girdle as tannfé and the ring at his heathen baptism in water. So far, it is a case of intertexture only in the Óláfs Þáttur Geirstaðaálfs. The sword is not mentioned. But there is a short vivid scene in Óláfr's childhood when he finds a sword in his mother's chest and takes possession of it. One would expect that this was the sword from the haugr, but Ásta, his mother, explains to him that it was his deceased father's sword, called Bæsingr. It seems likely that Leg.s. got things muddled; in any case, we have two parallel texts (Flateyjarbók and Ms.61)¹⁾ which say that this sword, Bæsingr, was a gift from Hrani and had belonged to Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr, the dead king in the haugr. But even if this is considered it does not constitute a proper case of intertexture, because the sword is never mentioned again. At least we have no reason to think that Óláfr's sword in his last battle has anything to do with it. This sword is mentioned twice in Leg.s., first when the battle order is arranged:

Olafur konungur hafði sverð í hendi sér í andvarðri fylcingu oc orrostone. En hvarke hafði hann hiálm né bryniu. (83,5-7)

King Olaf - in the first battle-line - had his sword in his hand for the battle, but he had neither helmet nor coat-of-mail.

Secondly, when he has received his fatal wound:

Sva er sact at þa er Olafur konungur fecc sár þat þa kastaði hann sverði sínu í braut oc bað fyrir ovinum sínum. (85, 12/13)

It is told that when King Olaf received that wound he threw his sword away and prayed for his enemies.

The Christian legend interferes with the old pattern; it has to introduce a new world of ideas, connected with new symbols. Such a symbol is contained in the statement that Óláfr had neither helmet nor coat-of-mail.²⁾ In

1) cf. Den Store Saga om Olav den Hellige. Bd.II, utg. av O.A. Johnsen og Jón Helgason, Oslo 1941, p. 740

2) cf. Ágrip, ch.31: Þat var ok snemma orrosto, er Óláfr konungur fell, hann hafði sverp í hendi, en hvárki hafði hann hiálm né brynio, hann fekk sár af húskarli Kálfs á kné; þá hneig hann ok bak fyrir ok skaut niðr sverpino.

Gamal Norsk Homiliebook, we find a Christian interpretation of this fact in St. Olaf's Vita: ¹⁾

Nu bryniaðe hann sic fyrst með hælilagre trv, en með træusti guðs þa lifði hann sér, gyrðr því sverði er guðs orð haitir, snarpæggiaðo ok sar-bæitu. (111,3-5)

Now he took as coat-of-mail the holy faith; he protected himself with trust in God, and he was girt with the sword that is called God's word, keen-edged and very sharp.

What a long way from the heathen sword Bæsingr taken from the heathen burial-place to the purely spiritual interpretation of a sword as God's word. It seems to be one of Leg.s.'s aims to reconcile the two aspects represented in Óláfr's person, the historical Norwegian king and the Christian saint, the worldly and the spiritual aspect. King Óláfr in the first line of the battle of Stiklastaðir carries a real sword, perhaps Bæsingr indeed, but he throws it away and prays for his enemies as soon as he becomes a Christian martyr.

Leg.s. has often been blamed for its flaws and deficiencies, and it has been argued that the author did not succeed in creating a narrative unity of the whole saga from his various materials, written and oral, Christian and popular. It is true that there are flaws; some of the smaller units are very muddled and can often only be understood with the assistance of parallel texts, either from E.S. or from later times. But some of the alleged deficiencies become meaningful when analysed with the means of intertexture, and it will be shown that the author tried, and in my opinion successfully, to create a unity. It is not possible to know whether the E.S. of St. Olaf had an equally ambitious goal; but he had the same task: to connect loose material in order to make a unity. We cannot know how well he succeeded as we have only fragments. And we cannot know whether Styrmir's Life of St. Olaf presented this unity since it has been lost, if not totally without trace. What I

1) cf. Passio et Miracula Beati Olai, p.72: Inductus igitur lorica fidei, et accinctus gladio spiritus, quod est verbum dei. (cf. Ephes.6, 13-17)

mean to say is that I call the author of the Leg.s. the man who was responsible for its present shape, whether he was a Norwegian or an Icelander. The text, of course, is Norwegian, but it may not have been the original.

It is quite obvious that the author made his unity out of narrative units, some of which are rather independent. A number of units which mark decisive steps in Óláfr's life will be called corner-units. It may be noted that neither his exile in Russia nor his last battle and death can be looked upon as such corner-units; the first is only an episode, and the last part is split up into a large number of small, even tiny units. Here, perhaps, it may rightly be stated that the author had not the necessary power of integration; even Snorri in his Olafssaga found only minor improvements.

The first corner-unit is: Hákon jarl's defeat in the Sauðungssund. When Óláfr returned from his viking-tour back to Norway in order to subject the country to his supremacy he found himself confronted with two lawful rulers: Hákon jarl Eiríksson and Sveinn jarl Hákonarson. His encounter with Hákon jarl (ch.19-21) is told in a large scenic unit with several sub-units, two of which include prophecies of the forthcoming event, one describing in detail the cunning way of how Óláfr catches his enemy, and the last and most circumstantial one giving the dialogue between the two young princes with the result that Hákon has to submit and swear oaths that he will leave the country, never to return as long as Óláfr is there; that he will never be engaged in a fight against him, and that he will inform him if, according to his knowledge, people intend to drive him out of the country. These oaths are twice mentioned again and it shows that the incident is very consciously integrated.

Heðan af fecc at nyiu opokce af Knutikononge við Olaf konong. Mintizk nu allra mæingerða við sic, þat fyst at Olaf konongr tok systur sun hans oc pindi til seiða við sic oc tok af hanum rikit allt. (62,29-33)

From now on, renewed hostilities came from King Knútr against King Óláfr. Knútr now remembered all the wrong deeds against himself, first, that King Óláfr took hold of his sister's son (Hákon) and tormented

him to make him swear oaths and took the whole empire from him.

This statement is inserted after a battle between Knútr of Denmark, Óláfr's mightiest enemy, on one side and the combined forces of Norway and Sweden on the other, and it marks a turning-point in the text, preceding one of the corner-units. The second mention occurs when Hákon for a short time becomes governor of Norway:

Sva for síðan at hann gaf Hakone Jarle frænda sinum allð Noreks konongs vælldi, þeim er fyrr hafðe veret handtakinn af Olave kononge oc hann svaret Olave kononge síða. (72,10-13)

Then he (Canute of Denmark) gave the government of Norway to Hákon, his nephew, who had previously been taken prisoner by King Olaf and who had sworn oaths to him.

The second corner-unit is: Sveinn jarl's defeat in the battle of Nesjar. This is a regular sea-battle in which Óláfr has to resist a large fleet led by the most prominent men of the country. Óláfr wins the victory, not without God's help through the accomplishment of a miracle. Einarr þambarskelfir, one of the noblemen in Sveinn's fleet, tries to shoot Óláfr with a bow and arrow. He misses him twice, but gets dangerously near. At the third shot, which would have been fatal, his bow breaks in pieces. Sveinn jarl says:

"Hvat er nu, Einarr, eða brast boge þínn?" (25,31)

"What is the matter, Einarr, did your bow break?"

And Einarr answers:

"Eigi brast boge, hælldr allr Noregr or handi þer!" (25,32)

"Not only did my bow break, but all Norway broke from your hand!"

Snorri used this lively episode in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (ch.108), an incident during the battle of Svolder. The fact is also discussed by Hallvard Lie, and he thinks that this Wanderanekdote had its first and most appropriate place in Leg.s.¹⁾ It is easy to see that the author of Leg.s. meant it to be a parallel to a corner-unit

1) cf. Hallvard Lie, Studier i Heimskringlas Stil, Oslo 1937, p.64 and p.72

towards the end, namely: Erlingr's defeat and death. This is a well-told unit, comparable to the Hákon-unit in so far as it contains as its first part the scene in which Óláfr wins the victory over Erlingr by one of his cunning stratagems and as its second part a scene with dialogue between Óláfr and Erlingr on board the ship. The end is that Áslákr Fitjaskalli kills Erlingr against the King's will, and the King says:

"Hogg allra manna armaztr. Nu hiot þu Noreg or hendi mer!" (66,9)

"Condemned be your stroke! Now you have struck Norway from my hand!"

The parallel of the verbal exchange in the Sveinn-unit and the Erlingr-unit is striking. As the last remark is also transmitted in Ágrip (ch.26): "Nú hefir þú hoggvit Nóreg ór hendi mér," I believe that first the last dialogue was formed, and after this model the dialogue between Einarr and Sveinn. Perhaps it was the author of Leg.s. himself who invented it. In which case he was the creative force and Snorri only an improver.

The whole bulk of material in Leg.s. has been arranged in six or seven main parts. The last part contains the miracles which happened after his death, whereas the first part tells the incidents of Óláfr's birth and youth, including prenatal incidents. The very first unit tells the story of how his father Haraldr grenski met the Swedish queen Sigríðr in stórráða and refused her offer to sleep with him. This refusal may be looked upon as the cause of his death in ch.7; he takes up their former talk - a case of intertexture between ch.1 and ch.7 - and asks her to become his wife, because he has changed his mind. This time, s h e refuses, giving as her reason,

"at nu er Asta orðen móðer þess Olafs er ec villda giærna hælldr mer at sone att hava." (5,14-15)

"that now Asta (Óláfr's mother, repudiated by her husband) has become the mother of that Óláfr whom I should have preferred to have as a son."

Her own son is Óláfr svenski, who in the course of events becomes Óláfr Haraldsson's antagonist. From a

political point-of-view it is quite clear that Óláfr Haraldsson was obliged to get things straight with Sweden in order to be able to resist Knútr of Denmark's hostilities. But the author, who may have been aware of this fact, lays much stress on personal relations; he does not forget that Óláfr Haraldsson had to avenge his father's death. During his viking-period, he invades Sweden and gains a victory over Óláfr svenski through the Agnafit-miracle. The author explains the invasion in the following words:

þui at Olafr var eigi i sacleysi við Syia þo at hann gerðe miok hart at þeim firif sacar Sigríðar ennar stórráða. En Olafr en svænsce var sunr hennar er þa reð firir Sviðþioðo er þetta var. (15,17-20)

... for Óláfr had a cause against the Swedes when he attacked them very hard, because of Sigríðr in stórráða. And Óláfr svenski was her son, who ruled over Sweden when this happened.

Much later, King Óláfr takes a decisive step to come to terms with Sweden; he sends Hjalti Skeggjason, an Icelander, to Óláfr svenski on a peace mission. In this rather independent unit, the so-called Friðgerða Þáttur, which is rich in talks and arguments, Hjalti does not leave out the first wrong done against Haraldr grenski.

"Nu litið a, herra, hvat i fystu var af gort við hann i aftake faður hans." (38,24-26)

"Consider now, my lord, that he (Óláfr Haraldsson) was wronged first when his father was killed."

Óláfr svenski admits that this is true and finally consents to a reconciliation.

I think that the author of Leg.s. attributes significance to the fact that both kings had the name of Óláfr; he uses the expression 'nafni' (namesake) several times and enjoys the amusing fact that Óláfr svenski wants his enemy to be called "hinn digri maðr". Already in Ari's Íslendingabók, the name Óláfr digri is used for Óláfr Haraldsson, and also in Ágrip. The identity of the names may also have caused him to insert the Óláfs þáttur Geirstaðaálfs in the beginning of the saga. This ancestor is also called digrbeinn and Óláfr digri, and though the author avoids giving a hint that Óláfr Haraldsson is

Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr reborn, the very fact that he inserts this unit suggests this idea. ¹⁾ His saga is saturated with Christian thoughts and ideals, and yet he does not abstain from heathen conceptions altogether; he seems to follow a line in Óláfr's career: from heathendom to Christianity. Thus he inserts two prophecies just before Óláfr sails home to become king of Norway. The first is spoken by a heathen woman, a spákona, and though she feels that he is endowed with a strange and superhuman power, she knows a curious detail about the time of his death:

"Þat hygg ec at skamt æigi hann þa olivat er hanum værðr mismæle a munni." (18,13/15)

"I imagine that his life will soon be ended, when he makes a slip of the tongue."

Years later, the situation arises, when Óláfr sees the approaching army of peasants at Stiklastaðir:

"Illt bær oc arkt", sagðe hann. En hann villdi sva mæla at illt lið oc arkt være þat eþ þa for i mote hanum. (81,9-11)

"A bad berry, and an evil one," he said. But he wanted to say that it was a bad and evil army which came against him.

Rognvaldr Brúsason overhears it and mentions that this was a slip of the tongue. Now, Óláfr predicts similar circumstances for Rognvaldr's death; the author immediately inserts this episode, which can also be found in Orkneyinga saga (ch.29). These two connected anecdotes - an example of intertexture between different sagas - may have been part of a popular tradition of Óláfr's death. The second prophecy, which follows in the next chapter (18), certainly originates from Christian tradition; there is a comparable story in Gregory's Dialogues.²⁾

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- 1) Four parallel texts expressly state this heathen belief (cf. Johnsen and Helgason, bd.II, p.772/773), and p.735: þa trudu þeir þui at ande Olafs digrbeins munde nu borenn i likam þessa Olafs.
 - 2) cf. Benedictus saga, ch.16 and 17 (in: Heilagra Manna Sögur, bd.I, ed. by Unger, Christiania 1877) and two versions where the story is attributed to Óláfr Tryggvason: Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (in Heimskringla ch.31, and in Ágrip, ch.XIX. Cf. also Lars Lönnroth, Studier i Olaf Tryggvasons saga. Samlaren, 84, 1963 p. 60/61

The author of Leg.s. adapts this story very well; to my mind, it is the best adaptation of all variants, including Snorri. Óláfr meets a hermit in England and wants to know whether he will be rightly king of Norway. The hermit confirms it and continues:

"Oc æigi at æins mantu stundlegr konongr vera.
Hælldr mantu æiliflega konongr vera." (19,8-10)

"You will not only be temporal king, but rather you will be eternal king."

Óláfr as rex temporalis and rex perpetuus, worldly king and eternal king in one person - that is in short words the principle which constitutes the unity of the whole saga. The prophecy at this place in the text links the beginning of Óláfr's earthly kingship with its transcendence in the end.

It is not possible to give a full analysis of Leg.s.'s practice with regard to intertexture in this paper. I cannot even complete the survey on its composition. Two further techniques may be indicated. The first is the use of leitmotifs which accompany large parts of the saga, for instance that Óláfr was born to be the legal king of Norway, that he became sole ruler of the country (æinvalds konongr ivir allum Norege), that the difficulties with Knútr begin (þa gerðesk opokce mikill við Olaf konong af Knuti kononge), that the lendersmen commit treason and drive Óláfr out of the country (raða landet undan honum). These are only the most obvious leitmotifs, frequently mere repetitions, which sound primitive to a modern reader. The second technique looks equally primitive, namely the transition from one main part to the next. There are no surprises, no elegant solutions. The transitions are performed in halting steps. For example, it is stated four times that Óláfr concludes his viking-period to return home, though with the use of various means. That he had to leave his ships and then his country, that he returned because Norway was without a ruler, that he died at Stiklastaðir, that miracles happened through his holy body and blood, - each step is mentioned more than once. The repetitions have been

explained as a clumsy and unskilful use of various sources. I think they ought to be interpreted as the author's serious attempt to master his task, i.e. to organize his disparate material and to elaborate the import of his hero's life.

One aspect of intertexture, which I consider important, has only been touched on so far, and a few words may be added. That is the aspect of *c r o s s - r e f e r e n c e s* in the text. It may give us information about the question of how far the author or narrator was conscious of the technique of intertexture. The cross-references show that there was a certain consciousness. Sometimes, they are very clumsy and direct, and then they show that the person responsible for the text was not at his best. There is an instructive example in *Heið.s.*; Barði has ordered provisions to be prepared for the ride; this is done by Þórðr melrakki all in a hurry night and day, and more or less in secrecy. All this is well told. The fresh meat is prepared somewhere else and fetched in the morning of the ride; the text explains:

ok jarteindu þat þau in nýju slátrin, er Barði lét þangat fara. (281,1/2)

That was the meaning of the fresh meat which Barði had sent there.

This is not a very elegant solution, especially since the word 'jarteina' is exceptional in such a context. It is well-known that *Reykd.s.* excels in cross-references,¹⁾ and there is one that is particularly clumsy, but most interesting for our purposes:

Þat er nú at segja, at skip kom í Eyjafjörð eitthvert sinn við Knarrareyri, sem opt kann við at bera, þó at helzt sé hér nokkut frá sagt at sinni. (172)

It must now be told that once a ship came into the Eyjafjörðr near Knarrareyrr, as it may often happen, though in this case something particular is to be told.

1) cf. P. Schach, Some Forms of Writer Intrusion in the *Íslendingasögur*, in: *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol.42, No.2, May, 1970, pp. 128-156 and Th. M. Andersson, The Textual Evidence for an Oral Family Saga, in: *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi*, Bd.81, pp. 5-23.

This ship, of course, is important for the action in the following story; but a reference of this kind would be out of place in a highly developed saga-style. It may almost be called an interpretation of its technique: if a saga-teller mentions a ship he does not do it just because it is an appliance of his every-day life and as such gives a certain background to his story; in that case, he would have to mention very many articles - no, he does it because this special ship will become essential for the action of his saga. If he and his audience are acquainted with this practice of intertexture, which requires a good deal of intelligence on either part, he must not explain, but apply it. In a good saga with its dense style, there is hardly any fact, be it the weather, a character-trait, a custom, an article, or a remark by one of the persons, that is not essential for the action of the story. Perhaps a good story-teller had some means to indicate to his audience that full attention would be necessary for full appreciation. Perhaps he used to raise or lower his voice, lift a finger, wave his hand, or have a twinkle in his eyes - some sort of extra-verbal communication, each according to his own style of story-telling. He would thus secure full understanding between himself and a good attentive audience. A modern reader who is not too well acquainted with this technique, and even one who is, tends to overlook facts often given so unobtrusively and fails to understand this particular device of saga-art.

Reflections of this kind would involve the theory that one of the basic principles of saga-art has already been developed in oral tradition. Everybody who is well acquainted with the 'classical' sagas knows many examples of skilfully used intertexture. The reason why I chose early written sagas was to show its fully developed existence at this stage of saga literature. Heið.s. yields the very best examples though I have not been able to give a full analysis. ¹⁾ On the other hand, it has been

1) cf. Th.M. Andersson, p.152: It is not only the more obvious devices of portent, prediction, dream, and taunt that quicken the pulse of the story, but all the indifferent details about legal maneuvering, alliances, logistics, espionage, and strategy are arranged so as to tantalize the reader's curiosity and make it taut

argued that auctorial cross-references show the 'bookish' character of these early sagas, and the argument has to be dealt with. I even have to supply an interesting result of a comparison between E.S. and Leg.s. in this respect. I counted seven examples of cross-references in the six fragments of E.S.¹⁾; two of them are of the most auctorial type, namely: "sem ec gat áðr". It was possible to identify the corresponding passages in Leg.s.: all seven references have been left out. Then I counted the formulas in E.S. which refer to reports from oral or written sources of the type: "svá er frá sagt," because they belong to a similar category. I found eleven examples; two of them included ek or vér. Again it was possible to identify the passages in Leg.s.; it has preserved only two of them. All four cases of ek (vér) have been skipped. That does not mean that Leg.s. completely lacks such references; it has the auctorial ek twice, apart from the miracles, and there are many cross-references of the type: "sem fyrr var sagt", and very many examples of the type: "svá er sagt" or "nú er at segja" and the like. Yet the comparison shows a definite tendency to get rid of such references. P.Schach wants to use this phenomenon to support the argument that the essential development of saga-style took place during the 13th century. I do not agree with him. My theory is: The essentials of saga-style were developed in oral form. We can find these essentials in early written sagas, not in a rudimentary, but in an exemplary form - in the narrative units. The defects and flaws of these early sagas may be traced to various conditions: a) defects of memory on the part of the story-teller who was one of the sources of the writing author, b) restraints of the narrator through lack of his proper audience when dictating, c) lack of efficiency on the part of the writing author

 1) It has been proved by Jonna Louis-Jensen that the two last fragments in Storm's Otte brudstykker do not belong to E.S.; cf.: "Syvende og ottende brudstykke". Fragmentet AM 325 IV α 4to. in: Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana, Vol.XXX (Opuscula IV) Hafniæ 1970, pp.31-60

in building up a unity out of preformed material. Many defects may be ascribed to the writing author: he was clumsy, he felt the need to explain things, he was primitive and verbally unskilful when combining events; it was he who had to learn a new craft, not the storyteller. This theory would explain the juxtaposition of clumsiness and primitiveness and extremely well told narrative units in all three sagas. This conception does not exclude the fact that improvements took place, refinements of character-drawing, modes of variety, and above all the art of constructing stories on a large scale, of finding unifying principles. Perhaps it was the life of St. Olaf that first supplied a unifying principle to a mass of oral material, mostly well told in more or less independent units.

Of course, this is only a sketch of a theory, and it is only partly backed up by the study of intexture, which in my survey is perhaps too comprehensive a phenomenon. It is partly the device of the narrator, and partly of the writing author. We still lack definite proof, and may only hope that further studies will bring us nearer to a decision. So far, if I may use and imitate one of Reykd.s.'s favourite formulas, I should like to say:

Sumir segja at sögurnar hafi fyrst gengið
í munnmælum, en sumir segja í ritum, ok vitum
vér eigi hvárt satt er.

Die Wahrheit, so will mir scheinen wird irgendwo
in der Mitte liegen.

Berlin, 5. Juni 1973