

TO MAKE A GOOD FORNALDARSAGA : A RECIPE (about GAUTREKS SAGA)

One should never forget that a good saga, whichever category it belongs to, has first of all been written til gamans. This is certainly a condition sine qua non to their composition and we should obviously avoid many misunderstandings if, behind the text we are reading nowadays, we would make the effort of imagining the audience actually listening to the sagnamaðr and its eventual reactions; this is particularly true of the fornaldarsögur where, clearly, the authors, frequently, are not so much interested with likelihood, truth or history

Now, my opinion has always been that the saga is a literary, written genre, that the authors are always clearly conscious of the effect to be produced, of the goal to reach. And I should like to show that these texts have been composed in order to produce such an effect. I shall take, for instance, Gautreks Saga : the way it has been composed and written could allow me, I think, to propose a kind of recipe of the way it could be possible to create such a text, especially because this one is a rather short one, where, accordingly, the devices may be more visible (1).

Let us recall the three components which, according to Hermann Pálsson (2) make a good fornaldarsaga : "at one level is the ancient legendary material, in which nature and natural processes are constantly being distorted", "at another level there is the viking material with certain codes of conduct /.../. It reflects an age of energetic acquisitiveness. And at a third level we have material from the period of literary Romance, where emphasis is laid on courtly manners and self-control." Legends of all kinds, viking adventures and chivalrous morals : we have here the three components which have to be found in a fornaldarsaga, and it will not be difficult to find them in our text.

For a trained reader of the Íslendingasögur, a fornaldar-saga shows immediately a considerable difference, even though one does not consider the story itself it wants to tell us. A good Íslendingasaga is dictated, so to speak, by an internal necessity. It makes a whole, either it is centred on a man, a place, a course of events or a precise view of life, such as, respectively, Egla, Eyrbyggja, Njála or Laxdoela. When the author puts a full stop to the last sentence, something has been achieved and completed which, independantly of the story proper, represents the term of a necessary evolution. Let us say that there is nothing more to tell, a principle of unity has been deeply respected : a classical masterwork such as Hrafnkatla shows clearly that such is actually the fact.

This kind of conclusion is reached through an attentive study of the composition of these texts : to speak in terms of the modern analysis of texts, a great saga is over, not only when the external principle (the pretext!) : to tell the history of a man, has been fulfilled, but still when the text itself has come to an end, shows no more necessity of new developments, has exhausted all the threads it was initially supposed to wind out. Thus, when a sagnamaðr says : ok hér lýkr N's saga, it obviously means that the story is over, but moreover, that his text has reached all the aims it pointed to. To give a well-known instance, Njála, in spite of its title, is not finished when Njáll dies, but, indeed, with the final reconciliation between Flosi and Kári, that is to say the reconciliation between a heathen way of life and a Christian one : a kind of synthesis of inn forni síðr and inn nýi síðr. I do not want to expatiate here on Njála, but it would be easy to demonstrate that everything, from the very beginning of the saga to its end, is selected and organized in order to make this morality arise like by itself from the text. A good saga has, together, something to tell and something to demonstrate, it wants to entertain and also to give a lesson, and every detail must be chosen in order to satisfy both aims, very intimately mixed and associated so as to become absolutely inseparable one from the other.

Now, this is obviously not the character of Gautreks Saga. For a start, its very title is puzzling : Gautreks saga eða Gjafa-Refs saga ok Dalafífla. We see at once that this unity, whether internal or external, will probably not be respected, since the title itself indicates that the main character will change. But let us look at the composition of this saga according to very simple and evident criteria, the object of this little investigation being : why has the author composed this text? What did he intend us to take interest into? Which kind of lesson, or morality, did he want to illustrate?

	Where?	When	Who?	What?	Themes BLOCK LETTERS
1	N.Vestra-Gautland a small farm	not told day after	King Ganti a slave Skafnörtungr's family Snotra	goes hunting, takes his clothes off history of the dog the meal Aetternisstapi's theme has conceived Gautrekr	HOSPITALITY- LUVIN COMICAL NAMES PAGANISM
2	same anticipation:N, S vifa	day after 9 months after 7 years after several years	Skafn. etc. Snotra + Gautrekr Gautrekr King Ganti	Skafnörtungr's suicide Gautrekr's birth suicides of the rest of the family Gyllingr's suicide Gautrekr inherits Ganti, becomes king	RIDICULOUS SUPERSTITIONS FORNAR SÖGUR
3	Húrdaland Agdir Alfheimr Hálogaland	not told retrospect 20 years?	Minnjófr & sons Haraldr, Víkarr Starkaðr I, Stórvirkr Alfhildr, Alfr Þórr, Stórvirkr Freki, Unni, Starkaðr II Freki's sons	legend old Starkaðr, rape of Alfhildr Þórr kills Starkaðr. Stórvirkr's birth. Víkingr mikill, landvarna maðr Haralds rape of Unni. Starkaðr II's birth kill Stórvirkr and Unni, drown	VIKING FEATS

Régis Boyer

4	Hördaland Agdir	3+9 years	Herbjófr, Haraldr, Hrosshárs-Grani, Víkarr, Starkadr II Sísarr	Herbjófr takes Víkarr away Starkadr captured beard 12 years old St. kills Herbjófr Víkarr king Agdir Battle. St. kills Sísarr VISUR LEGENDS
5	Uplönd, Þe- lanörk	long time	Víkarr, Geirþjófr, Haraldr Neri, Fridþjófr, Óláfr (Gautrekr)	Battle. Víkarr defeats Geirþjófr Víkarr's marriage. His sons. Fridþjófr's defeat and exile. Haraldr and Neri powerful Víkarr, Gautrekr's friend fornar Boekr AVARICE
6	Rennisey	not told	Rennir, Refr, Víkarr	Refr kolbitr. The extraordinary ox. Rennir is Víkarr's friend
7	Sweden	not told	Víkarr, Starkadr Birfkr, Alrekr	Ping of the gods MYTHOLOGY Starkadr hangs Víkarr til Óðins War in Sweden VIKARSBALDR Birfkr kills BERSEKIR Alrekr HIRÓLF'S SAGA G.
8	not told	same time	Gautrekr, Alf-hildir Hrosskell, Alf-hildir	two sagas simultaneously : 1/ Gautrekr marries Alfhildir. One daughter : Helga 2/ Death Alfhildir. Gautrekr's sorrow
9	Uplönd GE DK	back to 7 back to 6 long time "-"	Neri Rennir, Refr Neri Gautrekr Ella Hrólfkr Kraki	arfaskipti Víkars AVARICE Refr chase away. Takes the ox Refr gives the ox to Neri exchange : whetting-stone for ring " : ring for boat and dogs
10	DK	not told	Refr, Hrólfkr	exchange : dogs for ship+weapons
11	not told	not told	Neri, Refr Óláfr, Ref-nefr Helga	WITCHCRAFT exchange : weapons for ships CHIVALRY Refr marries Helga. GREFUMADR dies

Régin BOYER

4

Such a summary study imposes a constatation : there is, in Gautreks Saga, no proper "plan", no strict composition. It is impossible to find out any possible link - internal link, that is, due to the story itself and not to the author's intention - in this text.

The scene takes place in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, with allusions to Russia (Sísarr ór Kaemgardi), without any cohesion. We are jumping from one scenery to the other, eventually because of the characters in action, but loosely, since these ones step forward clearly according to the fantasy of the sagnamadr, not because of a possible internal necessity. Some chapters take us into an amazing number of different places (thus II or IX), some other do not even precise where the action is to take place (VIII). And most significant is the end of chapter II where the author, apparently well aware of this aspect of his work, feels the need of precisising : "And now this saga will shift north to Norway for a while and tell you something about the provincial kings who were ruling there at the time and also about their progeny. After this, our story will come back to Gautland to king Gautrekr and his sons." So, on this special ground, the action progresses by fits and starts, going back in old places, jumping suddenly forwards, not even hesitating to introduce (chapter III) such legendary places as Álfheimr where Álfhildr is supposed to come from. If you compare with, for instance, Eyrbyggja Saga where, obviously, the place itself plays an important part in the plot, so important that it could easily be taken for the main character of the saga, the difference is considerable.

The same remarks, still more striking, apply to the treatment of temporality. The most simple is to say that time hardly exists, is hardly taken into account in this story. There reigns a total off-handedness. Chapter I is correctly limited to two or three days. But chapter II may take some twenty years with a kind of incredible and progressive dilution of time which is quite characteristic of the genre : we are taken to, first, the "day after", than, implicit-

ly, (since Gautrekr, conceived the "day before" the beginning of this chapter will be born in chapter II) nine months after, then, explicitly, seven years after, when he kills Gyllingr's ox (which will provoke the last one's suicide) and finally, let us say ten years after, when Gautrekr succeeds his father, king Gauti. A lot of devices, which are used indeed in good sagas, but in that case with due motives, are freely resorted to, such as retrospectives (in chapter III for instance), consciously, or so to speak unawares (so in chapter IX), simultaneities (ná ferr tveim fram sögumum, chapter VIII), anticipations (VIII as regards IX, Gautrekr's sorrow and his sitting on Álfhildr's burial mound) or, more frequently, a total disregard of the temporal element: most of the episodes are so loosely connected to the plot that one feels they could be placed anywhere else, without particular damage for the whole: such is the fact of the well-known vandreanekdot of the gaefnumadr Refr (which, of course, takes us back to Audunn vestfirzki) that is but loosely connected to Gautrekr and could as well have been inserted in another part of the saga. On the whole, temporality is highly distorted, the author does not fear unlikelihood and, clearly, misuses the natural plasticity of this element.

If we now examine the characters in the plot, we are now stricken by their great number, for such a very short text (36 pages in Valdimar Ásmundarson's edition); some fifty persons, the gods not included! First of all, it is very hard, in spite of the title, to find out which one is the main character of the text. True to say, Gautrekr is more or less present from beginning to end, but the way he comes back, exactly when the author needs his presence, is typical. Let us say that king Gauti takes the lead in the first two chapters, king Vikarr in the five next ones (III to VII) and Refr in the last three ones. Except for Refr, where is Gautrekr, and where, the Dalafifi who are present in the first two chapters only? Some of these characters are visibly created on purpose. Not to speak of Skafnörtungr and his strange family, one may wonder why the author wants the existence of two Starkadr, for the rest much akin one to the other, whereas his informants, Saxo or other, never speak of but one of them! The unlikelihood - conscious, I think - of a good deal of these figures is

visible to some of the artificial names which have been given to them : the best instance being Skafnörtungr and his children. Finally, it is clear that he treats them exactly like puppets : they do not live by themselves, do not have, properly speaking, any personality, are here to obey the intentions of this perfect deus ex machina who composed the text. Obviously, we can find here no Skarphédinn Njálsson, no Víga-Glaur, no Ingimundr Gamli!

But the most puzzling is certainly the plot, the action itself. It is simply impossible to discover any firm line followed by the author. This saga is a mere conglomerate of anecdotes of all kinds, roughly connected by all sorts of links, if any, the author being very frequently obliged to resort to worn out devices such as Nú er frá því at segja, not to speak of the well-known beginning, contrary to all the laws of good saga-writing : Hér hefjum vér eina kátlega frásögu af einum konungi Þeim er Gauti hét. Digressions are frequent and the composition of certain chapters is so badly done that the author has to come back several times to connect various facts which have been presented in a wrong order : such is the case of chapter III where there are five different motives which have to be connected if one wants to make sense with the whole episode. Certain characters who play an important part at one moment disappear suddenly never to come back : this is the case of the second Starkaðr. On the contrary, the Refr episode which really starts on chapter IX, that is to say close to the end of the saga, had to be announced in a somewhat artificial way in chapter VI - the link being Víkarr who, for the circumstance, has been declared a good friend of Þennir, Refr's father. On the whole, there are but few narrative "themes" to support the continuity of the action. And, Gautrekr apart, (we must suppose that he is constantly present in the background, although this is not obvious), which kind of relations may be established between part I (the first two chapters with Skafnörtungr and his family in the foreground, a ridiculous episode on the whole), part II (chapters III to VII where Starkaðr II takes the lead, an epic and heroic episode) and part III (four last chapters, devoted to Gjafa-Refr, an ethical and more or less humdrum episode) ? One more, there is no necessity to proceed from one chapter to the next one.

To sum up : the coherence of this text does not depend on any of the ordinary elements which are supposed to play a part in the composition of a narrative piece. We could conclude that Gautreks Saga is a mere collection of details, deprived of art and cohesion.

But not deprived of interest! And it is time to come back to the audience we were making allusion to at the beginning of this paper. The fact is that, notwithstanding the absence of all the elements we have pointed to, Gautreks saga is a pleasant text to be read and, doubtless, to be heard, that we follow very willingly its course and even take pleasure in the action, disconnected as it is. How can that be possible if this is such a badly "composed" text? The answer is well-known, and rather commonplace : if a text does not take its interest out of its internal art and structure, it is that this interest comes from the very person of the author himself. We are seduced by him, first of all, and by the way he knows how to draw and keep our attention. Skafnörtungr, Starkaðr, Gautrekr, Gjafa-Refr, as we told already, are before all the author's puppets and we are looking at him behind them, at his purposes, his deliberate intentions.

Now, it is not very difficult to trace back which these intentions may have been. Through the story he is telling, he has tried visibly to reach three different goals in the same time : he wants to entertain us by narrating beautiful old stories, he probably takes delight into parody, and he is prone to propose us a clear morality. Entertainment, parody, morality : here are actually his intentions.

It goes without saying that the first one is the most visible and important, according to the laws of this genre. And here, he has not been sparing of his efforts. In order to attract the attention of his audience (present and to come), he has generously taken his matter out of different sources, all more or less attractive to a XIVth century reader as well as nowadays. These are - and we are coming back here to Hermann Pálsson's remark quoted at the beginning, of these sorts : the mythological and legendary fund; the viking world, genuine or presumed; and the universe of chivalry. Let us cast a glance in each of these fields.

a) Mythology and legend have plentifully been resorted to and

this, according to trends which are given as irresistible to every man's child, to day as well as formerly. Here are the gods of Old Norse mythology. Directly : Óðinn, his Valhöll where he will greet his faithful supporters, Þórr (Asabórr) and this strange Ring of the twelve gods which must probably remember of Snorri Sturluson's theories in his Edda. Or indirectly, through the characters of the two Starkaðr, the eldest being killed by Þórr himself. He may come from Saxo Grammaticus, or from Saxo's sources, ~~he~~ remains the prototype of the hero devoted to Óðinn and is indeed given to us as the model for every garpr. A detail like his growing a beard at the age of twelve years belongs to the theme, and his behaviour in king Víkarr's death is still more convincing - that is still more incredible and marvellous - than in Saxo's relation. He is the executive in sacred hanging devoted to Óðinn and it is certainly not by chance that the whole saga is more or less ascribed to him : he must embody a kind of heroic ideal the Icelanders of the XIVth century were always admiring. Depends equally of the same mythological centre of interest the berserkir-motive (present in chapter VII) and, as we know, a set theme, nearly obliged in sagas of all kinds. We could still add the mention of the jötnar (giants) in close connection with the older Starkaðr, with the interesting qualification of hundyfss, which proves that the old spirit of paganism was not dead in the author's mind.

On another hand, this text is full of old themes, more or less mysterious and bewitching : the extraordinary animals, for instance, and here, we have the marvellous ox which will cause the fantastical fortune of Gjafa-Refr. The whole display of witchcraft and magic is not absent of Gautreks Saga : Gauti foretells Snotra Gautrekr's birth and his fame to come. And there is some kind of witchcraft in chapter XI when Refr tries to recover his weapons in the sea, against Refnefr. We will notice, by the way, since we have to deal here with a heroic text, that, not more than in the heroic lays of the Edda, heroism is attested by deeds. We see certainly Starkaðr doing marvellous feats, but, for instance, Gautrekr himself is given for being a great hero although we never see him in action - which means that the author is exactly in the spirit of the old days.

And we have a whole stock of mere legends, whichever their origin and value. For instance, the strange story of a whole family, unknown of the rest of mankind, living quite by themselves in a clearing in a big forest, or the theme of the rape of the bride, appearing two different times in this saga.

For the rest, to enhance the already considerable prestige of the whole story, the author does not fail in resorting to a well-known, always effective device which consists in quoting or alluding to old sagas, fornar sögur, fornar boekr, as it is stated. Not so frequent, after all, is the mention of one of these works by name, that is Hrólfs Saga Gautrekssonar expressly named at the end of chapter VII. And the direct quotation of vfsur, which is a general rule of the genre, is, here, rather exceptional. This short story contains not less than 42 vfsur, including the Vikárbálkr!

On the whole, the great amount of old lore dispensed in such a short text is rather astonishing : it makes you think of texts like Snorri's Ynglinga Saga, with all the prestige attached to such compositions.

b) But it could as well, on different grounds, evoke a purely heroic text like Egla, for here too, the viking ideals are strongly put forward. Especially in its second part, Gautreks Saga gives us a great display of dreadful adventures, gallant deeds, prowesses. There are big battles, especially the one in chapter V which lasts seventeen days, where king Vikarr defeats Geirhjófr. A great number of so called kings appear in these pages, every one with special and prominent qualities and the amorous descriptions of beautiful weapons, swords, shields, helmets and coats of mail, unavoidable as it is, is given a fairly large place principally towards the end of the text. For the rest, we are granted a good amount of typical details of everyday's viking life : beautiful ships which suffer shipwreck, evocations of famous viking adventures and voyages, in particular this king Sfsarr coming from Koemugardr, i.e. Kiev, in Gardaríki. And Stórvirkr, whose name is clear enough, is literally given for vikingr mkill and depicted in one of the noblest functions of his condition, he is landvarnamadr of king Haraldr : he is, after all, supposed to descend

from Fridþjófr, whose name, once again, cannot have missed to remind the audience of renowned heroes of yore! Even small details, of great matter, true to say, in the viking way of living, such as the importance of arfaskifti, are granted, two times in this text, a considerable interest. Let us remark, finally, that an apparently minor detail like the fact that Refr was a kolbátr in his youth, has to play an important role in the biography of a hero or of a gaefumadr, what he will be!

Then, there was plenty of material to satisfy the taste of the audience for this kind of themes in Gautreks Saga : this aspect brought a sort of heroic element on the more or less magical features given above.

c) But, to be really up-to-date, our text needed a third element and it was the chivalrous one. And indeed, it is not absent, although, perhaps, it could seem less visible. Some details, scattered on the whole saga, recall us, discreet as they may be, the new ideals coming from the southern countries. King Gauti is going hunting in the first page of the text. Inade as it is, the saga does not miss any opportunity of insisting on courteous morals, especially towards the end of the text : the last mention of king Gautrekr specifies that he had been hinn haeversklegsti at sjá. We have to pay special attention to some details which were certainly unusual at the time : the fact, for instance, in chapter V, that Fridþjófr asks for Vfkarr's mercy and gets it, or that Gautrekr, inconsolable after his queen's death, does not care after his estates any longer and remains sitting every day on her burial mound. We may suppose that the author was intending to civilize his contemporaries and did so with discretion.

It is clear that Gautreks Saga's author did not spare anything to get the sympathy of his audience and to entertain them at the best of his possibilities. He knew perfectly the recipe for a good foraldarsaga : after all, no one was obliged to believe in the truth of such tales; the audience wanted to be entertained, to spend a good evening and one had to bring them all the elements which were considered to be, and are indeed, til gamans : old lore, mysterious and strongly appealing, fantastic deeds with mention of the spirit

of yore, and a bit of new ideals, new ideas duly fashionable. Such is, doubtless, the receipt of the genre and I could stop here, to conclude that the author was perfectly conscious of his call and did his best. Most of the fornaldarsögur would fall into this analysis. Let us say that the attention of the audience, at first view, was more important than the intrinsic quality of the text and it is clearly the reason why the posterity seems to have definitely preferred the great konungasögur or Íslendingasögur.

But such as we have it, it seems to me that Gautreks saga is deeper and deserves more attention. No doubt, the author is constantly present behind his text and our appreciation goes first of all to him and not to his text - curiously enough, an appreciation which could as well apply to Laxness writing Gerpla, this last work being also a kind of lygisaga composed after genuine konungasögur and Íslendingasögur (3) - But we must go further and, in the same line of appreciation, see why Gautreks Saga, probably, deserves a place for itself in the category of the fornaldarsögur. For here, the author goes beyond the aims which, up to now, we have assigned to him. If he actually wants to write til gamans his intentions are deeper. Since his text cannot (or is not intended to) live by itself, he may have loaded it with more intentions, two of them have to be given special attention here.

a) The first one is to moralize. It has sufficiently been demonstrated that, on the model of the exempla, the sagas were written like some sort of moralities. This could seem less true of fornaldarsögur, since the purpose is, here, far more to entertain an audience. But moralizing seems to be an inborn feature of a saga, whichever category it belongs to and I take for the utmost quality of this genre that this kind of principle is practically never directly visible. However, I am fairly sure that none of these texts has been written innocently, it seems always possible to draw a moral or ethical conclusion of the facts and characters depicted. And this is equally true of Gautreks Saga : I can see, without undue adaptation (at least, I hope so!) two different lessons to be drawn out of this at first view simply amusing tale.

There is on the first hand the doemisaga of Refr, so much parallel to Audunn vestfirzki's one. He was born a kolbfr, good to nothing, rejected by his father. By his intelligence and opportunism, he succeeds in acquiring riches first, then fame, to become finally a jarl ok Þótti inn fraegasti at öllum vaskleik.

The other instance is far more subtle. How is it that the generosity versus avarice theme is so important in this saga? If Skafnörtungr and his family are such ridiculous persons, it is because of their greed and the famous episodes of the beginning of the text (the slave who kills the dog, the barking of which has attracted a guest towards the house, Skafnörtungr who draws his hat on his eyes in order to avoid seeing Gauti eating his food, the pair of shoes given to Gauti, but only after the laces have been taken off, and the trifling or grotesque causes of the suicides of Skafnörtungr's various children), clumsy as they are, have no other reason. This motive is really important : it reappears in the second part of the tale (chapter V), contributing to create a kind of symmetry, with jarl Neri, guilty of exactly the same burlesque reactions as Skafnörtungr (he cannot bear the sight of the blank in his row of shields when he has given the one missing to Refr). But the insistence on the idea is as clearly visible out of the contrary. We are told that Gautrekr was a vfkíngur mfkíll, although we have hardly proofs of the fact. But what makes him great, this is clearly the intention of the author, at least, is his incredible generosity, illustrated by the fact that, when sitting on his queen's mound, he immediately gives a costly golden ring for a trivial stone, without even looking at the man who gave him, from behind, this stone. Hospitality or inhospitality, arfaskipti - of this, too, we have two different instances at two different moments of the story -, gifts and exchanges : the whole saga is full of more or less financial transactions and the accent cannot have been set at random with such a strength on this theme.

Accordingly, in both cases, either the Refr's episode or this generosity matter, the author wants us to learn something.

b) But his personal intervention is still more interesting on another point of view. Dare I say ~~that~~ our author is clearly conscious of the lesser qualities of the fornaldarsaga genre? Else, how could we

explain the parodic attitude adopted from beginning to end? Of course, this parody, this accent on the comical face of events, is prominent in the first two chapters with the incredible story of Skafnörtungr's family. A parody more subtle than we could think : after all, the subject of these chapters is nothing less but future king Gautrekr's birth and ancestry. By the way, it is probably not a trifling detail if the generous king is the offspring of a family of misers! If we go into details, every one may be eloquent : the slave gets his freedom because he behaved fairly when he killed the dog - which is a parody, unexpected, of noble motives found elsewhere in saga literature for such events. The Aetternisstapi, which is the best means to go to Óðinn, must ridicule this so called custom of the past. Skafnörtungr exhorting his children not to propagate the family goes against a well-known and deep feeling in the Old Norse ethics. And there is in the series of suicides of Skafnörtungr's sons, especially in the reasons why they do so (the first one because he sees a snail, the second one because of a sparrow, the third one after the death of his ox) a (probably too much heavy) irony which must tend to ruin the whole text, by derision. Rare, as everybody knows, are the comical sagas : this one reaches a climax and it is sufficient to catch our attention. Clearly, this fornaldarsaga is a pretext : the author does no longer believe into, not only the saga in itself, as a genre, but still into the values and ideals it supported.

Accordingly, Gautreks saga has to be read on at least three different levels : one is occupied by let us say a surface structure where logic is sprightly scouted and where we are told a lot of tales either of sound or of fury, most of which are valuable simply for themselves; the other level is reserved to what can be called, in spite of all, an ethic or pedagogical design : after all, we may draw useful conclusions of this story; but the third one is critical and ironical, properly appreciated, it tends to ruin the whole enter-

prise, indeed the saga genre as a whole.

This little study inspires me, to conclude, two different reflections. This is a purely literary work, a consciously and evidently written text. The whole matter is, in every detail, organized and wanted so by a man whose presence is constantly felt behind the text. And since he employs all the proceedings and receipts of the sagas he gives us a proof of the written nature of this genre.

On another hand, after all and in spite of all that has been said before, Gautreks Saga remains an interesting and more, a lively story. We take pleasure in reading it, same as, probably, the audience took pleasure in listening to this text composed and really written til gamans. And this, because of a style, a way of telling tales. Which remains, unquestionably, the major feature and merit of the sagas, fornaldarsögur as well as other.

NOTES

- (1) I shall follow the text given by Valdimar Ásmundarson : Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda III Reykjavík 1889, pp. 1-38, after AM 4to 590.
- (2) introduction to his translation of Hrolf Gautreksson's Saga.
Edinburgh. 1972. p. 10
- (3) I proposed a kind of similar study : "Essai sur la composition de Geþra" in Scandinavica. Supplement (special issue devoted to the work of Halldór Laxness), may 1972, pp. 5-20.