RIDDARASÖGUR, FORNALDARSÖGUR, AND THE PROBLEM OF GENRE Marianne E. KALINKE

The existence and the use of the terms riddarasögur and fornaldarsögur to designate two different groups of sagas have forced a good part of imaginative Icelandic literature into a .terminological straightjacket that has effectively precluded appreciation of the interrelationship of the works subsumed under these designations. The a priori assumption of scholars that there exists a generic distinction between riddarasögur and fornaldarsögur and that the works subsumed by either designation constitute a homogeneous corpus has led to study of either group without reference to the other. Margaret Schlauch's Romance in Iceland, published nearly half a century ago (1934), is a notable exception.

Both appellations riddarasögur and formaldarsögur are descriptive, each of a different narrative aspect. The term riddarasaga focusses on the social standing of the protagonist, his membership in the nobility; the term formaldarsaga, on the time during which the events took place, that is, in a distant past. Since most riddarasögur also tell of events in a distant past albeit in non-Scandinavian countries they could just as well take their name from the time of action and be called formaldarsogur surrlanda or formsogur suarlanda. Indeed, the latter is the entirely appropriate title of Cederschiöld's edition of translated and Icelandic riddarasögur 1. By analogy, since the protagonists of many of the sagas that have come to be known as formaldarsögur norgrlanda also belong to the nobility, albeit a Scandinavian nobility, many of the formaldarsogur could also be called riddarasögur nortrlanda. Neither social class nor time of setting suffices to create generically distinct literary groups, however. Nonetheless, the two traditional designations not only continue to suggest distinct literary genres but also fairly definite groupings of sagas. The terms have entered literary histories and handbooks and have indirectly contributed to a certain compartmentalization of research as far as Icelandic romance is concerned.

The designation riddarasögur is venerable; it is attested in medieval literature. In Viktors saga ok Blávus, for instance, the author uses the term to refer to translations of Greek and French fiction that had been commissioned by Hákon Magnússon (1299-1319), the grandson of Hákon Hákonarson: "hann lét venda mörgum riddara sögum í norænu ór girzsku ok franzeisku máli". In the Skikkju rímur which derive from Möttuls saga, in turn a translation of Le mantel mautaillié we are told that reports of great

deeds by King Arthur and his knights are said to have given rise to the riddarasögur: "Riddarasögur risa af því: rekkar kvómu þrautir [n]. The younger Mágus saga mentions Flóvents saga and þiðriks saga the one deriving from French, the other from German heroic epic in the same breath as the riddarasögur: "pvi þat gjöra spakir menn, at þeir vilja heyra þær frasagnir, sem þeim þikkir kátligar til gamans, svo sem er þiðreks saga, Flóvenz saga eðr aðrar riddarasögur...". To judge by these references to riddarasögur, medieval literary critics presumably intended to denote tales of foreign origin, be they romance or heroic epic, devoted to the deeds of a non-Scandinavian chivalric class. Modern literary critics and historians have extended the term to include Icelandic imitations of the translated riddarasögur. The exact nature of what constitutes derivation from this group as opposed to derivation from the fornaldarsögur, for example has as yet to be determined.

Unlike use of the term riddarasögur, use of the term fornaldarsögur for another group of sagas is not of medieval but rather modern, nineteenth-century origin. The name derives from the title of Rafn's three-volume edition of sagas entitled Fornaldar sögur Norörlanda, and is reserved chiefly for the sagas in this edition. With some notable exceptions, modern critics and historians have come to perceive these sagas as constituting a genre, a saga type distinct from the riddarasögur. In her study of the fornaldarsögur, Helga Reuschel came to the conclusion, "daß der Name [fornaldarsögur] wirklich wesensähnliche Werke zusammenfaßt und einen Sagatyp umschreibt". Similarly, Einar 01. Sveinsson characterized them as "en af hovedgrupperne inden for sagalitt[eratur]" in his article "Fornaldarsögur Norörlanda" in the Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder. Other scholars have

followed suit.

Despite the traditional division of imaginative Icelandic literature into riddarasögur and fornaldarsögur which in no small measure presumably derives from the fact that the former group is foreign in origin, the latter indigenous, scholars have persistently noted certain similarities between some of the later fornaldarsögur and the riddarasögur, as well as considerable overlapping between the two literary categories. E.F. Halvorsen pointed out that the riddarasogur have much in common with the formaldarsögur and that the former are distinguished primarily in that their main characters are not Northern⁸. No clear distinguishing features such as structure or style have as yet been adduced for the sagas assigned to either group. In fact, E. Ol Sveinsson and E.F. Halvorsen concurred in their respective articles on the fornaldarsogur and the riddarasogur in the Kulturhistorisk leksikon that borderline cases exist that could belong to either group, such as Vilmundar saga viðutan, þjalar-Jóns saga, Hrings saga ok Tryggva, Sigurbar saga fóts, Ála flekks saga, and Sigrgaros saga frækna. Halvorsen expressed dissatisfaction with the designation riddarasögur for the translated sagas and their Icelandic derivatives, but

pointed out that the alternatives "romantic saga" and lygisaga are no more definitive, since either could just as well describe most of the

formaldarsögur

The earliest attestation of the term lygisaga is in borgil Hafliba, where King Sverrir is reported to have deemed such ly Hrómundar saga Gripssonar (which is included in vol. Il of Rafn's edition of formaldarsögur) most amusing 11. The implication of the remark would appear to be that Sverrir particularly enjoyed works of fiction. Subsequently, medieval authors tended to use the word pejoratively, in order to characterize sagas considered to be incredible, that is, fantastic; authors of works that we today might label ric or formaldarsaga repeatedly include apologiae in which they deny that their creations are prevarications 12. A number of modern critics and historians have preferred to use lygisaga as a generic term, some to designate the indigenous riddarasögur 13, others to designate the "fictitious development" of the formaldarsaga 14. Still others have included indigenous rid as well as formaldarsögur under the single appellation lygisögur . Jónas Kristjánsson noted at the Liège Colloquium of 1972 that the tendency to use the disparaging term lygisögur both for the "later Romantic Sagas [riddarasögur] and... Legendary Sagas [fornaldarsögur] bears witness to the close relationship of these sagas. Some lie on the borderline, and there is mutual influence between the two groups¹¹⁶. At the Fourth International Saga Conference Hermann Palsson pleaded eloquently for an unprejudiced examination of the fornaldarsögur, and pointed out that "most of them belong, formally at least, to the romance tradition of medieval Europe, and for that reason it would be a mistake to try to draw a sharp dividing line between them and the "riddarasögur" 17. His point is well taken.

The designation riddarasogur for one group and fornaldari another group of sagas suggests not only the existence of two distinct genres but also an essential homogeneity for the works subsumed under the

respective categories. Such a homogeneity exists for neither ride

nor fornaldarsögur. From a Continental literary perspective the term riddarasogur, that is, chivalric sagas, or sagas of knights, is misleading as a generic designation because it connotes only translations and adaptations of the romans courtois, the courtly romances. Among the works traditionally classified as riddarasogur we find, however, translations of generically distinct sources. There are not only courtly romances, but also chansons de geste, Breton lais, and pseudo-historical works. The riddarasögur thus encompass works deriving from heroic epic, courtly romance, and Latin historiography. In his essay on genre in the Middle Ages, Hans Robert suggested the "commutational Jauss (Kommutationsprobe) as a means to determining generic differences. He remarked on the "Unvertauschbarkeit der Personen zwischen Chanson de geste und höfischem Roman.... Helden wie Roland oder Yvain, Damen wie Alda oder Enide, Herrscher wie Charlemagne oder Artur wurden trotz der

allmählichen Angleichung des Heldenepos an den Ritterroman in französischer Tradition nicht aus einen in die andere Gattung gebracht" ¹⁸.

The sources of some forty translations of continental imaginative literature- I am counting the Strengleikar individually- are to be sought in diverse genres, even sub-genres. For example, of some nine romances transmitted to the North, four are Arthurian, namely Erex saga, Ivens saga, Parcevals saga with Valvens báttr, and Tristrams saga. To these four courtly romances employing the matière de Bretagne can be added translations of three Arthurian lais: Möttuls saga (which might also be classified as a fabliau), Januals Ijóð, and Geitarlauf. In all, some twenty-four pieces of short fiction were transmitted to the North, including translations and analogues of Boccaccio's novelle (in the younger Mágus saga), the French fabliaux (in Sigurðar saga turnara and Möttuls saga), and tales in the Gesta Romanorum (Amícus saga ok Amílius, the younger Mágus saga).

The chansons de geste, from which such works as Karlamagnús saga, Elis saga, Flóvents saga, and Mágus saga derive, differ considerably in content, spirit, and form from romance and lai. To be sure, the divergent metrical forms of chanson de geste and roman courtois were levelled by being translated into prose. Nonetheless, the content and structure of the translated riddarasögur are variegated, the result of substantial differences in the nature of the heroic quest and in the motivation for the protagonists' extraordinary deeds. The same can be said for the Icelandic imitations of the translated sagas.

In some sagas the hero is guilty of a transgression and the plot is generated by his efforts to rehabilitate himself as, for example, in the Arthurian romances Erex saga and Ivens saga, and in the Icelandic Damusta saga. In others the plot devolves from a feud between the protagonist and his superiors, for example, in Flovents saga and in Magus saga. In still others the focus is on the hero's participation in the struggle between Christianity and heathendom, as in Elis saga and Mirmanns saga. Then there are riddarasögur in which the action stems from the usurpation of a throne, as in Adonias saga and Berings saga. In yet other sagas the victim of a spell must be liberated, for example, in Jons saga leikara or in Sigrgarbs saga freekna, or an abducted relative must be found, as in Valdimars saga and Vilhjálms saga sjóbs. In those romances where the erotic element prevails, the hero's actions may be motivated by a relationship with a fairy mistress, as in Januals 1job, Partalopa saga, and Gibbons saga; by his pursuit of an obstinate woman, for example, Klárus saga, Nitida saga, and Viktors saga ok Blávus, or his competition against rival suitors, as in Sigurbar saga fóts, Sálus saga ok Nikanors, and Konráðs saga keisarasonar. In short, the homogeneity suggested by the designation riddarasögur is illusory. To consider the Norwegian translations of foreign fiction of a piece generically and their Icelandic derivatives as nothing but variations of a single master pattern- Finnur Jónsson's simile of the kaleidoscope comes to mind 19 is to ignore the considerable diversity in a

rather large corpus of Old Norse-Icelandic fiction.

Similarly, the sagas known as tornaldarsogur since Rafn's day are a heterogeneous group; they include sagas with historical as well as ahistorical protagonists all of whom are depicted, however, as living in ancient heroic days. Scholars have proposed a tripartite classification of the formaldarsoour: heroic-mythical sagas, viking sagas, and adventure sagas. The last group has also been designated Märchensagas by German scholars 20. Hans-Peter Naumann expressed reservations regarding the last category, however. He pointed out that for all its common features, the extent of the supposed sub-genre "Abenteuersaga" is as uncertain as is its demarcation from other indigenous saga forms 21. Indeed, the "adventure" sagas have also been referred to as "romantic" formaldarsögur, thus implying a relationship to the Icelandic riddardsögur. A recent attempt by Ruth Righter-Gould to demonstrate that the fornaldarsogur "have a distinctive narrative structure which in addition to stylistic considerations sets them apart from other Old Icelandic literary genres" 22 is unconvincing and unacceptable, since the structural elements isolated as supposedly distinctive features of the formaldarsögur are also present in many of the riddgrasögur, translated as well as Icelandic. The structural pattern discerned for the fornaldarsögur is in fact the pattern of romance: "1. Introduction, 2. Hero's youth, 3. Motivation for departure, 4. Adventure cycle or plot including contact with helper-donor figure, and 5. Concluding elements" (p. 424). According to Northrop Frye, "the element that gives literary form to the romance /is/ the quest":

The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero ²³.

The author of Flóres saga konungs ok sona hans, an Icelandic riddarasaga, acted in the capacity of literary critic when he established half a millenium ago two categories of secular fiction concerned with former days. He wrote:

Aðrar sogur eru af ríkum konungum, ok má þar nema í hæverska hirðsiðu, eðr hversu þjóna skal ríkjum hofðingjum. Enn þriði hlutr sagnanna er frá konungum þeim, sem koma í miklar mannraunir ok hafa misjafnt ór rétt ; er þar eptir breytanda þeim sem vaskir eru. (pp. 121-22).

He further remarked that many are wont to consider those sagas fiction that relate deeds beyond the normal mortal's ability or realm of experience. His attempt at a literary taxonomy is based both on the character of the protagonists and on the effect the narrative is to have on an audience. In a somewhat unsophisticated fashion the author of Flores saga konungs thus anticipated Frye's characterization of the hero of romance as one "whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified

as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him" (p. 33). Keeping the above medieval and modern literary criticism in mind, Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards pointed out in their study of Legendary Fiction in Medieval Iceland that some of the fornaldarsögur like the riddarasögur clearly belong to the realm of secular romance. Following Northrop Frye's analysis of types of heroes, they suggested that we might classify the sagas according to the qualities of the hero and the way they are displayed. I would go further and propose that examination of the hero's quest, as well as motivation for that quest, is necessary if we are to arrive at a more convincing and satisfactory classification and thus at a better understanding of the character and diversity of imaginative Icelandic literature.

Once we predicate our analyses of Old Norse-Icelandic fiction upon acceptance of the theory that genre from the perspective of content is determined less by the accidents of geographical setting or the protagonist's place of birth than by the character of the hero and the nature of the heroic quest, then the traditional, supposedly generic division into riddarasögur and fornaldarsögur begins to vacillate. Certain recurring patterns are common to translated and Icelandic riddarasögur as well as a group of younger formaldarsögur known as "adventure sagas" or Märchensagas or lygisögur. Kathryn Hume pointed out that "knights" sagas and a substantial number of lying and legendary sagas exhibit the structure variously known as the romance or folklore pattern....Typically, a single hero undertakes a quest or a series of tests, and ends by succeeding, marrying, and assuming power"25. A study of the riddarasögur and formaldarsögur that focusses on narrative types common to both groups would appear to be more fruitful in terms of understanding Old Icelandic fiction than one that limits itself to one literary category (riddarasögur or fornaldarsögur) to the exclusion of the other. From the perspective of the heroic quest, a predominant type found in both categories is the bridalquest type. This comes as no surprise, since the search for a bride is a universally popular theme, one particularly favored in medieval literature 26. Icelandic fiction is no exception.

In the rather large group of Icelandic sagas that belong to the bridal-quest type, the search for and successful wooing of the bride constitutes the essential frame for the several secondary quests the hero may undertake. The bridal quest is both the primary motivating force of the plot and the hero's raison d'être. The bridal quest finds varied expression in Icelandic romance. The hero obtains the longed-for woman only after having successfully overcome such obstacles as rival suitors, reluctant maidens, and recalcitrant fathers or other relatives. Not infrequently the means to the hero's end are dishonorable: he may resort to force, murder, and abduction in face of rival suitors; or impersonation, deceit, and

trickery vis-à-vis the sought-for-bride. Although the bridal-quest type is dominant among the indigenous Icelandic riddarasögur, it is also represented among the translated riddarasögur and the younger formaldarsögur. Over twenty narratives have as their main theme and the plot's primary motivating force the bridal quest.

Hrolfs saga Gautrekssonar, which has been designated a fornaldarsaga since Rafn's edition, might be considered the quintessential bridal-quest romance of Icelandic literature. In this one saga the various obstacles the wooer might be expected to have to overcome and the several types of prospective brides found in the aggregate of bridal-quest sagas are depicted in four different wooing expeditions undertaken by two generations of the same family. Here we meet rival suitors, maiden kings, and overprotective fathers. Despite the fact that its protagonists are Scandinavian, and the settings are, If not entirely Scandinavian, then at least Northen, Hrolfs saga Gautrekssonar belongs to the same literary tradition as such so-called riddarasögur as Gibbons saga, Sigurõar saga bögla, Nitida saga, Viktors saga ok Blávus, and Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns.

To begin with, there is old King Gautrek's wooing of Ingibjörg to the displeasure of a younger rival, King Olaf. Direct conflict is not generated, however, until after the princess has chosen between the two, to the disadvantage of the younger suitor. The latter attempts to redress what appears to him to be an unwise and unjust decision. He ambushes the bridal party on its return to Gautrek's country. The bridegroom is given two choices: to hand over the girl and all her wealth or to fight. Anyone familiar with both translated and Icelandic riddarasogur will recognize the stock figure of the nobleman, highwayman, giant, or berserker who seeks to take another man's wife, daughter, or sister by force, or musters his armed forces against those of an unmarried lady of a castle in order to attain by dint of arms what he cannot by persuasion. We recall isond's abduction by the harp-playing Irishman in Tristrams saga, or Ivens saga with its Figlisharfir episode, or Klamadius' attack of Blankiflur's castle in Parcevals saga, or the several aggressive encounters in Erex saga where, as in the opening section of Hrolfs saga Gautrekssonar, the bride herself agrees to the marriage, but the hero must nonetheless demonstrate time and again his right to her as wife, and engage in combat in order to keep her. Or consider Damusta saga, in which the motif of an aggressive rival suitor is given an unusual twist because the hero himself is the unsuccessful suitor. The plot is generated by Damusti's murder of King Jon of Smaland whom Gratiana, the daughter of the king of Greece and Damusti's secret love, has married. The saga is a bridal-quest romance, but of a rather unusual type. Against seemingly insuperable odds, Damusti, the peccable protagonist, does eventually get the girl, but only after divine intervention and assistance have been assured.

The story of old King Gautrek's winning of a young wife which,

incidentally, provides an interesting counterpoint to other less happy May-December alliances, such as in Guiamars libs is followed by the story of his son's bridal quest. Hrolf's quest is as difficult as Gautrek's had been easy primarily because of differences in the characters of the prospective brides. Hrólfr is determined to marry bornbjörg, daughter of the king of Sweden. The princess in question belongs, however, to a long tradition of refractory princesses in Icelandic romance who refuse initially, that is to marry. Among these romances in which the desired woman herself impedes the protagonist's path to success, Klárus saga, that is ascribed to Jón Halldórsson (bishop of Skálholt, 1322-39) and supposedly derives from an unknown Latin romance, is the prototype. It belongs to the type called by Erik Wahlgren "maiden king" romance? . At the heart of such sagas is the taming of a haughty and cruel princess. One Icelandic romance after another depicts the basic conflict of Klárus saga: a suitor for the hand of a maiden who is "king" is repulsed because she considers herself superior to the male and is afraid that she will lose that superiority should she marry. Through a variety of techniques, male and female attempt to outwit each other. Inevitably the male prevails because he is able to discover the woman's weakness, be that moral or physical. The maiden kings themselves range from obstinate but otherwise quite courtly ladies surrounded by a splendid court to monarchs who are not above mounting a horse and fighting in battle. At first blush they appear more at home in heroic epic than in courtly romance. These nubile maidens are rulers- in the case of bornbjörg her father has given her complete authority over one third of Sweden- who not only refuse all suitors but also heap scorn and physical as well as psychological abuse upon them, bornbjörg is finally vanquished by Hrólfr on the battlefield. Other maiden kings are won over by means of trickery and cunning. In Klárus saga, for example, the protagonist outwits Queen Serena by appealing to her cupidity. An interesting variant of the maiden-king type occurs in Dinus saga dramblata, where initially not only the heroine but also the hero appears impervious to the charms of the opposite sex, and each is determined to outwit and humiliate the other. Despite their initial abrasiveness and coldblooded disdain for their suitors. erstwhile maiden kings eventually soften; despite their insults and deprecation a happy end is finally achieved in marital union. The miniature romance of Hrolfr and bornbjörg in Hrolfs saga Gautrekssonar belongs to the maiden-king type: the sexual and military opponents eventually agree to a truce, put aside their differences, and bornbjörg accepts Hrolfr in marriage.

That the Hrólfr-and-pornbjörg tale can be identified as a romance becomes evident if one contrasts it with the Helgi-and-Olof tale in Hrólfs saga kraka (also to be found in Rafn's corpus of formaldarsögur). Initially, the narrative follows the maiden-king pattern of Klárus saga. Like Klárus or like Viktor in Viktors saga ok Blávus Helgi has to endure the humiliation of having his head shaved and tarred by the woman he proposes to marry.

Like Klarus, Helgi appeals to the woman's cupidity and thus manages to bring her into his power. The similarity ends here. The maiden kings of romance eventually submit to the male, marry, and live happily ever after. In Hrolfs saga kraka, however, we move in the world of heroic literature. After having taken his pleasure of her, Helgi avenges himself for the shameful treatment he had to endure earlier at the hands of Olof by rejecting her. Olof in turn avenges her loss of honor by concealing the fact that their sexual union produced offspring. Heroic revenge and counter revenge eventually lead to the tragic incest of Helgi and his daughter Yrsa. As Helga Reuschel has pointed out, the Helgi-Olof portion of Hrolfs saga kraka is a heroic transmutation of matter drawn from folklore and romance (pp. 92-93).

Hrblfs saga Gautrekssonar contains two further bridal-quest narratives: the one involves Hrblf's brother Ketill, the other Hrblf's foster-brother Asmundr. Ketill wishes to marry the daughter of the king of Russia, Asmundr the daughter of the king of Ireland. In both narratives the fathers of the prospective brides are major obstacles to the desired union. In the case of the Russian princess, the wooed maiden is not only as inimical as her father, but the wooer also has to cope with a rival suitor. Ketil's and Asmund's wooings are replete with battles, bloodshed, and

incarcerations.

Fathers or other relatives inimical to prospective suitors or unwilling to marry off their daughters are as much the stuff of Icelandic romance as are maiden kings. Flóres saga konungs ok sona hans comes to mind, where the rejected suitor Duke Sintram declares war against the father of the desired bride. The most extended treatment of this particular theme is found in Sigurðar saga turnara in which the hero discovers a beautiful princess who is confined by her father in a tower. The plot devolves primarily from the hero's illicit and at first secret liaison with the princess and her father's attempts to uncover and thus thwart the relationship.

That the bridal quest narratives have a dominant position among the Icelandic romances should not surprise us if we consider the popularity of what was presumably not only the first bridal-quest romance but also the very first romance in the North, that is, Tristrams saga ok İsöndar, the impact of which on Icelandic literature has been amply documented by Paul Schach²⁸. Its influence pervades as much Rémundar saga keisarasonar, an acknowledged riddarasaga, as it does Göngu-Hrólfs saga, a so-called fornaldarsaga. To the former, Tristrams saga has contributed the motif of the voyage for healing; to the latter, the sword between the lovers. Like Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar, Göngu-Hrólfs saga is a bridal-quest romance from beginning to end ²⁹, despite the fact that the eponymous protagonist of the ahistorical saga is linked by reason of his name to Rollo, the Norse chieftain who laid siege to Chartres in the year 911 and died in 927. To be sure, Göngu-Hrólfs saga abounds in battles, but far from documenting the vikings' conquest of foreign peoples and territories, they are undertaken in

the cause of the bridal quest. The saga culminates in a triple wedding, the

description of which is in the best tradition of the riddardsogur:

ok at brullupinu settu ok veizlunni svá skipaðri, mátti heyra allskonar strengleika, hörpur ok gígjur, simphón ok salteríum; þar vóru bumbur barðar ok pípur blásnar, með allskyns listilegum leikum, er líkaminn mátti við gleðjast. Eftir þat vóru jungfrúrnar innleiddar með sínum skrautlegum skara ok skemtilegum kvenna fjölda ³⁰.

Despite the fact that Göngu-Hrólfs saga transpires in the North in Sweden, Norway, and Jutland and contains certain elements unfamiliar to continental romance, such as burial mounds and beserkers, the saga belongs

to the same tradition and genre as Tristrams saga.

An interesting phenomenon confronts us in the aggregate of the so-called riddarasögur and "romantic" fornaldarsögur: we have here a diverse, stratified entity generated by translations of foreign literature but transformed by generations of Icelandic transmitters of romance, be they scribes, redactors, or anonymous authors who wished to try their hands at literary composition. There is ample textual documentation for the manner in which the translated riddarasögur were modified so as to evolve into an indigenous genre. To mind comes especially the younger Magus saga, the author of which steps forward in the epilogue to explain why he felt compelled to embellish and augment a tale that some of his listeners might have recalled as being considerably shorter.

Nú pó at vér finnim ei, at pessari sögu beri saman við aðrar sögur, pær er menn hafa til frásagnar, þá má þat til bera, at ófróðir menn hafa í fyrstu slíkar eðr aðrar frásagnir saman sett, ok skilr því mest á um frásagnir, at þeir sem rita eðr segja þær sögur, er þeim þikkir skammt um talat, er orðfærir eru, þá auka þeir með mörgum orðum, svá at þeim sem skilja kunna, þikkir með fögrum orðum fram bornar.

sem áðir váru sagðar með ónýtum orðum 31.

The majority of the so-called native riddarasögur are Icelandic recreations of a literature imported via Norway. From the Norwegian translations as well as from other European literature with which they were acquainted Icelanders extrapolated names, motifs, topoi, characters, and even entire episodes for their own compositions. Striking examples are the grateful-lion episode in *Ivens saga* and the dragon slaying in *piūriks saga*, which appear singly and in combination in several Icelandic riddarasögur, but most charmingly in *Sigurbar saga bögla*. The evolution of romance in Iceland did not stop there: Icelanders also drew on indigenous traditions for their romances: berserkers, trolls, and shapeshifters replaced or existed side by side with the giants, dwarfs, and werewolves of Arthurian romance and Breton *lai* in a predominantly non-Scandinavian setting with a predominantly non-Scandinavian cast of characters as well as in a Scandinavian setting.

Critics have found it difficult to classify the romances in which Northern elements predominate or at least compete with elements derived

from non-Scandinavian sources, but which Rafn did not see fit to include in his collection of fornaldarsöaur. One solution to the problem of apparent hybrid forms would be to acknowledge the diversity of the imaginative subsumed under the designations riddarasögur formaldarsögur. Instead of proceeding on the assumption that the so-called riddarasögur and formaldarsögur constitute genres which forces us to extrapolate the several elements common to all works in the respective groups and to label the misfits "exceptions" it would be more fruitful to analyze in terms of plot, structure, characterization, style related works drawn from the two categories, such as the bridal-quest narratives. This is not to suggest that the terms riddardsögur and fornaldarsögur are henceforth to be deleted from our critical vocabulary but rather that we approach the medieval romance tradition of Iceland without preconceived notions as to what constitutes a riddarasaga, lygisaga, so-called "romantic" fornaldarsaga, Märchensaga, or Abenteuersaga32. The time has come to begin afresh, to pick up where Margaret Schlauch left off in her Romance in Iceland, with the intention of arriving at a clearer understanding of what has proved to be beyond doubt a most popular and prolific narrative form.

NOTES

- Gustaf Cederschiöld, Fornsögur Subrlanda. Magus saga jarls, Konrabs saga, Bærings saga, Flovents saga, Bevers saga. Med inledning (Lund, 1884).
- 2 Jónas Kristjánsson, ed. Víktors saga ok Blávus (Reykjavík : Handritastofnun Íslands, 1964), p. 3.
- Gustaf Cederschiöld and F.A. Wulff, Versions nordiques du fabliau français "Le mantel mautaillié". Textes et notes, Lunds Universitets Arsskrift, XIII (Lund, 1877), III, 76, p. 71.
- 4 Gunnlaugur þórðarson, ed., Bragða-Mágus saga með tilheyrandi þáttum (Copenhagen: Páll Sveinsson, 1858), p. 117.
- 5 C.C. Rafn, ed., Fornaldar sögur Norbrlanda, I-III (Copenhagen: 1829-30).
- 6 Untersuchungen über Stoff und Stil der Fornaldarsaga (Bühl-Baden: Konkordia A.G., 1933), p. 16.
- 7 Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder, IV (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1959), col. 499.
- "Riddersagaer", KLNM, XIV (1969), col. 175: "R/iddersagaer/ har således mye til felles med fornaldarsogur, og skiller seg ut fra disse vesentlig ved at hovedpersonene ikke er nord/iske/".
- See E. Ól. Sveinsson, "Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda", KLNM, IV (1959), cols. 500-01; E.F. Halvorsen, "Riddersagaer", KLNM, XIV (1969), col. 180; Kurt Schier, Sagaliteratur (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1970), p. 72: "Die Übergänge zwischen den jüngeren Fornaldarsögur und den Märchensagas sind fließend, und bei einer ganzen Anzahl von Werken muß es solange nicht neue grundlegende Untersuchungen eine Klärung herbeigeführt haben dem persönlichen Urteil überlassen werden, welcher Werkgruppe man sie jeweils zurechnet".
- 10 "Riddersagaer", KLNM, XIV (1969) 175-76.
- 11 Ursula Brown, ed. *borgils saga* ok Hafliða (London : Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 18.
- 12 See, for example, Bragba-Mágus saga, p. 177; Flóres saga konungs c

- sona hans, ed. Åke Lagerholm, in Drei Lygisogur, ANSB, 17 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1927), p. 122; pibriks saga af Bern, ed. Henrik Bertelsen, I, STUAGNL, 34 (Copenhagen: 1905-11), pp. 6-7; Göngu-Hrölfs saga, ed. C.C. Rain, in Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda, III, p. 363; Gvímars saga, ed. Marianne E. Kalinke, in Opuscula, 7, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana, 34 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1979), p. 138.
- 13 Finnur Jónsson, Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Gad, 1924), III, pp. 102 ff.; Eugen Mogk, Geschichte der norwegisch-isländischen Literatur, 2nd ed. (Strassburg: Trübner, 1904), p. 880; Henry Goddard Leach, Angevin Britain and Scandinavia, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 6 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1921), p. 164; Margaret Schlauch, Romance in Iceland (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1934), p. 16; Halldór Hermannsson, The Sagas of Kings (Konunga sögur) and the Mythical-Heroic Sagas (Fornaldar sögur). Two Bibliographical Supplements, Islandica, 26 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1937), p. vi.
- 14 A. Le Roy Andrews, "The Lygisogur", Scandinavian Studies, 2 (1914-16), 258; Einar Ol. Sveinsson, Verzeichnis isländischer Mürchenvarianten mit einer einleitenden Untersuchung, FF Communications, 83 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1929), p. XXVI.
- Jan de Vries, Altnordische Literaturgeschichte, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967), II, p. 539; Åke Lagerholm, Drei Lygisogur, fn., p. X.
- 16 "Text Editions of the Romantic Sagas", Les relations littéraires franco-scandinaves au Moyen Age, Actes du Colloque de Liège (Paris: Société d'Edition "Les Belles Lettres", 1975), p. 282.
- 17 "Towards a Definition of Fornaldarsögur", Fourth International Saga Conference. München, July 30th-August 4th, 1979 (Munich: Institut für nordische Philologie der Universität München, 1979), p. 16.
- 18 "Theorie der Gattungen und Literatur des Mittelalters", in : Généralités, Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters, I, ed. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (Heildelberg: Winter, 1972), p. 113.
- 19 Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie, III, p. 98: "De kendte motiver benyttedes; det var som et kaleidoskop; hver gang det rystes, kommer nye sammenstillinger og nye figurer frem, men bestanddelene er de samme".

- 20 Kurt Schier, Sagaliteratur (Stuttgart : Metzler, 1970), p. 77.
- 21 "Die Abenteuersaga. Zu einer Spätform altisländischer Erzählkunst", Skundingvistik, 8 (1978), 41-55.
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