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Sagas and Saints' Lives

Consumers of reading matter are similar to other gourmets: they want to have the very best for themselves, to feast their eyes on the bon bouches of great literature. Only the students of literature - and, of course, newspaper critics - condescend to the lower and more popular strata and find grim relish in chewing to pieces the wretched trash of inferior penmen.

Accordingly, the very few learned scholars who have stretched their forks all the way to the old sagas of Iceland start with the ripe - not to say over-ripe fruits, like Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla, the Saga of Njáll or the Saga of Grettir the Strong. Consumed as a single-course repast those sagas may appear like a miracle, clearly distinct from all other literatures of the world. Learned scholars have tried to describe the various characteristics of the sagas and have found many clever explanations of their genesis. The oldest attempt would be that of Saxo Grammaticus who tells us that the Icelanders are so well versed in old traditions because of their poverty and isolation: they tell stories about the deeds of other nations as a compensation for their own misery and destitution. Romantic admirers of the 19th and 20th centuries, as might be expected, did not find this old explanation aptly chosen for the grand Icelandic sagas. A more fitting origin was supposed to be found in the very special origin of the first settlers of Iceland: they would have been the most courageous and independent chieftains of Norway - those who had the vigour to rise against the self-willed and ravenous monarch, Harald Finehair, and to venture over the turbulent ocean to the new land. One scholar supposed them to be Herules who had come from the far south after a short stop-over in Norway. Another very popular and tenacious hypothesis supposes that the sagas sprang from some kind of fructiferous mixture of Norse and Irish blood - the Irish element coming from a multitude of otherwise unknown Irish slaves and farm-hands who are supposed to have left their hallmarks in the

special blood group and the reddish hair colour of many Icelanders.

All such romantic explanations are, however, unsatisfactory for pedestrian modern researchers; and for some time the favourite method has been to compare the sagas with various kinds of European literature in search of parallels and possible models. Whereas the sagas had previously been looked upon as truthful chronicles of real events, sprung from oral traditions, they are now supposed to be mainly a fictitious offshoot of continental medieval culture and literature. Some scholars now pretend to find saga-models in Latin hagiographic literature. Others study secular historical writings from classical and medieval times. The third group of erudites search for saga-origins in the French Romantic poetry that was translated into prose in Norway in the 13th century; and a brand new fourth method tries to explain the Icelandic sagas as "formal constructions" as an offspring of European, especially French, prose forms dating from the 13th century. One scholar explains the sagas of Icelanders as being pieced together from various Latin proverbs which would have been translated into Icelandic. Another and more nationally minded researcher supposes the sagas to be a kind of romans à clef, pretending to describe the "saga age" but in fact dealing with people and events from the time of writing in the 13th century. Landnámabók itself is thought to be a kind of falsification from the 12th and 13th centuries, composed in order to glorify the past or to prove the various chieftains' right to landed properties. - Only some few contemporary sagas written in the 13th and 14th centuries, such as the sagas in the Sturlunga collection, are free from this kind of scholarly research.

From all this it is obvious that in sagas which are supposed to take place in the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries no space is left for any indigenous material: no oral tradition, no national background, no historical truth. Our once so glorious forefathers are leading a truly miserable existence, sitting out in the darkness, bereft of their history and poetry, family and friends. All original thinking and creative power have been taken away from them, and they have lost their great poems, like *Hávamál*, *Höfuðlausn* and *Völuspá*. Their genealogies have been turned into falsifications from the 12th and 13th centuries, and

they are even left without their names: in reality the names of the settlers as recorded in Landnámabók are made up in later times from Icelandic place names. Poor Egill Skallagrímsson, who has lost all his brave deeds as well as his beautiful poetry! Ingólfur Arnarson is better off since he never did exist.

Icelanders who were brought up in innocent saga-belief have indeed many creeds to choose between when despoiled of the faith of their childhood and served with the apples of wisdom. To them, however, all this modern guesswork is not equally incredible and absurd. People like myself who are both old and old-fashioned, who regard the sagas, both thematically and constructionally, as the product of Icelandic historical tradition, may even feel themselves tempted to believe in some of these modern theories. One of the most solid, and at the same time most creative of modern saga students was the English scholar, Professor Gabriel Turville-Petre of Oxford. Many times I have happily quoted his conclusion in his book The Origins of Icelandic Literature, and permit myself to do it once again. This is what he says about the Saints' Lives that were translated from Latin into Icelandic (p. 142):

They were the first written biographies which the Icelanders came to know. The Icelanders learned from them how biographies and wonder-tales could be written in books. Thus, they helped the Icelanders to develop a literary style in their own language, and gave them the means to express their own thoughts through the medium of letters. In a word, the learned literature did not teach the Icelanders what to think or what to say, but it taught them how to say it. It is unlikely that the sagas of kings and of Icelanders, or even the sagas of ancient heroes, would have developed as they did unless several generations of Icelanders had first been trained in hagiographic narrative.

Immediately this quotation awakens two questions: (1) Are the Saints' Lives, viz. the heilagra manna sögur - the Icelandic translations of the Latin Vita^oSanctorum - undoubtedly older than the "original" Icelandic sagas, e.g. Sverris saga or Þorláks saga? (2) Is the style and diction of the Icelandic heilagra manna sögur the same as the style and diction of the "original"

Icelandic sagas? If not, how could the translations possibly be the models for the original sagas?

Let us first consider the age of the two groups of sagas. The first native or original sagas were in all likelihood written just before and just after 1200. The first part of Sverris saga was written about 1185 under the auspices of the king himself. King Sverrir died in the year 1202, and the saga was completed shortly after his death. Bishop Þorlákur of Skálholt died in the year 1193 and was declared a saint in the year 1198; obviously his saga was written shortly afterwards.

One contemporary Icelandic saga which must be of approximately the same age is Sturlu saga, the saga of Hvamms-Sturla, father of Snorri, the great saga-writer. Sturla died in the year 1197, but the main events of his saga took place some thirty years earlier, and are obviously written according to eye-witness accounts. This dating of the oldest Icelandic sagas may seem fairly early, on a medieval scale, but all the same they were not written earlier than round about 1200.

As to the Sagas of Saints, we have no such "contemporary" dating. Most of the non-Scandinavian Saints lived in the remote past and, accordingly, their lifetime is of no use in dating their sagas. However, we have some other possible methods of dating the Icelandic versions of Saints' Sagas. Let me first quote the so-called First Grammatical Treatise (Fyrsta málfraeðiritgerðin), written probably about or just before the middle of the 12th century. The author's aim was to provide the Icelanders with a practical alphabet which would make it easier for them to set down and to read the writings that were then current in the country: laws, genealogy, sacred expositions (or maybe we should say "holy translations", þýðingar helgar), and "also the wise learning which Ari Þorgilsson has put into books with his perceptive understanding." In all probability these four kinds were the precise sum of the literature that flourished in Iceland about the middle of the twelfth century. Ari the Wise wrote his Book of Icelanders (Íslendingabók) in the years 1122-1133. The Landnámabók, or Book of Settlements, may be counted among his learned works or covered by the Grammarian's work áttvísir - genealogy. Þýðingar helgar would be the very early homilies and other works of religious edification, and the expression might

also include the oldest translated Sagas of Saints. But obviously no original Icelandic sagas would have been found at the time of the First Grammarian.

The manuscript tradition also seems to prove that the Icelandic heilagra manna sögur are considerably older than any native or original sagas. The earliest manuscripts of Saints' Sagas (all fragmentary) are dated to the end of the 12th century, and from before c. 1250 we have manuscripts of eighteen translated Saints' Lives, whole or fragmentary, whereas from the same period we have only got three manuscripts or fragments of native historical works: (1) The Miracle Book of St Thorlak of Skálholt, (2) the Agrip or Compendium of the Histories of the Kings of Norway and (3) the fragmentary Oldest Saga of St Olaf. Those three works would have been composed about or shortly before 1200 but the manuscripts are dated to c. 1220-30. In these instances we see that some of the most ancient pieces of literature are preserved in some of the most ancient manuscripts. The great number of early copies of Saints' Lives is the more remarkable since we know that a lot of such "papal rubbish" was deliberately destroyed after the Reformation. Obviously the translation of Saints' Lives was in full swing in the latter part of the twelfth century, and the first of these must certainly antedate any original saga-composition in the vernacular.

Now we come to my second question regarding the style and phraseology of the Icelandic Saints' Lives. Some ninety years ago the Norwegian scholar Marius Nygaard wrote a classic article called Den lærde stil i den norrøne prosa (in Sproglig-historiske Studier tilegnede Professor C.R. Unger, 1896). Here he divides the whole of old Norwegian and Icelandic prose literature in two sharply distinct groups according to its style: on one hand he puts what he calls folkelig stil, or Popular Style, which appears in the native literature and which is supposed to go back to the spoken language as developed at assemblies and in story-telling. As its opposite Nygaard places what he calls den lærde stil, the Learned Style, which appears in works that are translated from Latin, mostly hagiographic works. His samples of the Popular Style Nygaard takes from the law-books and the Icelandic sagas, whereas 52 out of 132 samples for the Learned Style come from the Norwegian Book of Homilies, the rest

from various other learned works, both Norwegian and Icelandic.

In passing I should like just to mention two other kinds of style which are supposed to be found in old Norwegian-Icelandic prose literature. First, there is the so-called Court Style or, in Scandinavian, den høviske stil which is not discussed by Nygaard but which has later been researched by E.F. Halvorsen and others, for instance in the Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder. The Court Style is mainly found in the riddara sögur, viz. the Norwegian translations of the French Chanson de geste and the Romans courtois. Most scholars find that this style is closely related to the Learned Style; but a rough investigation made by myself seems to indicate that this does not apply to the real or oldest Court Style as found in Norwegian manuscripts of riddara sögur (indeed, most of those sagas are only to be found in later Icelandic copies). The Norwegian Court Style seems to have quite different characteristics from those of the Learned Style as described by Nygaard.

As the fourth and last type of prose style I might mention the so-called Florid Style, or skróðstill (in Danish less aptly called den florissante stil). This is indeed only a sub-division of the Learned Style with an exaggeration of its main characteristics. According to myself and most other students the Florid Style is a specially Icelandic phenomenon of the late 13th and early 14th centuries.

Now let us turn back to the "real" Learned Style as described by Marius Nygaard and others. As mentioned earlier his selection of representative works is rather limited, and what is more, he takes at random works from various times and various literary genres. For instance he has no samples from the above-mentioned old Sagas of Saints that are preserved in manuscripts from the late 12th and early 13th centuries. The reason might have been that so many of them are only fragmentary, but we can also suspect that they did not fit well enough into his strict and simple theory of the two kinds of style. In any case, some scholars - especially Gabriel Turville-Petre in his above-mentioned work - had supposed that they were written in an Icelandic Saga Style which would correspond to Nygaards Popular Style. Accordingly, when I was asked to give a contribution to his memorial volume (*Speculum norroenum*, 1981) I found it apt to investigate this

problem a little further. My conclusion was, in short, that all those above-mentioned 18 texts of Saints' Lives were almost completely free from the idioms chosen by Nygaard to characterize the Learned Style. Some of the characteristics that Nygaard attributes to the Learned Style are, in fact, indigenous stuff which is to be found in very old juridical formulas as well as in the modern Icelandic spoken language. Other features of style that must be derived from Latin originals are only to be found in later translations or in native works which seek to imitate the Latin "book-language" as it was so aptly designated. In determining this we must, however, be very observant: Latin influence may have crept into our written language through hidden doors and, on the other hand, modern Icelandic is strongly influenced by the classical sagas which have been the models for good Icelandic narrative style in all ages.

Many features are still unexplored and unsolved relating to those different kinds of style. For the present I want to shove aside the problem of Icelandic prose style and turn for a moment to another question which has interested me very much for a long time: What were the Latin originals of those most ancient Icelandic translations of Saints' Lives like? The manuscripts used by the translators would of course be lost, but can we possibly come more or less near to them? If so, what can be learned by a close comparison of the original and the secondary text? What could the adaptors transfer directly from Latin into Icelandic - and how must they remould their material to fit it into the widely different costume of the new language? If the Icelandic texts may be characterized as real translations, closely following their originals as regards content, then how did the adaptors twist and turn the Latin expressions into Icelandic? Or are the Icelandic Saints' Sagas maybe just free versions of the Latin texts, thus making it easy for the re-creators to use their unalloyed mother-tongue?

In some cases it may prove difficult to find the right answers to these questions. The Latin manuscripts that were brought to Iceland or copied there are all lost, and their counterparts are spread all over the Christian world. Most of the Icelandic texts have been printed, even if not all the editions are of the very best; but a tremendous lot of Latin manuscripts

of Saints' Lives have never been published or researched - and will surely remain unexplored forever. All the same I have succeeded in finding very close parallels to some Icelandic Saints' Lives, and even if those Latin texts are, of course, not the exact prototypes of the Icelandic ones, they demonstrate quite clearly that what we are dealing with are actual translations, not reproductions or freely made new versions. Accordingly, it is very instructive to compare those translations with the original texts in order to find out how the translators cope with the many difficulties which the often widely different Latin style imposed upon them.

For my present research I have taken as samples two Icelandic Sagas of Saints and collated them closely with their respective Latin parallels. The first one is the Páls saga I, or the First Saga of St Paul, preserved in the ms. AM 645 4to and printed in Postola sögur (Christiania 1874), pp. 216-236, the analogous text found in Actus Apostolorum from Ch. 9 onwards to the end. The second saga discussed is Jakobs saga I, or the Passion of St James, taken from the same manuscript, AM 645 4to, published in Postola sögur, pp. 524-529, and in Isländska handskriften N^o 645 4^o. I (Lund 1885), pp. 90-99, the analogous text found in Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti II (the Abdias text), ed. J.A. Fabricius (Hamburg 1719), pp. 516-531. This second saga comes somewhat closer to the original or counterpart in Fabricius than Páls saga I does to the Acts. However, Páls saga I may also justly be called a translation of the Acts as far as the two texts go together; the main difference consists in the translator's leaving out some of the Apostle's roaming in distant countries which he finds monotonous or unimportant. We must, however, always bear in mind that we do not have the translator's exemplar; thus I have no doubt that his Latin source has followed the Apostle all the way to his tragic end. As is well known the Acts close abruptly after Paul's first two happy years in Rome, but the Icelandic text has one more chapter, in all 26 lines in the edition, giving one miracle (really the same as is told earlier in ch. 10) and an epitome of the Apostle's later travels and activities, finishing with his execution in Rome on the same day as St Peter.

In his contribution to the article on Learned and Popular Style (lærd og folkelig stíl) in the Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder, E.F. Halvorsen describes the distinctive features of the Learned Style as follows:

"Characteristic for the Learned Style is that it is more verbose than the "Popular" Style and that it uses rhetorical figures and grammatical constructions which are mostly unknown in the Nordic spoken languages of to-day and were most likely also unknown in older times. The verbosity consists in extensive use of descriptive adjectives (epithets); use of word- and sentence-parallelism, often antithetical: hreysti ok riddarakap, válk ok vandræði, syrgði hann hana dauða, en landslýör allr syrgði hann viltan; assonance and rhyme (hendingar) and alliteration: harmr ok hörmung, ráð ok røður, siðaði ok friðaði. None of this is fundamentally foreign to the spoken language or to the style of the Icelandic sagas and of the laws, but such expressions are rather uncommon in the Popular Style.

Grammatical constructions which are typical for the Learned Style are: Much use of participial constructions, for instance as an apposition to a sentence member (setningsledd) instead of a whole sentence (- - er mik sigraðan hingat sendi; riddari, leitandi ævintýra) or in verbal constructions with durative meaning (hann var öllu öðru gleymandi), or as a gerund (hverir hlutir elskandi eru); use of the dative absolute (liðnum þessum 7 vetrum); the reflexive form with passive meaning (hirð eigi þú yfir at stfigask af illu = noli vinci a malo); extensive use of hypotaxis and inflected relative (- - kona, til hveurrar er)."

In the following I shall go through the two above-mentioned texts: Páls saga I and Jakobs saga I (the Passion of St James), looking out for any hallmarks of the Learned Style and taking into consideration all the "rhetorical figures and grammatical constructions" which Halvorsen enumerates. I am going to use my hand-out as working instrument, pointing out how the translators solve the various stylistic problems offered by the Latin originals. Whenever the hand-out falls short I shall add some more examples from the texts without presenting them to you in a typewritten form. I begin with the Acts versus Páls saga I.

As the first distinctive mark Halvorsen mentions the verbosity or the richness in words (ordrikdommen) of the Learned Style, describing this phenomenon somewhat further, and giving examples. Great verbosity is, indeed, a characteristic of later works, especially those written in the Florid Style such as the Nikolaus saga of Bergur Sökkason which dates from the 14th century. Accordingly, in our texts we find very few examples of the stylistic features mentioned by Halvorsen: no extensive use of descriptive adjectives, no word-parallelism, no hendingar or rhyme, no alliteration. On the other hand, there are some instances of sentence-parallelism or antithetical constructions which, as might be expected, have their pattern in the Latin original. As samples of such constructions I point out Handout 2a, l. 14-15 and 30-31. - Such constructions are, of course, not alien to the Saga Style where they would in most cases be imitations of learned translated works even if they in no way break the rules of the spoken Icelandic language. I remind you, for instance, of the warning that Illugi the skipper gives to Þorgeir Hávarsson in Fóstbrœðra saga (Íslensk fornrit VI, p. 193): "Nú mun ek eigi flytja þik frá friðinum ok til ófriðarins, því at þú munt ekki svá gott upp taka á Íslandi sem þú tekr hér hvern dag mikinn sóma af konungi." Or the laconic characterization of Hrolleifur, the slayer of Ingimundur gamli in Vatnsdæla saga (Ísl. fornrr. VIII, p. 50): "var hann glettinn ok ágangssamr ok launaði illu gott með ráði móður sinnar." Learned chiasmus we find already in Ari's Íslendingabók (Ísl. fornrr. I, p. 10): "Hann dreymði þat at hann hygðisk vesa at lögbergi, þá es þar vas fjölmennt, ok vaka, en hann hugði alla menn aðra sofa. En síðan hugðisk hann sofna, en hann hugði þá alla aðra vakna."

So much for the rhetorical figures of the learned style which are almost totally absent in our two texts. Now we come to the grammatical constructions which Halvorsen enumerates as being special for the Learned Style. They may be divided into five categories. Let us take them in order and see if they are to be found in Páls saga I and Jakobs saga I.

As the first grammatical construction typical for the Learned Style Halvorsen counts "much use of participial constructions, for instance as an apposition to a sentence member instead of a whole sentence (- - er mik sigraðan hingat sendi; riddari, leitandi

svintýra), or in verbal constructions with durative meaning (hann var öllu öðru gleymandi), or as a gerund (hverir hlutir elskandi eru).” Such participial constructions, especially the Latinized use of the present participle, are indeed the characteristic which first comes into your mind when you hear the expression Learned Style. Therefore it is quite remarkable that our two texts are completely free from all such constructions.

How then do our two translators solve the various problems of the gerunds and the present and past participles found in their Latin originals? Simply by using the indicative mood of the Icelandic Popular Style or Saga Style. I point out some examples in my handout: 1a,4 serviens Domino / ok þjónaða ek Guði; 1a,9 ignorans / ok veit ek eigi; 2a,7 rogans eum et dicens / svaraði, etc. In the last instance we have got two introductory verbs in the Latin, but only one in the Icelandic. However, such double introduction is quite common in the Popular or Saga Style, and we have indeed some examples of this in our handout, for instance 2b,35-6 kallaði ... ok mælti. This might be one of the many stylistic traits which the saga authors have taken over from the Saints’ Lives - nota bene without breaking any rules of their mother tongue.

As the second grammatical characteristic Halvorsen mentions “the use of the dative absolute (liðnum þessum 7 vetrum).” Here our translators solve the problem in very much the same manner as regards the present participle. Examples from the handout are: 1a,28-29 positis genibus suis / þá fell hann á kné; 2a,1 collectis libris magicis / Þá tók hann ... kistur fullar fjöl- kynngisbóka, etc.

Thirdly, Halvorsen counts “the reflexive form with passive meaning (hirð eigi þú yfir at stígask af illu = noli vinci a malo).” Such constructions are not to be found in our texts at all. I have not searched carefully to see if the originals might call for them, and in that case how the problem has been solved.

As the fourth learned characteristic Halvorsen takes “extensive use of hypotaxis.” This is one of the features which are supposed to be most typical for the Learned Style as opposed to the Popular Style. The Popular Style is “essentially characterized in the negative way, viz. by the absence of Latinisms and

rhetorical figures," as Paul Diderichsen puts it in the above-mentioned article on Learned and Popular Style (lærd og folkelig stil) in the Kulturhistorisk Leksikon. As one of the "positive qualities" of the Popular Style he counts "parataxis" where Latin prefers hypotaxis." But there is Latin and Latin: as is well known the narratives in the Bible are mostly paratactical, the sentences flowing one after the other, linked together with "and - and - and." Very much the same applies to the Latin Saints' Lives, which naturally comes across in the Icelandic translations. There is, however, one slight difference: in the Icelandic translations of Páls saga and Jakobs saga we often find the conjunction en, or the double en er, where the Latin original has et. This would need further investigation, but my impression is that this is just a question of individual style. If you read original Icelandic sagas you will find that some authors have a predilection for ok (and), others for en or en er. Among the latter was Snorri Sturluson; every other sentence in his Edda, in Heimskringla and in Egils saga begins with an en er.

As the fifth and last grammatical peculiarity of the Learned Style Halvorsen mentions the "inflected relative (- - kona, til hvefarr er)." As I have shown in my above-mentioned paper this is a late phenomenon, not to be found in older Icelandic works, neither translated nor indigenous. As is well known, Icelandic has no true relative pronoun, only the "relative particles" er and sem. In the written language from the late 13th century up to the early 19th century we were happy to use the declinable interrogative as relative, following Latin and later German and Danish models, until the romantic nationalism of the 19th century prohibited such improvidence. But in the earliest times Icelandic writers solved this problem by inserting the demonstrative pronoun sá in the suitable case before the relative particle er. For examples in our handout vide 1a,5 quae mihi acciderunt / þeim er mér bárusk at hendi; 2a,7-8 accipe poenitentem, qvem / Tak þú iðrun þess er; 2a,11-12 omnes codices meos, in quibus erat inlicita praesumptio, abjecerim / ek hefi nú á braut kastat öllum bófum mínum, þeim er á var öll ólofuð dirfð, etc.

Now we have had a survey of all the main characteristics of the Learned Style, as described by E.F. Halvorsen in the

Kulturhistorisk Leksikon. Even if the original texts offer all the models for the learned features, the Icelandic translators evade them completely. Only one of Halvorsen's marks is the sentence-parallelism (sætninga-parallellisme) which, even if it is modelled upon the Latin original, in no way violates Icelandic grammatical rules.

Before completely acquitting our translators from all charge of learned contamination we had better scrutinize the texts for other erudite features; of course Halvorsen's short characterization would not cover all the possibilities.

Substantial use of adjectives is by Nygaard taken as a symptom of Latin influence. Let us have a look at our handout, 2b,26-27: hann mun upplúka augu blindra ok gefa heyrn daufum ok kveykva dauða til lífs með orði sínu. Clearly this has its counterpart in the Latin (Handout 2a,27-28). We might be tempted to stamp this as a learned trait until we call to mind the strophe from the heathen and ancient Hávamál:

Haltr ríðr hrossi,
hjörð rekr handar vanr,
daufr vegr ok dugir ...

"The limping rides his horse, the one-armed drives his flock, the deaf is able to fight valiantly." In my article in Speculum norroenum, pp. 287-288, I also give similar examples from Heimskringla and other Icelandic sagas.

Similarly, the instrumental use of dative in our handout 1b,39-40: Eyrum munu þeir heyra ok skilja eigi, augum munu þeir sjá þrifgjöf Guðs ok þekkjask eigi ... Such constructions have also been explained as learned apings - but alas! again we bump against the Hávamál:

Eyrum hlýðir,
en augum skoðar,
svá nýsisk fróðra hverr fyrir.

"With his ears he listens, with his eyes he looks around; so the wise man inspects his surroundings."

I cannot claim to have thoroughly scrutinized these two texts of Saints' Lives or Saints' Sagas, but so far I have only been able to detect very few items which I suspect of being

modelled upon the Latin in conflict with Icelandic usage. For instance, when you read in the Acts 26.14: Saule, Saule, quid me persequeris? - you find in the Icelandic Páls saga: Saule, Saule, hvat sækir þú at mér - where you would expect: hví sækir þú at mér. Such use of the interrogative - hvat instead of hví - is not unique but it seems to be restricted to religious works and therefore it is under suspicion. The same would apply to Jakobs saga, p. 526,27-28: En Jacobus, fullr ins helga anda, svaraði þeim ok mælti: "Hlýðið ér mér, bræðr ..." where the word order seems to be a slavish imitation of the Latin: Ad quæ Jacobus repletus Spiritu Sancto: Audite me (inqvi) viri fratres ...

But such instances with a Latin flavour are extremely few - just the necessary exceptions to prove the main rule: that even if those two sagas are fairly faithful renderings of the Latin originals, they are not at all written in the so-called Learned Style but, on the contrary, in the Popular Style or the Icelandic Saga Style, as it is also called, more aptly.

Many more things could be said about the Saints' Lives as parallels or models for the indigenous sagas. For instance, it remains to be investigated in what way some rhetorical rules of medieval Latin may have been passed on to the translated Saints' Lives - and from those eventually to the native sagas. Jakob Benediktsson has done some research into this and seems to have detected traces of Latin cursus in some Icelandic hagiographic works. Without our least suspicion, many characteristics of written Icelandic which have come down to the modern language from the "classical" sagas may in fact be Latin remnants, adopted by the earliest writers, Ari the Wise and the translators of the Saints' Lives.

I would like to point out one more thing, namely the use of direct speech in the sagas, both translated and original. A lot has been said and written about the very artistic use of direct speech in the Family Sagas, but in my opinion scholars ought first to have investigated this phenomenon in the translated Saints' Lives since they are the models for the style of the native sagas. A quick glance at my two texts seems to indicate that direct speech appears there in very much the same way as in the native sagas. On the whole you find the same vivid interchange of words which makes the Icelandic sagas so dramatic and

life-like. Needless to say, in the translations this is taken over directly from the Latin originals. But there is, however, one slight difference between the translated and the original sagas: in the Saints' Lives the protagonists have a greater tendency to make longer speeches to preach the gospel or to attack their opponents. I have counted the direct speech in Jakobs saga I (or Passio Sancti Iacobi) and the results are as follows: If we include the sermon of the Apostle which fills about two pages in the Postola sögur (pp. 526,30-528,25), the amount of direct speech is about 70 % of the whole text of the saga. But if we drop this address and take only the vivid interchange of words, the direct speech covers about 50 % of the text, which would be about the average for an Icelandic Family Saga. And by the way the custom of giving shorter or longer addresses is by no means alien to the native sagas. In the Saga of King Sverrir, which is one of the oldest Icelandic sagas, the king loves to give long and eloquent speeches to his men - an artistic trick later imitated by Snorri Sturluson in his Heimskringla. Scholars have looked for models in classical literature where the generals like to give long speeches of exhortation to their soldiers before the great battles; but a model closer at hand might be found in the translated Lives of the Saints. Surely King Sverrir would have been an excellent orator in real life; and let us not forget that he was a Faroese priest before he got the idea of becoming king of Norway.

Now let me sum up the main outcome of this little investigation of mine:

1. The oldest sagas written in the Icelandic language are the Saints' Lives translated from Latin in the 12th century. This fact is proved (a) by their manuscript tradition; (b) by the words of the First Grammarian, and (c) by the general rules of Christian observance which count on the reading of Saints' vitae in the mother tongue.
2. The Saints' Lives or Saints' Sagas are real translations, sticking faithfully to the Latin originals. That this is the case could be proved even more incontestably if we had got the selfsame manuscript texts that the translators used for their work.

3. All the same, the translators reshape their material strictly according to the grammatical rules of their mother tongue. If they had not preserved in their text occasional Latin word forms or phrases you would not think that you were reading a translation.
4. The style and diction of Saints' Lives are almost exactly the same as are found in the earliest original or native sagas, the contemporary sagas written around 1200, namely: sagas of Norwegian kings, sagas of Icelandic bishops and sagas of Icelandic chieftains (or, the Sturlunga Sagas). Accordingly, my investigation has strongly supported the allegation of Gabriel Turville-Petre which I quoted at the beginning of my lecture:

"In a word, the learned literature did not teach the Icelanders what to think or what to say, but it taught them how to say it."

Actus Apostolorum 20.17-36.

A Mileto autem mittens Ephesum convocavit presbyteros ecclesiae. Qui cum
 3 venissent ad eum, dixit eis: Vos scitis a prima die, qua ingressus sum in
 Asiam, qualiter vobiscum per omne tempus fuerim, serviens Domino cum omni
 humilitate et lacrimis et tentationibus, quae mihi acciderunt in insidiis
 6 Iudaeorum; quomodo nihil subtraxerim utilium, quominus annuntiarem vobis
 et docerem vos publice et per domos, testificans Iudaeis atque Graecis in
 Deum paenitentiam et fidem in Dominum nostrum Iesum. Et nunc ecce alligatus
 9 ego Spiritu vado in Ierusalem, quae in ea eventura sint mihi ignorans, nisi
 quod Spiritus Sanctus per omnes civitates protestatur mihi dicens quoniam
 vincula et tribulationes me manent. Sed nihil facio animam meam pretiosam
 12 mihi, dummodo consummen cursum meum et ministerium, quod accepi a Domino
 Iesu, testificari evangelium gratiae Dei. Et nunc ecce ego scio quia amplius
 non videbitis faciem meam vos omnes, per quos transivi praedicans regnum;
 15 quapropter contestor vos hodie, quia mundus sum a sanguine omnium, non
 enim subterfugi, quominus annuntiarem omne consilium Dei vobis. Attendite
 vobis et universo gregi, in quo vos Spiritus Sanctus posuit episcopos,
 18 pascere ecclesiam Dei, quam acquisivit sanguine suo. Ego scio quoniam intra-
 bunt post discessionem meam lupi graves in vos non parcentes gregi, et ex
 vobis ipsis exsurgent virii loquentes perversa, ut abstrahant discipulos post
 21 se. Propter quod vigilate memoria retinentes quoniam per triennium nocte et
 die non cessavi cum lacrimis monens unumquemque vestrum. Et nunc commendo
 vos Deo et verbo gratiae ipsius, qui potens est aedificare et dare heredita-
 24 tatem in sanctificationis omnibus. Argentum aut aurum aut vestem nullius concu-
 pivi; ipsi scitis quoniam ad ea, quae mihi opus erant et his, qui mecum sunt,
 ministraverunt manus istae. Omnia ostendi vobis quoniam sic laborantes
 27 oportet suscipere infirmos, ac meminisse verborum Domini Iesu, quoniam ipse
 dixit: Beatius est magis dare quam accipere. Et cum haec dixisset, positis
 30 procumbentes super collum Pauli osculabantur eum dolentes maxime in verbo,
 quod dixerat, quoniam amplius faciem eius non essent visuri. Et deducebant
 eum ad navem.

33 Actus Apostolorum 27.14-20.

Non post multum autem misit se contra ipsam ventus typhonicus, qui vocatur
 euroaquo; cumque arrepta esset navis et non posset corari in ventum,
 36 data nave flatibus, ferebatur. ... Valida autem nobis tempestate iactatis,
 sequenti die iactum fecerunt, et tertia die suis manibus armamenta navis
 39 proiecerunt. Neque sole autem neque sideribus apparentibus per plures
 dies et tempestate non exigua imminente, iam ablata erat spes omnibus
 salutis nostrae. Et, cum multa ieiunatio fuisset, tunc stans Paulus in
 medio eorum dixit: ...

42 Actus Apostolorum 28.25-27.

... dicente Paulo unum verbum, quia bene Spiritus Sanctus locutus est per
 45 Isaiam prophetam ad patres dicens: Vade ad populum istum et dic ad eos:
 Aure audietis et non intelligetis, et videntes videbitis et non perspi-
 cietis; incrassatum est enim cor populi huius, et auribus graviter
 48 audierunt et oculos suos compresserunt, ne forte videant oculis, et
 auribus audiant, et corde intelligant et convertantur, et sanem eos.

Handout 1 b

Postola sögur (ed. 1874), pp. 224.31-225.31.

- Þá sendi Paulus eptir öllum forráðsmönnum kristninnar í Effeso at þeir
 3 kvæmi til hans í Miletum. En er þeir kómu þá mælti hann við þá: "Er vituð,
 bræðr, síðan er ek kom í Asiam, hversu ek var með yör of alla tíð, ok
 6 þjónaða ek Guði með öllu litillæti ok þanum ok meingörðum, þeim er mér
 bærusk at hendi af ráðum Gyðinga. En ek sparða þá eigi við yör nyttsamligar
 kenningar, ok boðaða ek Gyðingum ok heiðnum mönnum sýnda iðrun ok trú
 9 Dróttins Jesu Krists. En nú fer ek til Jórjala, ok veit ek eigi hvat mér
 mun þar at hendi berask, nema þat at heilagr andi vitrar í borgum at ek
 12 muna bundinn vera ok pindr, en ek hræðumk þat eigi, því at ek spari eigi
 líkam minn til þísla fyrir nafni Dróttins míns, at ek fylla þjónustu hans,
 18 þá er hann gaf mér at boða orð miskunnar sinnar. En ek veit at ér munuð
 mik eigi síðan sjá, þeir es nú heyra kenningar mínar. Fyr því vátta ek nú
 í dag at ek em saklaus við alla, því at ek sparða aldregi at kenna yör
 15 heilsuráð. Hyggið at yör ok allri hjörð yóvarri! þeir menn einkum er heilagr
 andi setti byskupa yfir kristni Guðs, þá er hann leysti alla sínu blóði.
 En ek veit at eptir brautför mína munu koma ólmir ok grimmir vargar til
 18 hjarðar þessar, ok af yör sjálfum munu hefjask villumenn, þeir er leiða
 munu lærisveina eptir sér. Af því verið ér varir, ok minnizk ér kenninga
 þeira es ek kennda yör þrjá vetr þá er ek var með yör. En nú fel ek yör
 21 Guði á hendi, þeim er máttþær er at efla orð miskunnar sinnar ok gefa yör
 erfð með öllum helgum. Er vituð sjálfir at ek girndumsk eigi golls yóvars
 né silfrs né klæða, því at hendr þessar unnu til þess er ek þurfta at hafa
 24 ok þeir er með mér váru. Ek sýnda yör hversu yör byrjar at vinna ok tæja
 sjúkum ok váluðum ok minnask orða Dróttins várs Jesu Krists, því at hann
 sagði sællegra vera at gefa en at þiggja." En er Paulus hafði þetta malt
 27 þá fell hann á kné, ok váru þeir allir saman á þanum. Þá urðu allir
 hryggvir ok óglæðir ok grétu þat er Paulus sagðisk eigi mundu aprt koma.
 En allir leiddu hann ofan til sjóvar bæði karlar ok konur.

30 Postola sögur (ed. 1874), p. 233.32-37.

- En er þeir höfðu skammt frá landi siglt, þá laust í gegn þeim landsynn-
 ingi svá óðum at þeir urðu at leggja skip í rétt. En er sær tók at
 33 starask þá urðu þeir at kasta farmi ok létta skip. Þat var mörg dægr svá
 at eigi sá himintungl, ok mæddusk menn af kulða ok af hungri svá at
 flestir órvæntu sér lífs ok heilsu. Þá stóð Maulus upp millum þeira ok
 36 mælti: ...

Postola sögur (ed. 1874), p. 235.19-24.

- Þá mælti Paulus: "Nú kómr þat fram er heilagr andi mælti forðum fyrir
 39 Ýsiam spámann við feðr vára: Byrum munu þeir heyra ok skilja eigi,
 augum munu þeir sjá þrifgjöf Guðs ok þekkjask eigi; blint er hjarta lýðs
 þess, ok byrgðu þeir augu sín ok eyru at eigi sæl þeir né heyrði, ok
 42 vildu þeir eigi snúask til mín at eigi byrga ek þeim, kvæð Dróttinn."

Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti II (ed. 1719), pp. 520-521.

- Et haud mora, collectis libris magicis, Zabarias plenas ad Apostolum
 3 attulit cervicibus et suis et discipulorum impositas, et cepit eos
ignibus coram eo combuere. Sed Jacobus prohibuit: Ne forte odor in-
cendii (inquit) vexet incautos, appende Zabariis lapides et piumbum,
 6 et mitte in mare. Quod cum fecisset Hermogenes, reversus cepit tenere
 plantas Apostoli, rogans eum et dicens: Animarum liberator, accipe
 9 pœnitentem, quem invidentem et detrahentem hactenus sustinuiti. Re-
 spondens dixit Jacobus: Si veram Deo pœnitentiam obtuleris, veram
 ejus indulgentiam consequeris. Dixit ei Hermogenes: In tantum veram
 Deo pœnitentiam offero, ut omnes codices meos, in quibus erat inlicita
 12 præsumptio, abjecerim, et omnibus simul artibus renuntiaverim inimici.
 Tunc Sanctus Apostolus: Vade (inquit) per domus eorum quos evertisti,
ut et revoces Domino quæ tulisti. Doce hoc esse verum, quod antea
 15 docebas esse falsum, et hoc esse falsum, quod modo docebas verum.
 Idolum quoque quod adorabas, et divinationes quas tibi putabas ab
 eo responderi, confringe. Præterea pecunias quas malo opere acquisisti,
 18 bona ratione expende: ut sicut fuisti Filius diaboli, imitando diabolum,
 efficiaris ita Filius Dei sequendo Deum, qui quotidie etiam ingratis
 præstat beneficia, et se blasphemantibus exhibet alimenta. Si enim,
 21 cum malus esses, circa Deum, bonus circa te extitit Dominus, quanto
 magis erit circa te benignior, si magis esse cessaveris, et bonis ei
operibus cœperis complacere? Hæc et his similia dicente Jacobo, in
 24 omnibus obtemperavit Hermogenes, et ita cepit in Dei esse timore
 perfectus, ut etiam virtutes per eum plurimæ fierent à Domino.

Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti II (ed. 1719), p. 524.

- 27 et hoc ejus signum erit: Cæcorum oculos aperit, surdis reddet auditum,
 et voce sua excitabit mortuos.

Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti II (ed. 1719), p. 527.

- 30 Retribuebant mihi mala pro bonis, et odium pro dilectione mea. Præterea
 quod a suo discipulo tradendus fuerat ... prædictum fuit a Davide.

Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti II (ed. 1719), p. 528.

- 33 nolite desperari: credite tantum, et baptizamini, ut deleantur omnia
 peccata vestra.

Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti II (ed. 1719), p. 528.

- 36 Cumque duceretur ad locum supplicii, vidit paralyticum jacentem,
 et clamantem sibi: libera me a doloribus quibus omnia membra mea
cruciantur.

Handout 2 b

Postola sögur (ed. 1874), pp. 525.31-526.17.

- Þá tók hann ok lagði á bak sér ok lærisevinum sínum kistur fullar fjöl-
 3 kynngisbóka ok kastaði niðr fyrir fætur Jacobo ok vildi brenna þær í
 eldi. Jacobus mælti við hann: "Kasta þú heldr grjóti eða blýi í kist-
 urnar ok sökkt þeim í sæ niðr, at eigi fái menn skaða af dauni þeira es
 6 þær eru brenndar." Hermogenes kom aftr es hann hafði þat gert ok fell
 til föta postolanum ok bað sér líknar ok mælti: "Þú lausnari anda!
 Tak þú iðrun þess er hingat til hefir verit andskoti þinn ok ámalandi."
 9 Jacobus svaraði: "Ef þú færir Goði sanna iðrun þá mundu sanna miskunn
 af honum fá." Hermogenes svaraði: "Þat er at marki at ek færi sanna
 iðrun Goði at ek hefi nú á braut kastat öllum bókum mínum, þeim er
 12 á var öll ólofuð dirfð, ok hefi ek neitt allri fjölkynngi óvinarins."
 Jacobus svaraði: "Far þú nú til húsa þeira manna er þú hefir svikvit
 ok kalla þá aftr til Goðs es þú leiddir frá Goði, ok seg þat satt vera
 15 er þú sagðir logit, en þat logit es þú hafðir sannat. Þrjöttu ok skurð-
 goð þau öll er þú göfgaðir ok ótrú þá alla es þú fylgðir. Fé þat es þú
 eignaðisk af illu verki, veittu nú þat við góð verk. Ok svá sem þú vast
 18 sonr Djöfuis þá er þú glíköisk honum, svá vestu nú ok sonr Goðs ok
 glíksku þeim er hvern dag veitir göðgjörninga sína óverðum ok gefr
 fæzlu óvinum sínum. Ef Goð var mildr við þik þá er þú vart illr, ok mun
 21 hann nú miklu mildari við þik er þú lætr af at vera illr ok þú tekr at
 þjóna honum í góðum verkum." En er Jacobus hafði þetta mælt þá gerðisk
 Hermogenes hlýðinn þessum hlutum öllum ok varð algerr í Goðs ást, svá
 24 at hann mátti margar jartelnir geta at Goði.

Postola sögur (ed. 1874), p. 527.10-11.

- ok mun þat vera tákni hans at hann mun upplúka augu blindra ok gefa heyrn
 27 daufum ok kveykva dauda til lífs með orði sínu.

Postola sögur (ed. 1874), p. 528.13-15.

- Þeir launuðu illu gott ok guldu hatr fyrir elsku mína. Þat var fyrir
 30 sagt at hann mundi seldr verða af lærisevni sínum.

Postola sögur (ed. 1874), p. 528.29-30.

- Eigi skuluð ér örvilnask, trúið ér ok látið skírask, ok munu yðr
 33 fyrirgefask synðir yðrar.

Postola sögur (ed. 1874), p. 528.35-38.

- En er hann var til huggs leiddr þá kallaði líkþrár maðr á hann ok
 36 mælti: "Leystu mik af sótt þessi er kvælr alla líðu mína."

