

JOURNEYS TO NORWAY (AND OTHER FOREIGN PARTS) IN *NJÁLS SAGA*

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Hrútr gekk fyrir konung ok kvaddi hann. Konungr mælti: Hvat villt þú nú, Hrútr? "Ek vil beiðask, herra," sagði Hrútr, "at þér gefið mér orlof til Íslands." "Mun þinn sómi þar meiri en hér?" segir konungr. "Eigi er þat," sagði Hrútr, "en þat verðr hverr at vinna, er ætlat er." (*Njáls saga* 6.20)

Konungr mælti vel til hans ok bað hann vel fara ok kvað Hrútr vera inn roskvasta mann ok vel kunna at vera með tignum mǫnnum. (6.21)

[Njal to Gunnar:] "Gerðu svá vel, félagi, at þú halt sætt þessa ok mun, hvat vit höfum við mælk." segir hann. "Ok svá sem þér varð in fyrri utanferð þín mikil til sæmðar, þá mun þér þó sjá verða miklu meir til sæmðar; muntu koma út með mannvirðingu mikilli ok verða maðr gamall, ok mun engi maðr hér þá á sporði þér standa." (74.181)

Forsætinn [Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson] lýsti þar mikilli ánægju með heimsóknina og sagði ljóst að í Noregi væru Íslendingar meðal vina og frændfólks. (*Morgunblaðið* 15. febrúar 1997, bls. 6)

From the first three of these passages we learn several things about the way the author of *Njála*— and perhaps saga authors in general — ideally regarded the trips abroad undertaken by their heroes. On their journeys Icelanders learned to behave in the "polite society" of foreign, especially Norwegian, courts; they enjoyed much prestige abroad; and on their return home — which arose from a longing as inevitable as that which draws modern Icelanders to return home, sometimes to the bewilderment of outsiders — they commanded great respect.

The journey abroad is a fixed element in the Icelandic family sagas and tales, with its accompanying set of stereotyped motifs. Anna Kersbergen (118-145) studied many of the motifs connected with overseas journeys in *Njáls saga* — such as visits from Norwegians, fetching of timber, claiming an inheritance, romance with a noble lady, shipwrecks, fights with vikings — and showed them to have frequent parallels in other sagas. Lars Lönnroth (71-76), extending Joseph Harris's work on the structure of the sagas, showed that there was a three-part "action pattern" underlying these motifs in the sagas, consisting of the departure and the various motifs associated with it; a series of tests while abroad, which included visits to the court and viking adventures; and finally the homecoming, comprising details such as the leave-taking and the return to Iceland.

There was clearly a historical background for such journeys. Although their forebears eagerly left Norway in large numbers in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, young Icelanders of the saga age were drawn in large numbers to the royal centers of the ancestral homeland. The reception given to young Icelanders by the Norwegian king was generally warm: in some cases the king could look forward to hearing a *drápa* or other poem composed about himself; in others, perhaps because of familiarity with the visitor's family, he could look forward to seeing or hearing of heroic deeds. There may also be a literary source for the journey abroad as we see it in some of the sagas, namely the

southern courtly ideals promoted in the thirteenth-century Norwegian court, expressed in the *Konungs Skuggsjá* and seen in imported literature, such as this passage from the beginning of the lai of *Gugemur*, where the benefits of a visit to the king's court are taken for granted: *þægar sem hann var heiman fær þá sænde hann fader hans heiman til konungs hirðar at þinna kononge* (*Strengleikar* 12; similar on 110). The description above of Hrut having learned how to associate with high-born men seems to derive from this ideal. Although this element is probably foreign and late, it does not undercut the historical reality of trips abroad during the saga age. This historical underpinning is general, however, and it is not likely that the specific journeys undertaken in *Njáls saga* have much grounding in fact.

This paper will not be concerned with motifs themselves, or the structural patterns which can be erected on them, or the historicity of the journeys, but will survey the eight principal voyages made by leading figures in *Njálsand* attempt to show how carefully the author adapted the journey pattern and journey motifs to his narrative.

The journeys of Hrut (chs. 2-6) and Gunnar (chs. 28-31) have received the most attention, because they conform so well to the expected stereotypes. Both become the followers of rulers in Norway (Hrut serves King Harald Grey-cloak; Gunnar, Earl Hakon Sigurdarson), win sea-battles against viking fleets, and have amorous intrigues with noble women. And yet it is not sufficient to label these journeys as “stylized and ‘typical’” (Lönnroth 75), or as Finar Ól. Sveinsson put it, “litlaust og óserkennilegt” (149). I doubt that anything in *Njáls saga* is merely typical, and I hope to show that it is possible for a true artist to select and elaborate stock motifs so that they become more than dull clones. Take the impetus for setting out: Hrut is summoned to Norway by his uncle Ozur, to claim the inheritance left by his brother. This is, to be sure, a typical motif – Kersbergen (120) has shown that the claiming of an inheritance also initiates journeys in *Grettla*, *Eigla*, *Bjarnar saga hítalækappa*, and *Flóamanna saga* – and yet the selection of this motif for this one place in *Njáls saga* is an inspired one. For one thing, it makes possible the illuminating scene between Hrut and Mord at the end of ch. 2:

Hrútr kom austr á Rangárvöllu til Marðar ok hafði þar góðar viðtökur. Hrútr segir Merði allt efni sitt ok bað hann ráð á leggja. Mörðr sagði: Hversu mikit fé er þetta? Hrútr sagði vera tvau hundruð marka, ef hann fengi allt. Mörðr mælti: “Mikit er þat í móti erfðinni minni, ok skalt þú vist fara, ef þú vill.” Síðan breyttu þeir málgaganum, ok skyldi hon sitja þrjá vetr í fesum. (2.11)

The contrast between the two men is evident: Hrut, not blinded by greed, is in an honest dilemma, torn between his agreement to marry Unn in half a month and the honor of his family. Mord, on the other hand, has one interest, and comes right to the point with a question that Hrut would not have asked: “Hversu mikit fé er þetta?” On hearing that the amount is high, he agrees to postpone the wedding – for purely financial reasons. Mord's greed will play a major role in the sad story of his daughter's marriage to Hrut. More generally, it is fitting that Hrut's journey abroad be motivated by a quarrel over a sum of money, for this is exactly what lies ahead with respect to Unn's dowry.

The impetus for Gunnar's voyage, on the other hand, comes from another stock motif, the visit by a Norwegian (Kersbergen 119). Up to this point in the saga (ch. 28) Gunnar has performed the task of recovering Unn's dowry, employing trickery and following Njal's directions, and he now needs to establish his credentials as a hero. A journey abroad is clearly called for, and of the various possible ways of initiating it, the author chooses the right one. Reclaiming an inheritance, apart from the fact that it has already been used, would be inappropriate to Gunnar's story, as would be the fetching of timber (Kersbergen 119-120). For Gunnar himself to conceive an urge to travel is another

possibility, but in general Gunnar is a passive rather than an active hero, one who tends to react to the doings of others rather than initiate actions himself, and thus the author fitly chooses to have a Norwegian visitor at Hlidarendi, Hallvard the White, who spends the winter trying to persuade Gunnar to go abroad. This is the only time in the saga that this motif appears, and it is nicely elaborated by making Hallvard an unusually well-travelled merchant, having visited even Russia and Permian, so that Gunnar is moved to ask Hallvard to promise to take him to the Baltic – which he eventually does (ch. 30). In the spring Gunnar consults with Njal, and when Njal reacts positively Gunnar is ready to go. The motif of the visiting Norwegian also suits Gunnar's modesty; young heroes who decide by themselves to travel abroad are sometimes quite difficult and self-centered, like Grettir and Gunnlaug.

It also suits Gunnar's modesty that, once in Norway, he does not seek out the earl immediately, but prefers to wait until he has proven himself, as we see in these twinned exchanges:

Hallvarðr spurði Gunnar, ef hann vildi ráðask til Hákonar jarls.  
 “Ég vil ek þat,” segir Gunnarr. (29.75)  
 Hallvarðr spyrr Gunnar, ef hann vildi finna Hákon jarl. Gunnarr  
 segir sér þat vera nær skapi, – “því at nú em ek at nokkuru reyndr,  
 en þá var ek at engu, er þú batt þess næstum.” (31.83)

Although both Hrut and Gunnar have what may be called successful journeys – both men are well received and perform heroic exploits and experience the favor of Norwegian rulers – the author makes the journeys more than merely routine. About Hrut's voyage the most conspicuous thing is the role played by the queen mother Gunnhild. Gunnar, as we have seen, postpones presenting himself to Earl Hakon until he has proven himself; when he finally appears, the earl welcomes him and invites him to spend the winter with him, and during that winter Gunnar is treated with great respect. Hrut, on the other hand, is summoned by Gunnhild to Konungahella and told to go to the king; when they present themselves, it is due to her urging that the king agrees to make Hrut one of his followers. When he does so – after the required two weeks' delay, during which Hrut has spent his nights in an upper chamber with the queen mother – the king lets her decide where Hrut is to sit, and she assigns him a prominent place.

Gunnhild's domination of Hrut extends even to the mission which brought him to Norway, the recovery of his estate. Although both she and the king supply Hrut with men and ships with which to track down a man named Soti, who has taken Hrut's inheritance, the actual killing of Soti and the recovery of the inheritance is managed by Gunnhild. Instead of being given that adventure, Hrut fights with a viking named Atli whose fleet he encountered in the Øresund while pursuing Soti. The author's purpose, it seems, is to show how completely Hrut's affairs – martial as well as sexual – are dictated by Gunnhild, and yet to allow him to exhibit his valor in one exploit. Ulf the Unwashed spoke accurately when he said, “Bæði er nú, Hrútr, at þú hæggr stórt, enda átt þú mikit at launa Gunnhildi” (5.18). But even this sea-battle with vikings, in which Hrut deals a hard blow, is undercut by one detail:

Hrútr sneri nú í móti Atla; hann hjó þegar í skjöld Hrúts ok klauf allan niðr. Þá fekk Atli steinshogg á höndina, ok fell niðr sverðit. Hrútr tók sverðit ok hjó undan honum fótinn; síðan veitti hann honum banasár. (5.18)

The splitting of an opponent's entire shield usually accompanies a killing,<sup>1</sup> and it would be natural that Atli, having split Hrut's shield, would now deliver him his death blow. But instead an unexpected stone knocks the sword from Atli's hand, and the advantage shifts to Hrut. This reliance on good luck rather than on valor diminishes Hrut's killing of Atli.

Nothing diminishes Gunnar's exploits (chs. 28-32), however, and we may reckon his journey abroad as the most unblemished and glorious of all in the family sagas. There are parallels with Hrut's trip: both are given longships and, together with the partner with whom they sailed from Iceland, are forced to deal first of all with vikings connected with Gotland, who lie in their way. But where Hrut and Ozur received their longships from the Norwegian king and his mother, Gunnar gets his from his partner Hallvard and from Hallvard's kinsman Olvir. And where Hrut killed two men, one by a stroke of luck, "Gunnar gerði ýmisst, at hann hjó eða skaut, ok hafði margr maðr bana fyrir honum" (30.78).<sup>2</sup> Nor do Gunnar's exploits end there: he and Hallvard have many unspecified victories around Småland and in the Baltic (30.79), and then defeat a second pair of viking brothers off the island of Ösel, from which they take much treasure.

Physical dexterity, both in battle (30.79, 81) and in games (30.82), and doubling are the main characteristics of Gunnar's expedition. The two major battles with viking brothers are matched by the two rulers who invite him to visit and who reward him generously, King Harald Gormsson in Hedeby and Earl Hakon Sigurdarson in Trondheim. The erotic element, so central in Hrut's journey and so crucial for his subsequent life in Iceland, is present, again in duplicate, in Gunnar's journey, but is less entangling, and serves mainly to show how highly Gunnar is valued: Harald offers him a wife and much land if he will stay in Denmark, and Gunnar's relations with Earl Hakon's kinswoman Bergljot are such that the earl would have married her to him had he asked.

The journeys of Hrut and Gunnar, then, are "typical" in a general sense, but are also carefully elaborated to contrast with each other and to integrate with the heroes' lives back in Iceland. Gunnar's can be seen as more typical than Hrut's, if only because it is such a perfect example of what a journey abroad should be. The erotic connection is particularly significant in linking the adventures abroad with the adventures at home, and in contrasting the two stories: the curse placed on Hrut by Queen Gunnhild blights and puts an end to his marriage to Unn; the finery and the splendid reputation which Gunnar acquires at the courts of Harald and Hakon may be said to initiate his blighted marriage with Hallgerd, for it is clearly his appearance and his fame which attract her to him at the Althing (33.85).

The other six journeys in the saga are less in conformity with the ideal pattern: those of Kolskegg (chs. 75, 81), Thrain (chs. 75, 82-86, 88), Grim and Helgi (chs. 75, 83-86, 88-90), Hrapp Orgumleidason (chs. 87-88), Flosi (chs. 149, 153-155, 157-159), and Kari (chs. 152, 154-155, 158-159). These journeys appear in two widely separated clusters, in chapters 75 and 81 to 88, and in the last eleven chapters, 149-159.

The first cluster is introduced as such at the beginning of ch. 75:

Þráinn Sigfússon sagði þat konu sinni, at hann ætlaði at fara  
utan þat sumar; hon sagði, at þat væri vel. Tók hann sér fari með

<sup>1</sup> See Skarphedin against Sigmund (45.116), Gunnar against Onund the Fair (72.176), Thorhall against Grim (145.402), Thorgeir Skorargeir against Thorvald (145.403), and Thorgeir against Leidolf the Strong (146.418)

<sup>2</sup> Similar language was used, not of Hrut, but of Hrut's ally Ulf the Unwashed: "Úlfr gekk vel fram ok gerði ýmisst, hjó eða lagði" (5.18).

Högná inum hvíta. Gunnar tók sér fari ok Kolskegg með Arnfinni inum vikverska.

Þeir Grímr ok Helgi Njálssynir báðu föður sinn at leyfa þeim at fara utan. Njáll svarar: “Erfið mun ykkir verða utanferðin. svá at tvisýnt mun verða, hvárt þit fáitð haldit lífinu, en þó munuð þit fá sömð í sumu ok mannvirðing, en eigi órvænt, at af leiði vandræði, er þit komið út.” Þeir báðu jafnan at fara, ok varð þat, at hann bað þá fara ef þeir vildi. Réðu þeir sér þá far með Bárði svarta ok Oláfi, syni Ketils ór Eldu. Ok er nú mikil umræða á, at mjök leysisk á braut inir betri menn ór sveitinni. (75.181-2)

Here we see elements typical of the first, or departure, stage: the motivation (outlawry in the case of Gunnar and Kolskegg, independent urge for adventure for Thrain, Grim and Helgi), consultation with a family member, and arranging for passage. Gunnar’s journey will have one more element – saying farewell and leaving the homestead – but it is then aborted and is thus not counted here.

Kolskegg goes further than his brother, but his journey is also incomplete, a one-way journey (like that of another hero’s brother, Thorstein in *Grettis saga*). The reader is prepared for this by Kolskegg’s parting remark to Gunnar: “en seg þú þat frændum mínum ok móður mínni, at ek ætla mér ekki at sjá Ísland, því at ek mun spyrja þik látinn, frændi, ok heldr mik þá ekki til útferðar” (75.183). In spite of the non-return, there remain some stock features: the reason for leaving Iceland is that he has been sentenced to three years’ exile; he takes passage with a Norwegian named Arnfinn; after a winter at Vik – though there is no mention of a visit to a ruler – he goes to Denmark and is received with great honor by King Svein Fork-beard. Kolskegg’s dream of a man gleaming with light is not typical, but in a sense it repeats the erotic element which we saw in the first two journeys: just as King Harald Gormsson offered Gunnar “kvánfang ok ríki mikit” (31.82), so here in Denmark does a visionary figure offer his brother “kvánfang, ok skalt þú vera riddari mín” (81.197). King Harald correctly interprets this to mean that Kolskegg will be God’s knight and go south, and eventually Kolskegg marries in Constantinople and becomes leader of the Varangian guards.

The other journeys in this cluster – those of Thrain, of Grim and Helgi, and of Hrapp (the only one not announced at the beginning of ch. 75) form a set of interwoven adventures which determine the events at home in Iceland all the way up to the burning. Thrain’s harboring of Hrapp, and the blame that falls on the Njalssons because of this, create bad feeling which leads to the slaying of Thrain and to Njal’s adoption of Hoskuld Thrainsson, whose slaying then leads directly to the burning.

The journeys in the second cluster – those of Flosi and Kari – are the direct result of the burning: Flosi and his companions are required to go abroad by an arbitrated settlement for the burning reached in ch. 145, and Kari, having killed a number of the burners in Iceland, goes abroad in order complete his vengeance by killing Gunnar Lambason and Kol Thorsteinsson, as he announces in ch. 152.

Just as the first two journeys (Hrut’s and Gunnar’s) introduce the first part of the saga, the story of Gunnar, these two clusters of journeys frame the second part of the saga, the story of Njal: the journeys of Thrain, Hrapp and the Njalssons look ahead to the central event, the burning, and the journeys of Flosi and Kari look back on it.

The most striking feature of the three journeys in the first cluster is that they all end with the heroes out of favor with the Norwegian ruler, Earl Hakon Sigurdarson – with varying degrees of guilt. Hrapp, from the moment he appears seeking passage from Iceland because he has killed a man, is a perfect negative example of the journey abroad,

just as Gunnar was a perfect positive example. On arriving in Norway, instead of going to the ruler, he seeks out Gudbrand of Dalir, a friend of the earl's. His reception, in sharp contrast to the others we have seen thus far in the saga, is a few degrees below lukewarm: "Guðbrandr mælti: 'Ekki lízk mér svá á þik sem þú munir gafumaðr vera'" (87.210). When he offends Gudbrand by seducing his daughter (the erotic element gone wrong) and killing his servant, the earl has him outlawed. With his sure instinct for trouble, Hrapp makes things even worse by burning down a temple belonging jointly to the earl and to Gudbrand, and the earl then personally takes charge of his pursuit.

Thrain, on the other hand, falls into disfavor only at the end of an otherwise successful and ideal journey. He is well received by Earl Hakon on account of his close relationship to Gunnar of Hlidarendi and spends the winter with him. The following spring he volunteers, in lieu of Gunnar, to pursue a viking named Kol whom Hakon had outlawed. With five ships given him by the earl, he finds Kol and defeats him in a sea fight, and on returning to Trondheim he is given the ship "Vulture" by the earl and invited to stay as long as he wishes. All this has strong reminiscences of the journeys of Gunnar and Hrut, even to the extent that the viking Kol comes out of the Gota river and the fight with him takes place in the Øresund. There is one reminiscence, it should be noted, which places Thrain more on the level of Hrut than on that of Gunnar: we saw above how a chance stone struck Atli's arm and destroyed his advantage in the fight against Hrut, and the same thing happens with Kol and Thrain, with almost the same wording:

Kolr hæggr til hans, ok kom í skjöldinn Þráins ok klauf ofan skjöldinn. Þá fekk Kolr steinshogg á höndina; fell þá niðr sverðit. Þráinn hjó til Kols, ok kom á fóttinn, svá at af tók; eptir þat drápu þeir Kol. (82.200)

Although this slightly undercuts Thrain's valor, he enjoys great favor from Earl Hakon until the time he agrees to take Hrapp back to Iceland. This decision to help a man outlawed by the earl, after having killed another of the earl's outlaws, reveals the same unsteady judgement that Thrain showed when he agreed to be present at the slaying of Thord Freedman's son (41.107). Thrain is not a wicked man, but he allows himself to be talked into things he should not do, and in both cases he incurs the wrath of the Njalssons which will lead to his death.

As for Grim and Helgi, the sons of Njal, they too have an auspicious beginning, (apart from being blown about at sea and getting lost): they meet Kari and become followers of Earl Sigurd Hlodvisson in Orkney. But when they come to Norway they experience the bad luck that their father predicted. Earl Hakon, after three vain attempts at finding Hrapp's hiding place on Thrain's ship, turns his anger against Grim and Helgi. This is patently unfair, as Svein Hakonarson points out to his father – "Þat er eigi gott ráð," segir Sveinn, 'at snúa sökinni á óvalda, en láta þann undan setja, er sekr er'" (89.221)<sup>3</sup> – but nonetheless it nearly costs the Njalssons their lives. The earl eventually

<sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy how the sons of Hakon are presented as being more fair-minded and gracious than their father. Eirik sees to it that Thrain is well outfitted (82.199) and on his return from defeating Kol points out that Thrain deserves to be rewarded with more than words (82.200); when Hakon wants Kari to swear that he never planned to attack him, Eirik points out that this is an unfair request, since Kari has always been their friend. Thus it is not surprising that Helgi and Grim are not willing to make a settlement with Hakon, but are willing to do so with Eirik. Svein speaks out for fair treatment at 88.219, and 89.221 (where, in addition to the passage above, he reminds the earl that it would be wrong to kill the Njalssons at night). On the same page, his seeing to it that the Njalssons are taken prisoner, rather than killed as would be expected, is an act of grace: "Þá sótti at Sveinn Hákonarson ok lét bera at þeim skjöldu, ok urðu þeir handteknir." Finally, at 89.222, Svein points out to his father that the Njalssons must, logically, be braver than the brave men they killed.

offers a settlement, which the Njalssons only accept from his son Eirik, and they leave Norway under these terms, alienated from the earl but enjoying the favor of his son.

These three interconnected journeys all show how things can go wrong on journeys abroad, not only as a result of wind and fog (as with the Njalssons), but more because of human meanness and the way one Icelander was sometimes made to pay for the fault of another Icelander. Where Hrapp fell into disfavor by being thoroughly wicked, and Thrain by making a foolish decision to help him, the sons of Njal are perfectly innocent of wrongdoing against the earl. The great inequity which occurs in Norway because of these three journeys will have to be corrected back in Iceland.

The final journeys, those of Flosi and Kari, come after that inequity has been settled, and a worse has come about, which in turn must be settled. Just as the first inequity had to be settled in Iceland, so must the burning which took place in Iceland be finally settled abroad, and that is the reason for Flosi's and Kari's journeys.

The departure stage of Flosi's journey involves bargaining with a man from Trondheim named Eyjolf Nose, who wishes to marry and settle in Iceland. Flosi purchases from him a ship large enough for himself and his men, paying for it with land and with support for Eyjolf's marriage suit (ch. 149). The arrangements are mutually satisfactory and amiable. The episode, unnecessary to the flow of the narrative, shows Flosi's good nature and sets a pleasant tone for what follows.

The actual departures take place in a pair of matching chapters (153 and 154). In the first of these chapters Flosi and his men are beset with bad weather and "höfu þeir langa útivist" (153.438), like the Njalssons (83.201) but with even worse consequences: their ship is wrecked. Like the Njalssons too, they come to Mainland in Orkney, which was not their original plan, and in this case is particularly unfortunate since at the burning Flosi killed Helgi Njalsson, who had been a follower of Earl Sigurd Hlodvisson. Flosi decides that it would be better to face the earl than to hide, and when the earl asks "Hvat segir þú mér til Helga Njalssonar, hirðmanns mins?" Flosi answers boldly, "Þat, at ek hjó höfuð af honum" (153.439). The earl angrily orders Flosi and his men to be seized, but Thorstein Hallsson, Flosi's brother-in-law, pleads for him, with the result that the earl comes to peace with Flosi and even makes him his follower, in the place of Helgi Njalsson.

Kari sets out a fortnight later, and has a swift, untroubled crossing to his destination at Fridarey, between Shetland and Orkney, where he stays with a good friend David the White. On Christmas Day they come to Mainland, and listen from outside the hall to Gunnar Lambason's lying account of how Skarphedin wept at the burning. Kari then rushes in with drawn sword and beheads Gunnar, and the earl – whom he had formerly served – orders him put to death. No one is willing to seize him, however, and Flosi even speaks up for Kari: "Ekki gerði Kári þetta fyrir sakleysi; er hann í engum sættum við oss; gerði hann þat at, sem hann átti" (155.444). Kari then walks away untouched.

These parallel scenes, in both of which an Icelander provides grievous offense to a Scandinavian ruler, are reminiscent of the earlier cluster of journeys – with the difference that instead of Icelanders leading other Icelanders into trouble, here we have Icelanders helping other Icelanders out of trouble. These scenes match the mood of peace

and forgiveness, begun already in Iceland, which every reader feels strongly at the end of the saga, a mood the more remarkable for its co-existence with harsh bloodshed.<sup>4</sup>

Flosi's and Kari's untypical journeys abroad parallel each other in their endings as well as in their beginnings: both make a pilgrimage to Rome to receive absolution (the ultimate form of forgiveness), again in successive chapters and again with Flosi's journey coming first (in ch. 158). On their return to Iceland, in what might be seen as a nice symmetry, it is Kari who endures "langa útivist" (159.462) and shipwreck.<sup>5</sup> This shipwreck brings him to Svinafell, a place he did not plan to visit, just as Flosi's shipwreck brought him to Mainland in Orkney, but in both places the unexpected result of the unlooked-for but bravely faced visit is reconciliation.

There is one final journey to be considered, one which forms a kind of coda to the journeys abroad in the saga, and to the saga itself:

Þat segja menn, at þau yrði ævilok Flosa, at hann færi utan, þá er hann var orðinn gamall, at sækja sér húsavið, ok var hann í Nóregi þann vetr. En um sumarit varð hann siðbúinn. Röeddu menn um, at vánt væri skipit. Flosi sagði, at væri orit gott gomlum ok feigum, ok sté á skip ok lét í haf, ok hefir til þess skips aldri spurk síðan. (159.463)

The fetching of wood for a hall or church in Iceland is a stereotyped motif, and so of course is the winter's stay in Norway and even the late start home. But to do all this as an old man, and to board an unsafe ship with the thought that it will conduct him to his appointed death, is far from the journey pattern and shows, for one final moment, how dexterously the *Njála* author has adapted the motifs of the journey abroad to the artistic and thematic needs of his saga.

<sup>4</sup> The saintly King Brian's attitude toward outlaws contributes to this mood: "Brjálln komungr gaf upp titlogum sínum þrysvar ina sömu sök; en ef þeir misgerðu optar, þá lét hann deima þá at lofum, ok má af því líku marka, hvílikr komungr hann var" (154.442).

<sup>5</sup> The language describing Flosi's shipwreck in Orkney and Kari's shipwreck in Iceland is similar: "Fundu þeir eigi, fyrr en þá keyrði á land upp um nótt, ok varð þar mannbjörg, en skip brotnaði allt í spán" (153.438); "en um sfoir tóku þeir Ingólfshöfði ok brutu þar skipit allt í spán, en þó varð mannbjörg" (159.462).

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