

**AKKERISFRAKKI. TRADITIONS CONCERNING ÓLÁFR TRYGGVASON AND HALLFREÐR ÓTTARSSON VANDRÆÐASKÁLD AND THE PROBLEM OF THE CONVERSION**

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According to the opening words of Ari Þorgilsson's account of the Conversion, in chapter 7 of his *Íslendingabók*, Óláfr Tryggvason brought Christianity into Norway and out to Iceland. He sent Pangbrandr to Iceland, and after the failure of that mission he flew into a rage and threatened to maim or kill those Icelanders who were in Norway. That same summer he extracted from Hjalti Skeggjason and Gizurr Teitsson a promise of support and the assurance that the prospects for a successful Conversion were good. Upon their return to Iceland, accompanied by the priest Þormóðr, their efforts on behalf of the new religion and those of their opponents culminated in the famous scene at the alþingi when the pagan lawspeaker Þorgeirr went under the cloak and emerged to proclaim a new religion for the land.

Ari represents the best and most trustworthy source (Strömbäck 1975), but as the matter is taken up in later writings and becomes considerably more voluminous, culminating, perhaps, in such a "monument of bombast and rhetoric" (Strömbäck 1975: 23) as the Longest Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason, a window is opened into how Icelanders, learned and lay both in my view, made sense of their past.

If, then, one goes beyond Ari and considers as a whole the materials concerning the Conversion, one finds that the central moments include, beside the missions and the culminating scene at the alþingi in the summer of 999, a crucial encounter in Niðaróss between various young Icelandic men of good family and the zealous missionary king of Norway. Most readers will probably know this scene best from its presentation in Snorri's version of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* in *Heimskringla*. Þórarinn Neffjólfsson, Hallfreðr Óttarsson, Brandr Vermundarson inn örvi, and Þorleikr Brandsson, pagans all, wish to depart Trondheim when they learn that the Christian king will ask them to convert, but the weather is against them; then the king forbids their departure. After Michaelmas is sung, Kjartan Ólafsson confesses to enjoying the ceremony and agrees to the king's invitation to accept baptism. Later Hallfreðr accepts the same invitation, but wins the concession that the king himself will baptize him, and further, in connection with becoming Óláfr's liege man, that the king will never drive him away; thus the king nicknames him *vandræðaskáld*.

As usual Snorri is conflating. To judge from Oddr the Monk's *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, *Kristni saga*, and *Laxdæla saga* on the one hand and *Hallfreðar saga* on the other, there were separate or at least varying traditions about the encounters of some of these Icelanders with King Óláfr, in each case situating the first encounters on the waters of the Trondheim fjord and later adding the details of the Icelanders' conversion on land. Oddr, *Kristni saga*, and *Laxdæla saga* focus on the encounter between Kjartan and the king. In Oddr's *Óláfs saga* (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1932), rubrics indicate new sections in both main manuscripts: "Íslendinga þátr" in AM 310 and "Frá Íslendingum" in Stockholm 18. They agree that three ships came one fall from Iceland, and the passenger lists agree roughly with that offered by Snorri. Oddr reports that they have three times been unable to put to sea, but he does not motivate their desire to depart. There follows the famous scene of the swimming contest between an unknown stranger who later reveals himself to be Óláfr Tryggvason and Kjartan Ólafsson, who according to 310 takes on the contest himself only after Hallfreðr declines his urgings; this detail is missing in Stockholm 18. Three times the two swimmers dive, and the disguised king finally proves himself the stronger. After revealing himself as the monarch, Óláfr

persuades Kjartan to accept a cloak, and although this annoys the other Icelanders, presumably because it would put Kjartan under an obligation to the king, it appears to be the first step toward the personal conversion of Kjartan. Even when, in the decidedly more baroque version recounted in *Laxdæla saga*, Kjartan sets out to the decisive assembly at which he will be persuaded to convert declaring himself ready to burn the king in, one senses that this swimming scene and the gift of the cloak were decisive.

*Hallfreðar saga* has another swimming scene and another cloak, and this is one of the more curious scenes in the entire saga. Hallfreðr is traveling alone, not with the other prominent Icelanders, and he arrives in summer. Nor does he actually come all the way into Niðaróss, but stops off at Agðanes, and there he learns that his former patron Hákon jarl has died and been replaced by the zealot Christian Óláfr Tryggvason, whose enthusiasm for missionary endeavors appears to be endless. As in Snorri (and in *Laxdæla saga*), the king's missionary zeal causes the Icelanders to wish to depart, and now they call on their gods (all the versions other than *Möðruvallabók* state this explicitly) for a favorable wind, and all versions explain who will be paid off depending on the pagan country to which the wind will blow them, Freyr if it is Sweden and Thor or Odin if it is Iceland. Instead of a fair wind, however, they get a brisk onshore breeze that blows them in toward Niðaróss, and that night a major storm arrives from the same direction. The next morning one of the men on the nearby battle ships realizes that the merchants are in trouble and rows out with 30 men. He is in the prow according to *Möðruvallabók* and steering according to the other versions, which add that he is wearing a green cloak (the relatively rare word *ólpa* is used). Unlike Kjartan, who did not deign to ask the name of the other contestant in the swimming contest, Hallfreðr asks the large skipper of the warship his name and gets the strange answer "Akkerisfrakki." At that moment their anchor cable parts, and the stranger dives down and retrieves the cable so that the anchor can be retrieved. This prompts a *staka* from Hallfreðr, to which the stranger responds in kind.

Hallfreðr begins the exchange with these four lines:

Fœrum festar várar,  
ferr særoka at knerri,  
svqrð tekr heldr at herða,—  
hvar es Akkerisfrakki?  
Let us move our moorings,  
a squall approaches the ship,  
the shrouds begin to grow taut,—  
where is the anchor fluke?

The response of the *ólpu*maðr:

Enn í ólpu grönni  
ek fekk dreng til strengjar,  
þanns hnakkmiða hnykkir, —  
hér es Akkerisfrakki.  
Still in a green cloak  
I got a rope for the cable,  
the one that pulls the buoy line,—  
here is the anchor-bold one.

I follow here the texts as printed by Finnur Jónsson in *Skjaldeightning* (A1:152, 167; B1:144, 158) and in Einar Ól. Sveinsson's edition of *Hallfreðar saga* (1939:153), although my understanding of Óláfr's differs from theirs. Although the verses are metrically *dróttkvætt*, despite the missing full rhyme in the last line of each, the diction is quite straightforward, with one clause per line and no apparent kennings. In Óláfr's verse, I prefer to retain *Enn* at the beginning of the first line, not just because of its plurality in the manuscripts, but also because I

believe that Finnur Jónsson and Einar Ól. Sveinsson misread the verse. Finnur Jónsson's translation of the first three lines, using initial *Einn*, is "Jeg skaffede én svend (mig selv) i grön kofte for at få fat i tovet, en som kan oprykke ankerspidsen (?); Einar Ól. Sveinsson has "Ég fékk einn dreng i grænni úlpu til að fara (kafa) til strengjar; hann hnykkir í dufltaugina." According to these readings, Óláfr says that he supplied someone to do the job, an awkward way of boasting that one has done something oneself. The problem vanishes if *drengr* is read not as the obvious "lad" but rather as the term found among the ship's heiti in the *pulur* of Snorra Edda (pul. IV z 10 in Finnur Jónsson 1912-15, A1:674, B1: 669). In *Lexicon Poeticum* Finnur Jónsson glossed this term with "tov" (1931b: 85, s.v. drengr 1), which seems reasonable given the apparent Old French loan *drenc*, modern French *dran* "brace [line for trimming a yard or boom]" (cf. de Vries 1962: 83, s.v. drengr 2); in the *pula*, the term following is *dragreip*. Thus, as I read the verse, Óláfr is saying that he supplied a rope to be used as an anchor cable, the one that will pull up the *hnakkmiði*. Finnur Jónsson's tentative translation of this term as "ankerspidsen (?)" (1912-15, 1B: 144) later gave way "en del af ankret, vistnok en ring ved midten" (1931b: 268, s.v. hnakkmiði). Kock (1926: 58, Not. 1081) thought that the *hnakkmiði* had to be parallel to the *streng* of the previous line. Fritzner, however, has "ankerbøje," with which Falk (1912) concurred, and this reading, also used by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, is the one I have adopted.

My translations of *Akkerisfrakki* are determined by the prose. As Einar Ól. Sveinsson pointed out in his note to this stanza, by comparison with *hræfrakki* "sword" and the heiti *frakka* "spear," *akkerisfrakki* ought to refer poetically to the sharp part of an anchor that penetrates the sea bottom, that is, its fluke (*akkerisfleinn* in ordinary usage). Hallfreðr's use of the term would then be metonymic, but in heavy seas and high winds it is the holding power of an anchor, that is, the degree to which it can dig itself into the sea bottom, that is of greatest importance. However, there is the additional element in the context as the saga presents it, namely that the unidentified stranger on the longship has already identified himself as *Akkerisfrakki*. Encountering the term as a name, one probably thinks of something like "Anchor-bold" (so Finnur Jónsson 1912-15, 1B: 144; 1931b: 5, s.v. *Akkerisfrakki*). In the context of the prose, then, Hallfreðr's use of the name to refer to the lost anchor would be either a willful disregarding of the stranger or a challenge to him. I therefore understand Óláfr's repetition of Hallfreðr's last line, with the incremental variation "Hér es" for "Hvar es," as a response to the challenge and a reaffirmation of the name "Anchor-bold."

Following this exchange, the merchants row their vessel into a sheltered area and presumably drop anchor without further incident. Later they learn that the stranger was King Óláfr Tryggvason, and in the following scenes Hallfreðr is baptized by the king.

In both the *Kjartan* and the *Hallfreðr* stories, the Icelanders know the king by identity only, and they are unable to escape from him and his influence because the wind will not cooperate; the stories part ways in that the king himself bans departure in most of the *Kjartan* versions, whereas the pagan gods completely fail the Icelanders in the *Hallfreðr* version and indeed endanger them. Thereafter, in both versions an unidentified stranger appears on the waters of the Trondheim fjord. In both cases he dives deep, once in a contest, once in a rescue mission. In both cases a cloak is involved, and in both cases the Icелander is apparently disposed toward his forthcoming conversion on the basis of the meeting. In sum, it hardly seems too much to imagine that the two versions are multiforms of one and the same scene. Any search for a literary relationship would probably have to start from the fact of Oddr's primacy and would also have to take into consideration the close relationship between Óláfr Tryggvason and Hallfreðr Óttarsson implicit throughout the literature, which might have provided an invitation or motive for the transfer of stories about Óláfr from other Icelanders to him. My point here is

not to conduct such a search, however, but rather to try to come to terms with the stories as we have them. Certainly their doubling, and the inclusion of both in Longest Saga must indicate their importance. Presumably the repeated details I have enumerated must represent the core of that importance.

In 1963, Lars Lönnroth suggested a relationship between the Kjartan story and St. Martin's gift of half his cloak to a beggar, and more recently Gerd Wolfgang Weber (1987) explored the implications of this relationship and Óláfr Tryggvason's prefiguration of Óláfr the Saint as a typology of John the Baptist and Christ. I find this line of reasoning promising and believe that it can help illuminate the Hallfreðr version. At the same time, the incidents that follow owe much to the genre of the Íslendinga þáttur, and aspects of that structure also apply to the way the Conversion is presented and understood, as I shall show. I begin, however, with the world of medieval Christianity.

Hallfreðr and his shipmates are aboard ship and in peril from a storm that resulted from an appeal to their own pagan gods. There is no way to recover the verisimilitude or historicity of such an incident, given our ignorance concerning actual cult practice, but from the point of view of the mythology we may wonder at the inclusion of Odin and at the omission of Njörðr in the list of gods invoked. Although as a poet Hallfreðr had a special relationship with Odin, that deity had no special connection with Iceland (see for example Turville-Petre 1958) nor for that matter with the sea, which was precisely, according to Snorri, Njörðr's realm: "Hann ræð fyrir göngu vinds ok stillir sjá ok eld" (normalized from Finnur Jónsson 1931a: 30). Furthermore, if the details of the sacrifice of King Víkarr in Saxo and *Gautreks saga* have the validity that some observers claim, we might have expected some form of sacrifice at this moment. The rest of the oath as Möðruvallabók has it is also significant: "en ef þeim gæfi ekki í braut, þá skyldi konungur ráða." Thus the passage is to be understood not as reflecting actual paganism to any real degree but rather as a means of explicitly juxtaposing the missionary King Óláfr Tryggvason to the pagan gods.

Such juxtaposition situates the scene in *Hallfreðar saga* explicitly in the arena of the Conversion and brings out the forces that are involved. The discourse is one of mission and conversion, and Christian symbolism is surely relevant. Ambrose had compared the Church to a ship and its mast to the cross, and now the merchants (presumably mostly or all Icelanders, since that was whence they departed) aboard their ship, this potent symbol of the church, are in danger of being blown on the rocks—the non-Möðruvallabók versions use the word *skerjóttr*—by the storms of their pagan gods, or more precisely, by the storms occasioned apparently by their invocation of these gods. Óláfr perceives the imminent danger, offers to help, provides the help when it is needed, and leaves the Icelanders without revealing his true identity. That his aims are really spiritual rather than nautical is suggested by the language he uses, particularly in the versions of Longest Saga (ed. Ólafur Halldórsson 1958-61). Where Möðruvallabók has "Þessir menn eru illa staddir á kaupskipinu, ok mun þeim eigi duga, er veðrit stendr þar á, sem þeir liggja, ok skulu vér róa til þeira", Longest Saga has "Þessir menn á kaupskipinu eru komnir háskasamliga, því at þeir liggja þar er mest stendr á veðrit ok dugum vel til at hjálpa þeim." The key word here is *háskasamliga* (*háskaliga* in 53 and 557), which stands in place of the neutral *illa* of Möðruvallabók and which forms part of the regular vocabulary of medieval Icelandic religious writings (see the attestations in Fritznér 1973, 1:739-40 s.v.). Furthermore, when the disguised Óláfr addresses the Icelanders, he uses language that is hardly nautical, and this occurs in both versions: "Þér eruð illa komnir ok er hér óhreint fyrir ok skulu vér greiða ferð yðra" (Möðruvallabók); "Þér eruð staddir ekki vel, því at stormr er á en hér fyrir óhreint ok skerjóttr, ok skulum vér greiða ferð yðra" (AM 61). Now although *óhreinn* is sometimes used elsewhere of places where travel is difficult, it seems absolutely apparent here that the statement of the cloaked stranger refers to the spiritual situation of the Icelandic sailors, who indeed plan

no travel but rather wish to stay safely anchored. The verb *greiða*, too, has a strong spiritual sense, as a glance at the attestations cited by Fritzner will show. As the supplicant says in *Stjórn*, "Guð greiðir minn veg ok mína ferð" (cited in Fritzner 1973, 1: 635, s.v. *greiða* 2). Furthermore, after the merchants have rowed their ship into calm waters, the saga reveals the identity of their helper as follows: "Ekki vissu kaupmenn, hvern þessi hafði verið, en síðar var þeim sagt, at konungrinn sjálf hafði hjálpt þeim" (ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1939: 153). Although the noun *hjálp* was sometimes used in profane contexts, the verb has overwhelmingly to do with salvation (Fritzner 1973, 1: 827 s.v. *hjalpa*). In other words, whatever the Icelanders may think, to the missionary king it is apparent that their problem is spiritual, not nautical, and the words placed in his mouth here will have made this interpretation of the situation apparent also to an audience reading or listening to a reading of this scene.

Óláfr does not, like Jesus with his apostles on the stormy sea of Galilee, calm the waters. Instead, just as the Icelanders are cast adrift (by their gods?), he dives down and retrieves their anchor. As John the Baptist to Saint Óláfr's Jesus, Óláfr Tryggvason might be expected to have a connection with water, and such a connection may even make sense in the case of his swimming contest with Kjartan, insofar as he causes Kjartan to be immersed. But the retrieval of an anchor hardly seems a typological act of baptism. Rather it appears to connect to the symbol of the ship as church, held fast by faith and hope, just as Hebrews 6:19 refers to hope as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. Seafarers throughout Christian Europe will have known of the special patronage of their sphere by Saint Nicholas and of his rescue of sailors in distress off the Lycian coast, and seafarers in the High Middle Ages could hardly have missed the churches dedicated to him in such ports as Niðaróss, Bergen, and Oslo. However, the disguised king has other attributes: he is wearing a green cloak, and he calls himself by the curious name "Akkerisfrakki."

The cloak, as we have seen, is part of the core of the doubled scene of the watery encounter between Óláfr Tryggvason and Icelanders of high prestige that leads to their conversion, although the actual terminology varies; Oddr calls the cloak given to Kjartan a *stikkja*, whereas here we have the rarer word *ólpa*, which seems to denote a long everyday hooded garment. In my view it is possible that the cloak (however it is called) is a loaded symbol in the tradition of the Conversion whenever it turns up, for it is from under a cloak (as Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson titled his study of the Icelandic Conversion) that the decision to convert will be announced at the alþingi.

Here it is also worth recalling that Hákon jarl also participates in a scene involving water and a cloak, for according to Oddr while fleeing to his demise in the famous pigsty Hákon threw into the sea a purple mantle, presumably to mislead his pursuers, a subterfuge that failed. Thus there is an implicit contrast between the pagan leader and the missionary king who succeeds him, for Óláfr gives away his cloak (the Kjartan version) or wears an everyday garment (the Hallfreðr version). If the Kjartan version in particular admits of allegorical reading, then the cloak which Óláfr confers on Kjartan may indeed prefigure Þorgeir's cloak.

Be that as it may, the *ólpa* worn by Óláfr Tryggvason in the Hallfreðr version is green—an extremely unusual (perhaps unique?) color for clothing in the Icelandic medieval corpus. Even if *ólpa* occurs in the verse in order to facilitate alliteration, the same cannot be said of *grænn*. The sea is occasionally called green—and indeed the term is most often used of the color in nature, but that locution can only help explain the passage if it is to associate indirectly Óláfr with the sea, and at that point one enters into a mode of reading that is characteristic of medieval Christian allegorical and typological literature, in which every detail counts for something. Perhaps, therefore, we should think of the color symbolism of the Church, in which green is, of course, the liturgical color associated with Epiphany. The fit is not bad, for the Icelanders are about to have several important items revealed to them, especially the identity of the king and the

power of the faith. More generally, green is associated with paradise and the regeneration of the earth, and the Icelanders are about to enter into a spiritual rebirth calculated to lead them to Paradise.

By connecting himself with an anchor, Óláfr Tryggvason (or the poet of the helming, if they are different) evokes an association with another saint, namely Clement, who according to legend was martyred by being cast into the sea attached to an anchor; on the sea bottom angels arranged a grave for him which was uncovered at certain especially low tides. The anchor is Clement's special attribute in iconography, and the bishop-with-anchor is known from Scandinavian churches of the Middle Ages. A translation of his life in the northern vernacular was early undertaken, and there were numerous churches dedicated to Clement, including one in Oslo and, perhaps even more to the point, the first church in Niðaróss.

Given the circumstances of Óláfr Tryggvason's disappearance into the sea at Svölör, the swimming contest with Kjartan and the diving episode with Hallfreðr make manifest Óláfr's remarkable ability to stay submerged and thus lend credence to the possibility that he might, as even the first biographer Oddr has it, have survived the battle and gone on to the life of a monk in the Middle East. Little more than a year separated the events in the summer when Óláfr converted the prominent young Icelanders from the battle of Svölör, and they are also in close textual proximity; for example, in *Kristni saga* only the final course of the Conversion out on Iceland intervenes. Indeed, in *Longest Saga* there are, in effect, three diving scenes for Óláfr, the two with the Icelanders in which he dives disguised and emerges, as it were, to shed the disguise, and the third, in which he dives the king and emerges, in effect, in disguise. All three presage a change in station for the better: in the first two the Icelanders take baptism, in the third the king takes orders and withdraws from the world.

There were, however, those who saw in Óláfr's last dive his death, and there were also apparently those in Iceland who wished to see in Óláfr Tryggvason an Icelandic equivalent to the Norwegian national saint Óláfr Haraldsson. For them a connection with Clement, the early bishop of Rome and founding father of the Church, would be helpful, and Hallfreðr's anchor could help present it. With Clement and the anchor in mind, Óláfr's death becomes that of the martyr, and his watery grave would be not dissimilar to Clement's, prepared as it was by angels.

Bringing Clement into the picture may also be helpful at regarding *Hallfreðar saga* as a whole. For Oddr and others with his clerical training and Latin education, etymologizing names must have been a commonplace, and it is precisely *clementia* that characterizes some of the more curious aspects of the saga, those which go more or less against the generic grain of the *Íslendingasögur*. Acts of mercy begin with Óláfr's sparing of Hallfreðr after the Icelander has escalated the level of his troublesomeness from poetry to the murder of one of the king's retainers. This act of mercy must be important, for in it Hallfreðr takes advantage of both the baptismal deals he made with Óláfr and even calls on the godfather relationship. Besides his own clemency, Óláfr often urges the same virtue on Hallfreðr, and three episodes stand out particularly, spread as they are all over the Northern world. First, in Norway (Upplönd specifically), Hallfreðr is sent by Óláfr to blind or kill Þorleifr spaki, who is resistant to Christianity, and Hallfreðr carries with him the king's *gipta*. After a curious self-referential scene, in which Hallfreðr pretends to be an old man with Hallfreðian characteristics, and Þorleifr reveals that Hallfreðr has inhabited his dreams, Hallfreðr carries out his sire's order only halfway, by taking only one eye. This act of insubordinate mercy causes yet another act of apparent mercy from Óláfr, who takes no action against Hallfreðr, even though he has abetted the crime by bringing the eye of Óláfr's retainer Kálfr; the text motivates this by means of Hallfreðr's words that he is only getting even for Kálfr's having marked him with a spear when he was under penalty of death for the murder of Óttarr (Kálfr's brother), but this is hardly convincing, given Óláfr's ordinary missionary zeal. The second act of mercy involves the duel

Hallfreðr is to fight with Gríss, from which he withdraws at the advice of Óláfr, who has come to him in a dream (and pointed out that Gríss has prayed to God that the one with the stronger case should win the duel—hardly a comforting prospect for Hallfreðr). When Hallfreðr aborts the combat, people naturally deride him, and more so when he breaks down when he learns of the death of Óláfr. There follows yet another act of clemency: Gríss, who hardly has any reason whatever to spare Hallfreðr's feelings or reputation, publicly remarks that he too reacted strongly at the news of the fall of his lord, the Byzantine emperor. The husband of the poet's true love and the poet who has cuckolded and ridiculed him are now reconciled in a way that is far indeed from the stories of Kormákr and Bersi or Gunnlaugr and Hrafn. Finally, there is the curious scene in which Óláfr again in a dream discourages Hallfreðr from an act of violence, this one directed at none other than Eiríkr jarl; Hallfreðr is good enough with his weapons and in this instance determined enough (he plans to kill Eiríkr despite certain death for himself) that we may understand Óláfr's apparition as a manifestation of his clemency toward his old adversary. This takes the specific form of advising the poet to concoct a *drápa* for Eiríkr, and the scene ends with yet another act of mercy, in which Hallfreðr is spared despite having killed one of the king's men, and is allowed to recite the *drápa*, through the intervention of Þorleifr inn skaki, himself the beneficiary of mercy, as we have seen.

This sparing represents a tempering of Óláfr's missionary zeal, and indeed this tempering appears also to be an important part of *Hallfreðar saga*. In a very real sense, Hallfreðr contrasts with Óláfr. The one is implacable, focused, and sovereign, the other humane, willing to compromise, and a devoted follower.

The ultimate importance of the Trondheim swimming scenes and their aftermath is that they portray vivid and individual Icelandic personalities reacting to the persuasion of a missionary king and converting to Christianity. The Conversion on Iceland itself is presented as essentially a *corporate* affair, although it is driven by individuals. The men we actually see convert in Niðaróss under the influence of Óláfr Tryggvason are men of considerable eminence or accomplishment—Kjartan's father, we recall, had decorated his new hall with elaborate carvings of scenes from pagan mythology, and Hallfreðr is still renowned as a poet (recall, too, that Oddr and other authors put Brandr inn örvi Vermundarson with them—the one, according to *Brand's þáttur*, who was best suited to be king of Iceland, and who according to some versions accepts baptism after Hallfreðr does; and recall, too, that an upper-body garment is central to his interaction with the Norwegian monarch). It is surely not a coincidence that the missionary whose message they found persuasive was a king, and a king with considerable accomplishments, not the least of which was swimming. Sending foreigners like Pangbrandr, bishop or not, was not likely to work with the proud independent people Icelanders imagined themselves to be when they looked back at their Conversion. The influence of a king must have been comforting to consider, especially from within the walls of a monastery.

Hallfreðr's formal conversion is a quick matter; after hearing Óláfr preach the virtues of the new faith, he is ready to make a deal—literally. He actually has in mind two conditions, namely that the king shall never drive him away and the other that the king himself is to baptize him. Such is the order in *Möðruvallabók*; in *Longest Saga* the order is reversed, with baptism coming first. This stipulation occurs throughout the tradition, although there is disagreement as to whether the king himself agrees to it because he wishes to (so *Longest Saga*) or at the advice of Bishop Sigurðr (so *Möðruvallabók*). Only thereafter do we arrive at the stock scene of the desire of the skald to recite a poem for the king. This is a stock scene not only in the *þættir* but also throughout *Hallfreðar saga*; indeed, this crucial occurrence of it is only the second, for Hallfreðr has already arrived at the court of Hákon jarl, recited a *drápa*, and been rewarded with some fancy clothing, an ax chased with silver, and of course the offer to become the jarl's man.

That he left the jarl to return to Iceland after only one winter may have something to do with his request to Óláfr not to drive him away, a sort of insecurity about his role as *hirðmaðr* that is in fact ultimately borne out by the events of his life. In any case, the sequence of his becoming accepted by Óláfr is clearly a focal point of the traditions about Hallfreðr. The poems that follow are composed for Sigvaldi jarl (a *flokk*), Óláfr Svíakonungr (a *drápa*), and Eiríkr jarl (also a *drápa*). Indeed, Hallfreðr never meets a monarch, according to the saga, without ultimately presenting a skaldic encomium.

One aspect of the circumstances of the presentation of the *drápa* to Óláfr Tryggvason deserves comment. After baptizing Hallfreðr, Óláfr has sent him off with his maternal uncles Karlshöfði and Jósteinn to study his catechism; Möðruvallabók calls it *heilug fræði* and Longest Saga specifies the credo and pater noster. When trying to get Óláfr to grant a hearing to his *drápa*, Hallfreðr argues that it is *skáldligri* than these *fræði*. Credo and pater noster—can the word *fræði* be used ironically here? Even if it is not, it curiously validates the native tradition, which already by Oddr's time had been put to considerable use for Christian purposes. Any Icelandic cleric who composed religious lyric in the vernacular could find comfort or at least a smile in this scene.

In any case, the numerous meetings with royals and the presentation of poems to them, with gifts given in return, repeatedly situate Hallfreðr in the realm of the Íslendinga þættir, and structurally the entire saga more easily fits the mold of that genre, as described by Joseph Harris (1972), than it does of Family Saga as described by Theodore M. Andersson (1967). Indeed, the core of Harris's chiasmic structure consists of a move from alienation to reconciliation between Iclander and king, and that move occurs in multiple forms in *Hallfreðar saga*, so much so that it must be understood as central to the relationship between the two men; indeed, we might hazard the guess that the repetition of this structure signals its importance in a way similar to that of the repetition of the "diving scene" that recurs in connection with various of the Icelanders who visited Óláfr Tryggvason. Moreover, this particular form of the alienation-reconciliation sequence has to do, as I have suggested above, with a general theme of forgiveness and reconciliation, and Harris (1976) has found such a theme to characterize four of the richest of the thirty-one *þættir* he collects on the basis of their structural and thematic unity: *Gísli þáttur*, *Halldórs I*, *Hrafn þáttur*, and the two-part *Ógmundar þáttur*. Conversion occurs explicitly in *Þorvalds þáttur* and *Ógmundar þáttur*. More generally, about the a third of the corpus is driven by religious considerations.

It is, however, at the point of intersection between fairy tale and *þáttur* that the true value of the form for the presentation of the Conversion to a medieval Icelandic audience occurs. One of the commonplaces of *þáttur* and one of its clearest generic markers is the improvement in status which the hero undergoes after his meeting with royalty. Ordinarily this is expressed on the Mainland by his joining the king's retinue, receiving expensive gifts and praise from the king, and so forth, and sometimes it is explicitly contrasted with his situation when he leaves Iceland. The type is seen perhaps clearest in *Hreiðarr heimski*, but many other heroes partake of it. What would an audience familiar with this leap in social status make of Hallfreðr's spotty behavior upon his return to Iceland? The answer lies in the Conversion. Hallfreðr departs Iceland (the first time) a pagan and returns a Christian, and in his conversion is his leap in status.

The further traditions of Hallfreðr's actual conversion emphasize the interaction between Hallfreðr and Óláfr and focus on two areas, Hallfreðr as poet and Hallfreðr as troublemaker. Taken together they certainly verify the sobriquet *vandræðaskáld*, which he receives in this section of the story. The poetic incidents suggest a clear progression from poetry as a dangerous, possibly pagan commodity, to poetry as a special courtly skill. Thus in the first

instance Hallfreðr is charged by Óláfr to “improve” on a stanza, and the three iterations move from a verse full of pagan names to a verse in which the poet repudiates Freyr, Freyja, Njörðr, and Grímnir (Odin)—but not, curiously, Thor—in the first helming and embraces the love of Christ in the second. It is surely relevant that the saga prose has Hallfreðr praising the pagan gods at the onset of this episode (Möðruvallabók) or at least not actively repudiating them, even if others do (Longest Saga). The second poetic episode simply has Óláfr challenge Hallfreðr to compose his now famous stanza with a sword in every line, and the change in subjects must indicate that Hallfreðr’s Christianity is now secure. The intervening episode is the one in which Óláfr demonstrates his clemency by pardoning Hallfreðr for the murder of Óttarr, and the sword-stanza episode—initiated by Hallfreðr’s tears of remorse at the anger of the king—is followed by an accusation, clearly to be understood as false, by Óttarr’s brother Kálfr, to the effect that Hallfreðr is sacrificing to the gods and carrying about an image of Thor hidden on her person. It is the latter accusation that causes Óláfr to send Hallfreðr off to attack Þorleifr spaki, and it may be a measure of the degree to which Óláfr now accepts Hallfreðr’s faith and trusts him that he apparently forgives him with no great show of words, even though the mission was unfulfilled and Hallfreðr maimed another of Óláfr’s retainers.

Óláfr’s trust in Hallfreðr motivates the next sequence, that of Hallfreðr’s apostasy—that is, his journey to Sweden, marriage to the pagan Ingibjörg, and return to and reconciliation with Óláfr. This sequence, which is only taken up again in Longest Saga after the intervention of other material, reiterates some of the themes already manifested in the crucial diving scene. In the first instance, his visit to Gautaland and stay among the pagan Swedes only occurs after a shipwreck. The sagas are full of shipwrecks, but I am particularly tempted to tie this one to the avoided shipwreck in Trondheim fjord because of the language of what follows. Hallfreðr meets Auðgísl, who has just returned from (harrying in) England (can the name be significant: hostage to wealth?) and who invites Hallfreðr to accompany him to Sweden, with the warning that the way there is *óhreinn* (so M, 62 and F; *ekki kallaðr hreinn* in other manuscripts). If my reading of Óláfr’s use of the term in connection with the rescue/conversion of the Icelanders in stormy Trondheim fjord is correct, this journey is also spiritually dangerous—as indeed it turns out to be. Hallfreðr needs both the help of Christ and the *gipta* of Óláfr Tryggvason to overcome the highwayman Önundr, and then the intervention of the widow Ingibjörg when he is sentenced to a ritual death. Hallfreðr’s appeal to Ingibjörg puts her in a position similar to that of Óláfr when Hallfreðr is to be executed for slaying Óttarr. When Óláfr appears to Hallfreðr in a dream to recall him from his apostasy, however, the proximate event is Hallfreðr’s visit to and *drápa* for the Swedish King Óláfr. Óláfr Tryggvason discloses little of the source of his anger in this dream appearance, contenting himself with the observation that Hallfreðr has abandoned his Christian faith, but later he situates the apostasy in connection with the marriage to a pagan woman. Ingibjörg’s conversion ought to remedy this difficulty, but the king also craves a poetic solution, namely the soul-saving but now lost (if it ever existed) *Uppreistardrápa*. Here the structure of the *þáttur* comes up against the explicitly Christian content of *Hallfreðar saga*, as the ordinary praise for the king—doubled in this instance by the initial and memorial *drápur*—is replaced by praise for the Christian god. Ordinarily the subject of this poem is understood to be the Creation, based on the denotation of Genesis as *Uppreistar saga*, but the pun in the background is wholly in keeping with the complex nature of Hallfreðr and his relationship with Óláfr Tryggvason: outside of *Uppreistar saga* we would expect the noun *uppreist* to mean either “improvement” or “resistance.” This ambiguity nicely sums up the problem of the Conversion as it is portrayed in *Hallfreðar saga*.

Óláfr Tryggvason was not a noted poet. Besides the *staka* he exchanged with Hallfreðr, tradition assigned only one other verse to him, which is “næppe ægte” according to Finnur Jónsson (1912-15, 1A:152, 1B: 144-45). An artless *málaháttir* stanza devoid of kennings, it hardly betrays the presence of a gifted poet, and indeed it is difficult to imagine that an ardent missionary like Óláfr Tryggvason would embrace a form with such strong pagan associations. Thus it is easy to imagine the creation of Óláfr’s Akkerisfrakki stanza at some remove in time and space from the stormy morning on the Trondheim fjord and to view it instead as part of later efforts, quite likely Icelandic, to embellish the traditions of Óláfr. Indeed, the portrayal of Óláfr differs from the one implied by Ari’s report of Óláfr’s intention to maim or kill “ossa landa” in Norway. In the Akkerisfrakki scene he does the opposite: he saves. That he does so in a way that is loaded with Christian symbolism and suggests a clemency that is played out in his relationship with Hallfreðr has been the burden of these remarks.

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