

An Old Norse Version of the legend of St. Margaret of Antioch

The saga of St. Margaret was, according to Unger (1877: i, volume 1), probably translated to Old Norse from Latin as early as the 12th Century, even though the transcripts are somewhat younger. It is a translation of the Latin legend of St. Margaret of Antioch: Margaret is the daughter of a heathen chief, but still a devoted Christian and servant of God. The brutal heathen Count Olibrius wants to marry her or have her as his mistress, he only has to make her deny God first. To achieve this, seeing that she will not do it voluntarily, he tortures her, and he puts her in the *Myrkvastofinu*. There she meets and gets the better of, both in words and an action, first *Rufus*, a terrible *dreki* (dragon), then a *diöful*. Of course this can only happen with the help of God, and his divine intervention shows the sanctity of the girl. In the end, Olibrius decapitate Margaret, but her martyrdom and the way she meets it, make many of the viewers convert to Christianity. This way she is victorious and obtains an eternal life in heaven, while Olibrius justly obtains eternal perdition.

The saga of St. Margaret was among the more popular hagiographic sagas in the Old Norse area during The Middle Ages, and she was also a very important saint in other parts of Europe. She was called on by pregnant women. This was probably also the case in Iceland.¹ The legend of St. Margaret is transmitted and exists today in three different Old Norse versions. One of which is a compilation, another is a fairly loyal translation.² My subject here is the third version, which probably is a rather free one. Widding, Bekker-Nielsen and Shook (1963:320) have identified the source of this version as BHL 5305, the same as for the loyal version. Rasmussen (1977, p. 2 in the chapter of the story of the legend of St. Margaret) has further identified a Latin version, BHL 5303, 3,³ as the most probable source for the loyal version, and maybe also for the third version, since a closer Latin version, he states, does not exist. He does not however take a position regarding the question, though he states that no other known Latin version is closer. Both the free and the loyal version of the saga have elements that you cannot find in BHL 5303, 3. The free version of the saga is transmitted in five mediaeval manuscripts, of which only two are intact. They are mostly from a period around 1400, and, according to *A handlist*, none of them younger than ca. 1350. My analysis is for the most part based on the main manuscript: AM 235 folio.

Collings (1969:7) states in her examination of the sagas in the *Codex Scardensis* that she, when the Icelandic lives deviate from BHL: "*assumed as a general probability that the translator himself was responsible for the deviation*", and also that she considered that: "*only the more frequently occurring texts (or those found in Scandinavian libraries) would be available to the translator; any text not recorded by the BHL or by Lipsius by its relative rarity would be less likely as a source*". I agree with her on these points, and this forms the basis for my analysis here. The subject of this paper is mainly to show the relation and the differences, structural and stylistic, between BHL 5303.3 and the free version of the saga, and then to present some problems regarding ways of viewing free translations of this kind in their literary and cultural context.

Structure

The Latin legend consists in a prologue, the main story and an epilogue. In the prologue we get a presentation of the theme. First a general introduction, which mentions that many people

¹ cf. Jón Steffensen (1965:273-82)

² cf. Rasmussen 1977.

³ Published by Bruno Assmann (ed.) 1889: 208-20, after BM Harl 3527 (11th Century).

became saints after the resurrection and glorious ascension of Christ, but that many people still holds on to and worship false gods. Then the narrator, Theotimus, presents himself, and he tells us that he is a learned man, a servant of God, who has got to know of the story of St. Margaret. And in the end he bids anyone who might hear his words to listen well and keep them in their hearts. In the epilogue the same Theotimus tells us what he has done with Margaret's relics after her death, and he places himself in the narration as an eyewitness, writing that he is the man who brought bread and water to Margaret in prison when she met the dragon.⁴

The Old Norse saga keeps also the prologue and the epilogue around the main narration. But where the legend has a first person narration in the prologue and epilogue, the saga has a third person narration. This way, Theotimus does not keep the position as narrator. Except this, the prologue follows the Latin prologue fairly close, but paraphrasing. The same is valid for the epilogue.⁵ This Old Norse epilogue omits the fact that Theotimus brought bread and water to Margaret, and abbreviates when it comes to what he has seen and heard. The narrator does neither mention how and on what Theotimus has written nor does he specify that the narration is meant for Christians. But this narration does not differ from the Latin except for the fact that it omits details.

When the saga comes to the main narrative, it is very close to the legend structurally, but can from time to time shift information units in limited parts of the text, and also omit certain parts; like Olibrius' threats of torture or one of Margaret's prayers⁶ when she is tortured. Here, the saga reproduce only the action; that the prefect gets angry and bids that she is hung up and that they shall *slíta hold hennar með jærnkrokum*. The prayer is totally left out. The saga is quite loyal to the legend when it comes to structure and content. The omissions one can find do not have a considerable effect on the main content. They do have an effect though when it comes to style or how things are presented, for example for how persons or religious motifs are presented. This I shall come back to.

Style – rhetorical figures and tropes

The Latin legends were for the most part written without much rhetorical figures or tropes. They were written in a quite simple style, *ornatio facillis*, without much ornamentation. But some tropes you find nevertheless. Some of the metaphors of the Latin legend of Saint Margaret are recreated in the Old Norse saga, even though adapted to a Nordic context (a). Sometimes they are also more elaborated (a), simplified (b) or left out (c):

Table 1

Latin	Old Norse
(a) <i>barbae eius aureae videbantur, dentes eius ferrei. Oculi eius velut margaritae splendebant.</i>	SkeG hans uar hart sem þyrnir. enn tenn hans sem jærn. ok sua stornar sem j uilligelli. ögu hans uoro sem blodsegar.
(b) <i>Video enim me ut ovem in medio luporum. Ecce facta sum</i>	Nu em ek sua komin sem saudr með

⁴ *Ego enim eram, qui ministrabam ei in carcere panem et aquam, et ego consideravi omne certamen, quod habuit contra impios bellatores et omnes orationes eius scripsi in libris chartaneis cum multa astutia et transmisi omnibus ubicumque Christianis omnia in veritate.*

⁵ *Ek kom til hennar þegar hun var i myrkvastofu seigr Teodimus og heirdi eg þærir hennar ok sa ek þislr þær sem hun hafdi ok ritada ek sögu hennar og senda eg vjlda umm heiminn.*

⁶ *Beata autem Margareta aspiciens in caelum dixit: Circumdederunt me canes multi, concilium malignantium obsedit me. Tu autem Deus in auditorium meum intende et exurge. Erue a framea, Deus, animam meam et de manu canis unicum meam. Salva me ex ore leonis et a cornibus unicornium humilitatem meam. Conforta me, Christe, et da mihi spem vitae, ut penetret oratio mea caelos. Transmiste mihi columbam de caelo, quae veniat mihi in auditorium, ut immaculatam tibi conservem virginiam meam: et dimicem contra adversarium meum facie ad faciem et videam deicetum inimicum meum, qui mecum pugnat. Quid illi nocuerim, ignoro; vincam eum et dem fiduciam omnibus virginibus confidere in te, quia nomen tuum benedictum est in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

sicut passer ab aucupe, comprehensa in rete velut capra.	uðrgum, ok fengin sem fiskr j neti.
(c) O horribilis et irrationabilis leo ...	---

There are also many other examples that the saga simplifies these tropes. One possible explanation is that they seemed strange in the Old Norse culture.

The saga simplifies the rhetorical figures a lot through rewriting, paraphrasing and omitting figures and tropes. Phrases that contain repetitions or lists of different kinds are often paraphrased, simplified or simply left out. There is also a tendency to simplify specialised descriptions, leave out unknown and 'difficult' words, ignore unknown figures or replace them with new ones. Rhetorical figures that are meant to cause *variatio* are very often simplified. *Variatio* consists in rhetorical figures or tropes that express repetition through variations in the use of the language. It underlines difference and equality. Many times the translator does not use these same *variatio* figures as the legend. Most of the rhetorical figures that you find in the legend are figures based on repetitions. These are often simplified in the saga, for example:

Table 2

Latin	Old Norse
Beata es tu inter mulieres, beata es Margareta quae oleum sanctum quaesisti; beata es Margareta, quae in orationibus tuis omnes memorasti [...] Beata es tu, quae in poenis tuis memorasti omnes peccatores.	Sél ertu Margareta þúat þu leitadir miskunnar af mer ok mintiz allra jþénum þinum.

This is only one example that the saga simplifies or does not recreate rhetorical figures. Many times the whole part where the figure can be found is left out or paraphrased.

The fact that the saga simplifies repetition figures also applies to other types of repetitions. When something in some way might be said to have been expressed before, even if barely implicitly, then it is often left out of the saga. In the saga there is a tendency to choose expressing things implicitly that is explicit in the legend. Another tendency is that parts of the text that are of little significance for the basic story and contains little information are left out. Also insignificant persons or others might be left out, or their role might be simplified. Other parts of the text that are often left out are parts without much significans for the story. Such as certain descriptions, specifications and many 'empty' phrases, or religious clichés:

Table 3

Latin	Old Norse
Deus, qui palmo mensurasti caelum et mensurasti terram, qui mari limitem posuisti, exaudi deprecationem meam, ...	Heyrdu ben mína.
Benedictus est dominus Deus meus in saecula saeculorum. Amen.	---

Dialogues, speeches and prayers

In this paper, I concentrate my analysis of the relation between this saga and its Latin original on the monologues and dialogues. This has several reasons. As seen in my analysis, it is there many of the interesting aspects (at least the aspects that interest me) are reflected. Furthermore the speech has a long tradition in European literature, and a person reading or hearing this type of text was able to understand and appreciate it, also its theological content. They had common references, something that made them able to interpret the information in these parts of the text. The speech is in Greek and later Roman culture strongly related to the courts of justice and to politics, and through this to the art of rhetoric. It's all about convincing the listeners – not mainly the opposing part. Also in the tragedies the speeches play an important role and they are meant for a public that was used to hear this kind of long interpretations. Later on the speeches also played an important role in the Christian literature, and in the legends of the martyrs the tribunal with its speeches and dialogues plays a decisive role. My interest lies in what happens to these speeches when the legends are translated into

Old Norse. This is because my hypothesis is that we there find the most interesting differences between Old Norse and Latin text.

Dialogues

Dialogues, together with speeches and prayers, often play a large and important part of the legends, so also in the Latin legend of Margaret. In the Old Norse saga though, many of these are omitted or paraphrased. This has not a very large effect on the main content or the action, but has a great deal to say for the way in which it is said and for what is said between the lines. The dialogues are largely reproduced in the saga version, although you sometimes have a simplification of the exchanges of words. In the Latin legend the dialogues are much concentrated around the interrogation, which plays an important role in the martyr legends, and around Margaret's conversation with a demon in prison. In addition you have two short dialogues; one with a viewer and one with the executioner.

The interrogation consists in the Latin legend of a number of dialogues, interrupted by torture and a stay in prison. As is the case in many of these legends, the lines of the interrogator (Olibrius) consists in appeals to sacrifice, promises of marriage, threats and insults. Margaret on her part simply refuses or initiates speeches. In the Old Norse saga almost all the dialogues are present, but certain terms of address, insults et cetera are omitted, and some of the dialogues are also somewhat rewritten or paraphrased. The saga version has sometimes indirect speech in the place of direct and minor differences when it comes to meaning. There are also examples that the saga omits small parts of the dialogue.

Repetitions of something already mentioned in the text are often left out, or the saga leaves out something that might be seen as more or less implicit in a preceding part of the text (a). The saga sometimes also paraphrases strongly certain lines. Other times we find significant omissions. For example does the saga not have some of the threats and promises that Olibrius makes before he tortures Margaret (b):

Table 4

Latin	Old Norse
a. si ego carni meae miseror, anima mea utique in interitum vadit, ut tu. Sed ideo tradidi carnem meam in tormenta, ut anima mea coronata sit in caelis.	Ef ek hlyddi bod ordum þinum þa mun önd min vera jeilifum kuðum med þer. ...
b. Praefectus dixit: Quid est, quod non oboedis, Margareta, neque tuimet ipsius misereris? Carnes tuae maculatae sunt in iudicio meo. Consenti mihi et adora deos meos, ne male moliaris. Si autem me non audieris, gladius meus dominabatur carni tuae et ossa tua dispergam et nervos tuos dinumerabo ante omnes. <i>Beatissima Margareta respondit:</i> ...	ok m(élti). hui uilltu cigi hlyda bodordum minum. hon su(aradi)

This may sometimes break away from the normal progression in the interrogation. This also means that some of the information explicitly given in the legend lay implicit in the Old Norse. When parts of the dialogue are strongly paraphrased or left out, this might also have an effect on the answers:

Table 5

Latin	Old Norse
<i>Beatissima Margareta respondit: O inique impudice et audax, si ego carni meae miseror, anima mea utique in interitum vadit, ut tu.</i>	hon su(aradi) Heyr þu him omilldi GR(eif) Ef ek hlyddi bod ordum þinum þa mun önd min vera jeilifum kuðum med þer.

Since the saga only has the part of the line where the evil count tells Margaret to obey, and not what he will do with her flesh if she doesn't, it is only natural that her answer is that she is not willing to obey instead of that she will not have mercy on her own flesh.

In the dialogue with the demon all the lines and the main content are present. Many of them are more or less abbreviated or rewritten, though. Most differences are stylistic:

simplifications of rhetorical figures, omission of terms of address et cetera. There are only small differences when it comes to content, for example the saga omits "... in similitudine draconis" and "Peto te, de mea cessa persona". There are also some additions, for example the saga has "þu uant han med krossmarki ok miskunn Gudz", where the Latin has "Tu vero interfecisti eum signaculo Christi ...," these are emendations that might be caused by the unknown source. There are nevertheless emendations that are probably made to suite an Old Norse public. Most of the differences that have to do with the content consist in omissions of parts of the text with motifs typical for the legends.

An important difference between the Latin and the saga is when the demon asks Margaret not to kill him, but instead to bind him as long as she herself lives:

Table 6

Latin	Old Norse
Sed peto te, agna Dei, relaxa me modicum, ut unum verbum loquar tibi. Et dixit iterum diabolus: Ecce annuntio tibi omnia. Adiuro te per Deum vivum et per Christum filium eius, in quem credis, ne me penitus de anima eficias, sed liga me magis in manum terrae usque in vitam tuam, ut non pugnem cum iustis neque adversum te.	enn þu munda ek fleira segia ef þu letir mik lausan vera eptir and lat þitt. at þa mætti ek beriaz jmoti retlatun mónnum.

Here, the translator has rewritten a lot, and this text is in many ways clearer and more straightforward than the legend seeing that the essence (content) of that text is rather intact, but the saga has used fewer words. In the saga the demon says that he will only tell her more if she only binds him to the earth while Margaret lives. He further refers to Salomon, who has punished him and some other demons earlier in this way. And he says clearly that after her death he will fight the just again. In the legend the demon is somewhat cleverer. He says that he in this way won't be able to fight the just while she lives. This way, the Old Norse demon demands where the Latin one begs.

In the legend one of the viewers asks Margaret to be sensible and do as the count says (the Greek choir effect). This, in the saga version is replaced with the Count asking Margaret to believe in and sacrifice to his gods. Also the answer is somewhat different, seeing that in the legend Margaret responds first to the viewer then talks to the Count, while she in the saga responds only to the count. The discourse is also much abbreviated. You get the feeling that in the saga this is just a pause between two torture scenes, while this discourse in the Latin is important for the religious content of the legend. In the legend, you also have two discourses between the Executioner, Malcus, and Margaret. In the first of these the saga has a longer introduction than the legend (see table 13). This does not have to be due to an unknown source, but might be explained by the fact that a sudden introduction like the one in the legend is not normal in the Old Norse prose style. Except for this, the saga is rather close to the legend one here, with only some omissions and rewritings and paraphrases.

Speeches and prayers

In the legend, there are many examples that Margaret directly appeals to God or Christ for advice or help. Even the executioner, Malcus, has a prayer. It is here that we find many of the rhetorical figures that are present in the legend, or we find them in other speeches or monologues. As in many other martyr legends we find prayers of help to resist or requests that who pray for something in the name of the saint must be heard. We also find prayers of thanksgiving. In addition we have the prayer of the executioner. These prayers are very much abbreviated in the saga, and particularly the subtle religious content is absent. One prayer is totally omitted.⁷ Here Margaret prays to God that he, since she is surrounded by evil enemies,

⁷ See note 6.

must save her from them, comfort her and send her a dove from heaven that will hear her. She also asks to come face to face with her enemies, so that she might see who she is fighting with, because she doesn't know why they fight her. All these things are later satisfied in the legend and most of them in the Old Norse one.

In the other prayers you find much paraphrasing and rewriting (a), and short passages are also omitted (b), for example:

Table 7

Latin	Old Norse
a. ... ad aperiendos sensus meos et os meum ad respondendum cum fiducia.	... at hán gēti andar mǫnar uidollum [sic] suikum fiandans. ok hann styrki mik at suara ...
b. Aduiva me, domine, et sana me. Ne <me> derelinquas in manus impiorum.	---

Many of these omissions, rewritings and paraphrases in the dialogues, speeches and prayers, you find in connection with rhetorical figures. Often these changes might be seen as omissions of repeated information, or information that you can understand as implicit in preceding parts of the text.

Persons

The legends of fictive martyrs have a quite standardised cast of characters. The main protagonists are the martyr and his or her persecutor. And you have series of subordinate characters: soldiers when the martyr gets arrested, guardians in prison, an executioner, a number of viewers, an eyewitness, a Christian that buries the body and others. In the legends of the virgin martyrs, the hero is always a young, untouched girl, the persecutor a man that threatens her virginity, and the narration always ends with the death (but still victory) of the young girl (cf. Carlé 1985:76).

The cast of characters in the Latin legend of Margaret consists more or less of these standard characters. The dragon and the demon replace the guardians as discussion partners in prison, and Theotimus and Margaret's foster mother replaces them as eyewitnesses to the events in prison. The characters in the saga are much the same as the ones in the legend, but there are a few differences. Where the legend presents Margaret before her father, the saga presents them in a way typical for the sagas. The more loyal Norse version though, here follows the Latin way of presentation:

Table 8

Latin	Old Norse free version	Old Norse loyal version
Beatissima Margareta erat Theodosii filia, qui erat gentilium patriarcha et idola adorabat.	[T]heodosius het madr hann uar gófuqr at uirþingu þessa heims heipin uar hann ok blotadi skurdgod. hann atti dottur þa sem het Margareta.	HEILOG Margareta uar dotir heidens manz þess er Theodosius het. hann uar hofdingi blot manna.

Margaret's relation with her parents and with her wet nurse and later foster-mother is also described somewhat differently in the saga version, probably to simplify the narration:

Table 9

Latin	Old Norse
Hic [Theodosius, the father] habebat de se natam unam filiam, in quam spem suam ponebat. Illa autem spiritu sancto erat repleta, mox de sua madre. [...]	EN þegar hon uar ung at alldri þa trudi hon agud almatkan. ok uar hon fylld af helgum anda.
Quae nutrita est: ab ea, quae susceperat eam, ut nutriretur. Quando autem mortua est mater eius, beatissima Margareta ampliore desiderio tenebatur a sua nutrice, quia vere formosa erat et Christum invocabat et dominum adorabat. Odiosa erat suo patri, dilecta autem domino Iesu Christo. Erat autem annorum XV et delectabatur en domo nutricis suae.	[...] hon var ung at alldri. Þær [sic] modir hennar andadiz. enn fadir hennar unni henni lítit. ok selldi hana til fostrs nockurri konu.

Information like the fact that her father has much faith in Margaret when she is young, that she has her Christian faith from her mother, and the fact that Margaret herself chooses to be brought up by her Christian foster-mother, is omitted in the saga version. This gives much less significance to the mother and foster-mother in the saga, and they are not given the credit for the fact that the girl grows up as a Christian. Where you in the legend can explain her Christian faith as an inheritance from those two women, in the saga this is all Margaret's own credit. In the legend moreover, the decision that Margaret is to be brought up by her foster mother, is entirely Margaret's own. She chooses so because she wants to live with Christians after the death of her mother. In the saga, this decision is made by Margaret's father, and the foster-mother becomes a less important character. This places Margaret much more alone, and the fact that she is a Christian much more of a mystery. In the saga version we may nevertheless suspect that the foster-mother is a Christian, because we get to know that she loves Margaret because she is *fogr at sedum ok hugskoti*. Other subordinate persons have much the same function in the saga version as in the legend, although some actions they commit might be omitted. For example the saga version does not mention that Olibrius lets his men decapitate the viewers that begin to believe in God because of what happens to Margaret.

The viewers play an important part in the Latin legend. Their function is almost that of the Greek choir⁸ when they give her advice to do what the evil count wants in order to get away, and when they sanction Olibrius' evil deeds and cry for Margaret. This function is much simplified in the saga. Some of their pleadings are left out entirely:

Table 10

Latin	Old Norse
... illic astantes omnes flebant super eam amarissime. Et dicebat ei quidam ex ipsis: O Margareta, vere dolemus te, quia vidimus te nudam laniari et corpus tuum macerari. O qualem decorem perdidisti propter incredulitatem tuam. Iste praefectus iracundus est et perdere te festinat et delere de terra memoriam tuam. Cede ei et vives.	... ok gretu margir þeir sem sa meinléli hennar.

The role of the viewers as tempters or bad counsellors disappears. Instead it is simply Count Olibrius that bids her to believe in his gods, and Margaret refutes him instead of the viewers. Thus, an important motif that is typical for these texts is left out; that of the "Greek choir".

In the legend, the viewers are also mentioned in many other occasions. Many of them are cured of different illnesses like blindness or deafness after her decapitation (which she has asked for in her last speech), and they begin to believe in God. Some viewers cover their faces when Margaret is tortured, and *omnes, qui ibidem stabant, ceciderunt in faciem suam super terram*, when a dove shows itself after an earthquake. None of these things are mentioned in the saga version. Other minor information that has to do with subordinate characters is also omitted throughout the saga. None are added though, except a somewhat more elaborate and crude description of the dragon (see example 1a. The saga has also *ellði þeim er for or munní hans ok nausum*, where the legend has *igne, qui exibit de ore draconis*). Considering all the omissions and paraphrases in the speeches and dialogues of Margaret, she herself becomes a much more eloquent and rhetorical orator in the legend than in the saga, and this has consequences for how she is presented as a character. The same might be said of Olibrius.

Introduction of persons in the texts

The saga presents persons in a way typical for the Old Norse sagas and untypical for the Latin legends. As Collings (1969:157) writes: "*The Latin lives neglect to make an introduction,*

⁸ cf. Gad (1961:17). The Greek choir in these legends play a part first as tempters that for the good of the martyr try to make her or him to yield, then they supports the honour of the martyr by converting to Christianity when they see how the martyr supports her faith.

mentioning a character's name only as he enters in action, with any descriptive information given as an aside." This is also the case for BHL 5303, 3. In the Icelandic sagas, the norm is that a new character is introduced through a description of the family, and the formula "Maðr het..." or "... het maðr" followed by a description of this man's family is normal. Also a subordinate character might be introduced in this way with or without the Genealogies. When this type of presentation is found in the Old Norse hagiographic sagas,⁵ as is the case with the saga of St. Margaret, it is natural to consider it an adaptation to the Old Norse prose style:

Table 11

Latin	Old Norse free version	Old Norse loyal version
a. Dixit Malcus ad eam ...	Þa m(élli) sa maðr er hana skyldi hóðna sa het Malcus	---
b. In diebus transibat Olibrius praefectus de Asia in Antiochiam civitatem.	Olibrius het jarl hefþinn hann for af Asia landi til borgarin- α -ar Anthiochiam ...	A þeim dogum atti Olibrius greifi for af Asialandi til Aantekio.

In example a, the legend throws the executioner, Malcus, directly into the action without presenting him first, while in the saga it seems necessary to give a short introduction. Margaret herself is presented in a way that is more common in the Old Norse prose style than the way she is presented in the legend (see table 9), in relation to and after her father, while the more loyal Old Norse version follows the Latin example. The other main character in the text, Olibrius, is also presented in a somewhat different and more "saga like" way in the saga than in the legend (b). Here, it might be interesting to compare this presentation with the presentation in the more loyal Old Norse version of the legend, which follows the Latin version much more closely in presenting the persons.

The presentation of some motifs in the texts

In the legend Margaret's faith is presented as a miracle. In the Christian theology of the period when these texts were written, the frailty of body and soul was often emphasised. This is an often recurring motif in the martyr legends, and it is particularly visible in the legends of the virgin martyrs. The woman was seen as very easily influenced, much more so than the male. In the legends of the virgin martyrs, this motif is often related to the contrast between the relation the virgin has with her own father and her heavenly father. The miracle becomes greater when a fragile woman is able to resist her persecutors, and is further strengthened by the fact that she has not found her strength through the example of her father. The only thing to give her this strength is her faith in God, which shows the reader or listener how great his power is and also how much power lies in faith. This motif is very much present in the legend, especially through Margaret's speeches and lines, while less present in the saga where it is expressed, but not underlined. Much is implicit. Margaret is in the Latin legend presented as her father's contrast (see example 1 and 2). This is partly to underline how much of a miracle she is. Not only is she the servant of God, she is so despite the fact that her father is a servant of heathen gods. This is expressed in the speech between the demon and Margaret:

Table 12

Latin	Old Norse
Ecce, a tenera puella superatus sum et hoc mihi dolet, quia pater et mater tua, o beata Margareta, socii mei fuerunt, et modo tu surrexisti adversus genus meum. O quam mirandum est, quia filia tenera superavit patrem et matrem et totam generationem suam et Christum secuta est, ligat daemones, diabolum fugat et aliquos occidit. Vere virtus nostra nihil valet, quia a parvula superatus sum	Matta ek suika fodur þin ok modur. enn nu hefir þu fengit sua mikla miskun af Guði. at uer erom allir lúreddir

⁵ Also Collings (1969: 157) in her study of the *Codex Scardensis* lives, find examples of this practice: "The later sagas, with their propensity for detail, may add a character portrayal, deduced solely from the hints of the later narratives."

In the legend, the fact that women, the weaker sex, might stand up against torture and other attempts of persuasion, is underlined. Or, as Tue Gad express it: "... *virkingen af martyrenes mod er så meget større, når det viser sig, at den svage kvindelige natur kan udholde det samme som de mandlige krigere for troen*". The saga is very much a paraphrase of the legend, and thus it looses some of the strength of this motif. The contrast between Margaret's weakness as a woman (strengthened by the insufficiency of her father) and the strength of her faith is also much less present.

In the exchange of words between the demon and Margaret, we also find many other examples that underline what a miracle her beating the devil is. Once, the demon tells Margaret that he can see that she might do as she wishes because she holds on to Christ, and that she before she did so was only "earth and ashes" that is without any chance. But now all is different because she has received the blessing of God.¹⁰ This is a further underlining of the fact that Margaret couldn't have done this without the help of God. This part of the text is completely left out in the saga. Other lines that expresses this motif is also omitted, such as "... *et quacumque sorte ventilabo eos, ut mihi placet, et tamen nemo de manu mea evadit et cum omnibus pugno et omnes conquasso.*" This line underlines how much power the demon has, how miraculous it is that Margaret has escaped him and even beaten him, and how hopeless it is to stand up to his kind without the help of God. This is also omitted in the saga. Other lines that expresses some of the same theme, is not omitted. An example is the fact that he (the demon) is able to get otherwise just people to sin while they sleep.

Some problems

As we have seen, the Old Norse text differs from the Latin in the way it presents the saga (3rd person narrative) and the author/translator abbreviates and omits a lot, especially when it comes to rhetorical figures and tropes which one mainly find in the speeches and dialogues. When it comes to the story though, it is represented very loyally. The differences between the two texts has for the main part solely consequences for how the characters and some important motifs are presented. This Old Norse version becomes in many ways a more exciting narration and less of a religious text that what is the case with the source text. It is true though that this kind of literature often is considered a literature of entertainment, but what was possible as popular literature must have been different within a new literature than within a much more literate and "intellectual" one. One might protest that the common people was more or less equal both places when it comes to the ability to read, but what one is able to appreciate often depends much more on the culture and what "stories" this culture has made a part of itself, than of the single person's ability to read or his or her "intellectual" capacity. And an oral narrative culture would be different in this respect from one with a long literal history.

In my opinion, the differences found between this legend and saga, and other legends and sagas, raise some important questions about the role this kind of literature has played in the Nordic mediaeval culture, and about how we might look at them as literary and cultural expressions – not globally but in their national context. Because this is a literature that seeks recognition in the reader/listener, it will, meeting a culture where the people do not already know this type of narration, raise a need to adapt the text to this culture's narrative conventions. Some

¹⁰ ...et nunc, quia video in te Christum manentem, facis, quod tibi placet. Antequam Christus in te maneret, terra eras et cinis et totum corpus tuum exterminatum erat. Nunc autem, ex quo cepisti caelestem prophetiam, aliam formam in te video, unde in te aurei pedes dignoscuntur et signum Christi ostenditur, per quod in te fructus iustitiae maturus, suavitatis et gratiae plenus ostenditur. Candidi super lac et digiti tui signati signaculo Christi cum ipso signo me vicisti et ipsum Rufonem occidisti, per quod et alligasti me, Christus ergo, qui est ante saecula, requievit in te, per cuius sigillum colligasti me.

aspects might find support in the target culture, many has for example pointed out that the saint as type has many things in common with the Old Norse hero, but I find it is also obvious that one in a culture which has newly begun to put texts into writing in its own language, in a literate culture will find elements that are strange to it. This I find most obviously reflected in the speeches and to some degree in the dialogues.

When we look at the texts transmitted of this Old Norse version of the Saga of Margaret, much suggests that it has been made to be read out loud for a non-learned public, maybe in church.¹¹ This might have been done during the translation, maybe later. Regardless of how influenced or not it might be from the Latin source, this text has surely a different significance within the Old Nordic culture than in the source cultures. This difference goes beyond mere differences on the textual plan, although we might see these differences reflected in the text. A translated text will always have a special and different position in the target culture and language than in the source culture and language, and even more so when it is translated during a period of transformation from an oral to a literate culture. And this is an autonomous contribution to the literature in the target language as well as to the literacy. This has many reasons beyond what is possible to discuss here, but if one, for example, start from the presumption that different languages imply different ways of viewing reality, it gives meaning considering these sagas as autonomous expressions in the target culture, without of course disregarding the strong European influence on Old Norse literature and culture that these legends contribute to.

One problem though is that we are quite far from having a sufficient language to describe these differences. Modern translation theory is based on a modern understanding and concept of what text, literature and translation is. Here, the author is if not a "genius" then at least an artist, you have copy-right, a demand of fidelity to the source text in translation and to originality in writing, negative connotations in relation to concepts like for example *renarration* and *plagiarism*; all these words and point out a problem in relation to understanding literature and text born under different circumstances. You might as Berg (2002:34) try to see variants as: "produkter av nye forfatteres omarbeidinger og nyskapinger med utgangspunkt i allerede eksisterende håndskrifter eller 'verk'." I think we should furthermore try to find a totally different language to describe these texts.

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