

FOLKTALE AND THATTR: THE CASE OF ROGNVALD AND RAUD

Joseph Harris

Among the several folkloristic studies of the Old Norse-Icelandic saga literature, none can be considered a grand synthesis, and the more recent work in this vein tends to be detailed and limited. However, the years 1927-1929 produced two very different major surveys; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's introductory essay in his index of Icelandic tale-type searches conservatively for Aarne's tale-types among a wide range of sagas, while the underlying theoretical basis of Heinz Dehmer's study of the family sagas derives from Hans Naumann's conception of folklore as **primitive Gemeinschaftskultur** and so has as much to do with beliefs as with narrative patterns.¹ Both books are still very useful and Dehmer, at least, still suggestive; but the single indispensable tool in the field is Inger Boberg's **Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature**.² These works and others by, for example, Knut Liestøl, Toralf Berntsen, and Alfred Bock, vary according to the author's conception of folklore and of their task.³ A contemporary folkloristic approach could make use of all these and other older studies in the service of--what? a structural study, a generic approach? The example of the Old Norse short story or **thattr** (plural **thaettir**)⁴ suggests that these methodologies, while possible, would be premature and that a simpler, more empirical and detailed analy-

sis of the composition of individual tales ought to have scholarly priority.

I. Folktale and thattr

The thaettir constitute, for the literary folklorist, a promising corner of the saga literature, but generalizations about the relationship of thattr to folktale have been scarcely attempted. I have argued at some length that the position of the short forms in the overall economy of the saga literature affiliates them with folktale in a very broad context of literary typology, but a further generic comparison is certainly possible, perhaps one grounded in the Jollesian generic framework.⁵ But comparison is not derivation, and T. M. Andersson's genealogy of the narrative structure of feud (family) sagas also suggested to me an analogous historical connection of Proppian folktale structure with that of a type of thattr in which the hero (usually an Ice-lander) moves out of and returns to the good graces of a king or powerful noble (usually Norwegian).⁶ The similarities between the six narrative units of these "King and Icelander thaettir" and Propp's thirty-one functions are, on the face of it, slight; yet I pointed out that both patterns contain only two obligatory elements and that these elements stand in a similar logical relationship to each other.⁷ Just recently Claude Bremond, in an important article, has shown how, from an ethical point of view, the Proppian functions are equivalent to three pairs of functions which bear an obvious transformational relationship among themselves and reduce to Deterioration and Improvement.⁷ Bremond's "almost purely deductive" model "should be applicable, a priori, to every kind of

morally edifying narrative which is governed by the optimistic requirement of a happy ending" (p. 49). Indeed, his simplest "initial model" (p. 49-53) is sufficient to account for the core, the movement from Alienation to Reconciliation, of most of the thirty-odd "King and Icclander thaettir,"⁹ and the fact that this "ethical" model deals with rewards and punishments, good and bad actions, tends to confirm our literary intuitions about the ethical, even didactic, nature of many of these thaettir.¹⁰ However, because it is so general, the applicability of Bremond's folktale model is but a weak argument for the history of this particular thattr genre.

Such structural and generic speculations will not be convincing without complementary content studies, down-to-earth accounts of how international narrative folklore is used in particular thaettir, and recent scholarship provides some examples of this type of detailed, ultimately literary-critical approach. Dag Strömbäck, John Lindow, and I have all tried to demonstrate concrete derivations of this kind and to analyse the more or less artistic deployment of motifs and whole tale-types in individual thaettir.¹¹ Earlier there was a lively debate about the relationship of the widely-admired **Story of Audun** to the tale best known as **Schrätel und Wasserbär**, and Lindow has provided a contemporary review of this controversy, which is methodologically related to problems raised by the three articles just cited and by the present essay. It should be added that **The Story of Audun** seems to me to contain a version of another international motif (or tale), K187 **Strokes shared**.¹² Several further thaettir have been mentioned in connection

with particular international tales or motifs.¹³

This kind of literary-folkloristic analysis has its risks. W. H. Vogt argued (in 1931) that the story of Asbjorn Selsbani derived parts of its fable from the frame-story of the **Seven Sages** and from the Masterbuilder legend in the specific Devil-as-builder form.¹⁴ The stories are too lengthy to be summarized here, but Vogt's case must be judged very weak. The thattr certainly shows stylization; but the image of Norwegian royalty does not suggest the oriental setting of the romance as Vogt claimed (p. 46), and obvious disagreements and the extreme difficulty of the chronology led even Vogt to concede: "Die Annahme der Entlehnung müsste überall mit Vorformen rechnen" (p. 48). There seems to be even less similarity with the Masterbuilder tale, which, however, was certainly known in medieval Scandinavia; for all the essential elements of that tale are missing, and only the commonplace idea of a false signal remains.¹⁵ Vogt also failed to notice that the motifs he regarded as borrowed from the oral tale were also found in **The Story of Gisl Illugason** and that the explanation is, therefore, more complicated than he allows; I would assume that these two works are related through literary borrowing of events that would have been plausible in the everyday realism of the saga literature.¹⁶ Coincidence and not dependence on international narrative materials accounts for all the simple agreements Vogt pointed out here.

With this cautionary example of an unsuccessful quest for the folktale roots of a particular thattr in mind, I turn to a story for which a better case can be made, **The Story of Rognvald and Raud**, and first

to its generic relations within the saga literature.

II. Conversion thaettir

One group of short stories comprise as their central narrative moment a conflict or opposition of Christianity and paganism. In *The Story of Rognvald and Raud* (= **R&R**), *The Story of Eindridi Illbreid* (= *Eindridi*), and *The Story of the Volsi* (= *Volsi*) the main action gets under way when the Christian king sets out to eradicate another trace of heathenism and baptise the protagonists of the story, and all three stories climax in the confrontation and baptism.¹⁷ *Volsi* and **R&R** are very circumstantial in giving details of the pagan cults, and **R&R** also of the life histories of the heathen protagonists. The hero of *Eindridi* is not a practicing heathen but one of the noble atheists that the Icelandic Christian writers presented as having no faith in idols but believing in their own "might and main." This story, however, resembles **R&R** in having the conversion depend on a direct test of the strength or skill of the king himself.

In *The Story of Svein and Finn* (= *Svein*) the hero Finn is a strange, brash, and unpredictable youth whom many thought a fool.¹⁸ He refused to honor the gods as his father and brother did and only entered the temple to abuse the statues. He left home after making a vow, which he himself did not fully understand at the time, to seek service with the greatest king. In Denmark he was converted--after some comic business--and eventually returned to Norway when he heard that Olaf Tryggvason had Christianized the land. In the meantime Olaf had compromised with Finn's father Svein

and promised to allow the old man to keep his splendid temple if the pagan cult were not practiced. Finn is outraged to learn this and journeys home to destroy his father's temple and vilify the image of Thor. Finn became one of Olaf's most constant and zealous retainers and died in the king's presence.

This story, like the others in the group, centers on the conversion; and, as in **Volsi** and **R&R**, there is a certain glee in the scornful treatment of paganism. However, **Svein** largely lacks the element of direct conflict between Christianity and heathenism, even though the tale is constructed on the contrast between the two. **Svein** further resembles **R&R** in that both combine conversions with a story of family quarrels, the resolution of which coincides with the conversions.

The heroes of all these thaettir are Norwegian and the setting, Norway, but **The Story of Helgi and Ulf** takes place in the Orkneys and Ireland.¹⁹ The first part of the story tells of the conflict between Helgi and Ulf and how Helgi abducted Helga, Ulf's daughter, and lived in obscurity as a small farmer until Ulf died and Helgi took over his lands. In the second part of the story Bard, son of Helgi and Helga, announces that he is unlike his (pagan) father in temperament and wishes to journey to those lands where the "god of the skies" is worshipped. Young Bard goes to Ireland, and after being thrice tested by "Peter the Apostle" disguised as a pilgrim, he is granted special grace and a vision. Later he becomes the bishop of Ireland and invites his mother and father to visit him. **Helgi**, thus, has some of the same elements as the other conversion tales; the contrast of pagan and Christian is co-

ordinated with a conflict of generations and conversion with a reunion, as in **R&R**, **Svein**, and to some extent **Volsi**, and the hero Bard leaves home to pursue his religious instincts in a foreign land, just as Finn did. However, little emphasis is given to the actual conversion in **Helgi**, and conflict and contrast are expressed only in muted form.

Four *thaettir* that are closely related to these conversion stories have as their literary common denominator a Norwegian king's contact with the heroic or pagan past. In *The Story of Norna-Gest* (= **Norna-Gest**) and *The Story of Toki* (= **Toki**) a strange old man (*Gest*, *Toki*), who has lived an exceptionally long life and remembers heroic figures from the past, comes to visit the king (Olaf Tryggvason, Olaf Haraldsson).²⁰ He tells about the famous heroic figures he has known; at the end of his narration the old man is baptised and dies soon after. *The Story of Sorli* (= **Sorli**) is somewhat similar but lacks the framework provided by the old saga-teller.²¹ The story opens with a mythological prologue that explains the illogicalities of the tale that follows as effects of the spells laid by Freyja; next there follows a series of viking adventures in the families of a certain Sorli and of Hogni; the purpose of the adventures seems to be to explain a verse. The story puts itself on a firmer foundation in the next section as a rivalry develops between King Hogni and Hedin, and the tale continues as the familiar eternal battle of the Hild story, the abduction of Hild, daughter of Hogni and the ensuing chase and fight. One hundred and forty-three years later Olaf Tryggvason, the new king of Norway, landed at the island where the perpetual battle of Hedin and Hogni was

taking place, and one of the king's champions, Ivar Ijomi (Beam-of-light), ended the conflict by giving the warriors the permanent death that only a Christian could effect. Hedin, however, did not die before explaining the curse and the tale.

All three of these thaettir can be seen as merely an excuse to tell about the ancient heroes, though Toki's tale is obviously not a traditional story but a situation invented to contrast the great Danish king of the heroic age with his Norwegian counterpart, to the advantage of the Norwegians. However, all three stories can also be regarded as a symbolic burying of the heathen past by the Christian king, and that seems to be their larger meaning.

The fourth tale of this type is **The Story of Albanus and Sunnifa (= Albanus)** which tells how a band of Irish Christians under the royal brother and sister Albanus and Sunnifa set themselves adrift from the coast of Ireland and arrived at an island off the Norwegian coast where they at first lived as hermits.²² Later they were attacked by the pagan ruler Earl Hakon, and in answer to their prayers God caused them to be buried in a landslide that hid their remains until, in the Christian reign of Olaf Tryggvason, their bodies were discovered, exhumed, and worshipped. This story, of course, differs considerably from the other three but is nevertheless constructed around the contact of the Christian period with events from the pagan past.

The structural idea of all nine of these tales may be derived from Christian history since it seems to be the idea of a divine intervention that converts an Old Dispensation to a New. The paradigm resembles a supernaturally sanctioned rite of passage: 1) an original (old, damned, pa-

gan) state of affairs; 2) intervention by a Christian agent; and 3) a new (redeemed, Christian) state. **Volsi** and **R&R** emphasize the original state 1), while **Eindridi** expands the intervention 2). In **Svein** this paradigm is complicated by the prefixing of the youthful adventures of our Christian agent Finn; but that part of the story is itself modeled on the same paradigm, thus: Part One: 1) Svein and Finn at home, Svein's paganism; 2) Finn in conflict with pagan gods, leaves home, and is converted; 3) Finn a Christian; Part Two: 1) Svein's paganism continued; 2) Olaf converts Svein but compromises on the image of Thor, Finn's intervention; 3) Finn a faithful paladin of Olaf and Christianity until his death. **Helgi** executes a related variation on our paradigm: 1) Helgi, Helga, and Bard at home; 2) Bard feels out of place, journeys abroad, is tested and converted; 3) later as Christian bishop of Ireland he rewards his parents with gifts. However, here the original state is fully developed as a feud story involving a bride-theft, an included narrative pattern with independent existence elsewhere; and the narrator loses interest in Helgi and Helga so that their conversion and new life is left obscure. Thus a potential doubled conversion narrative like that of **Svein** hovers incomplete behind the extant text.

In **Norna-Gest**, **Toki**, **Sorli** and **Albanus** this intervention paradigm is developed in a way that emphasizes not the personal drama of conversion (as in **Helgi** and **Svein**) or the ethical conflict of Christianity and paganism (as in **R&R** and **Volsi**) but the historical gulf between the Old and New Dispensations. **Norna-Gest** and **Toki** begin in "modern" times 3), rehearse the past in the hero's monologue 1), and conclude with

conversion 2); the Christian king's intervention is not strongly emphasized. However, in **Sorli** Christian intervention is especially dramatically presented when Ivar ljomi ends the continual battle from pagan times 2), terminating the rambling history of calamities that was pagan times 1); the thattr gives no attention to the new state 3). However, **Albanus** ends with laudatory description of the new state 3). In this story the original state shows Christianity persecuted by Norwegian pagans 1), and King Olaf intervenes in history in a literally archeological way 2); but the intervention lacks the element of conversion. Despite its Latin and ecclesiastical background and strong religious tone, **Albanus** seems rather unlike typical Christian legends although of course containing a martyrdom. Nevertheless, I think it is likely that Christian legend, and particularly the non-martyrological type (St. Martin), was one carrier of the obviously Christian intervention paradigm to Scandinavia.

III. The Story of Rognvald and Raud

R&R is preserved embedded in the so-called **Greatest Saga of Olaf Tryggvason**, probably a fourteenth-century compilation best known from the late fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscript **Flateyjarbók**.²³ The short story is assumed to be a thirteenth or fourteenth-century composition, originally an independent tale, later adapted to its context in the saga of the first of the missionary Olaf's of Norway.²⁴ The assumed original independence of such tales is a consensus view, yet lacks certainty and must be argued separately for each tale; for **R&R** the only real evidence is the episode's closed form.²⁵ Three brief historical

digressions borrowed directly from an identifiable source and interrupting this closed form are probably interpolations of a scribe-reviser who was adapting the tale to the saga matrix.²⁶

The story may be summarized as follows:

Thorolf Cockeye, a powerful noble of southern Norway, was responsible for the murder of one Lodin of Aervik. Thorolf then took Lodin's widow as a concubine, claimed Lodin's lands, and reduced Lodin's young son Rognvald to servitude. Rognvald advanced in the ranks of Thorolf's slaves until through good service he became Thorolf's trusted overseer. Thorolf found a wife for Rognvald and treated the couple's young son Gunnar almost as a son. While Thorolf was away on a summer's raiding expedition, Rognvald employed Wendish craftsmen to construct a new feasting hall for his master; Rognvald had firewood stacked against the new walls and all the wood chips saved up. At the feast honoring Thorolf's return, Rognvald and his Wendish henchmen got all the guests drunk and burn them in the hall. Rognvald, his wife, and sleeping child, together with the Wends, left by ship, but baby Gunnar awoke to scold Rognvald for killing his "foster-father" Thorolf. A shipwreck drowned all but the family, but Rognvald survived to reestablish himself on his father's land. One day he set the child Gunnar adrift in a small boat and commented to his wife that the boy would never reveal the killing. The boy was found on the shore of a distant island in the north of the country by a priest of Thor, and as the priest and his wife were childless, they named the boy Raud ("Red") for the color of his tunic and reared him as their son. Raud succeeded as priest of Thor. Now (about 995) Rognvald's wife Sigrid heard of the superior religion Christianity being preached by Olaf Tryggvason, and she left Rognvald to seek baptism from Olaf in England. She told the future king all about Rognvald and something of Raud and other powerful men in Norway and exacted a promise that Olaf would go to Norway and

convert these two gently. Then she went out "into the wide world." In the course of his conquest and conversion of Norway Olaf went to Aervik; but when Rognvald refused to accept the Faith, the king took him prisoner. Later Olaf decided to stop at Raud's Island, but Raud learned from the statue of Thor that Olaf was approaching. Raud urged Thor to put up a resistance, and the idol, which regularly walked and talked with Raud, caused a storm that temporarily stopped the missionary king. Finally, there is a confrontation, and a tug-of-war between Olaf and Thor across a fire ends when the idol burns to ashes. Raud still refused to be converted and was taken prisoner. At last Olaf brought the father and son together and revealed that he had long known the facts of Thorolf's murder. Assured that he can be forgiven even this enormity by God and Olaf, Rognvald agreed to accept the Faith; Raud followed as they puzzled out their own relationship of father and son.

In this plot, then, the original state of affairs is compounded of the story of Rognvald and his revenge (1a) and the fact of Raud's paganism (1b). Olaf intervenes first with Rognvald (2a) and then with Raud (2b), but the actual conversion is postponed for no very logical reason until the protagonists of the two parts are reunited (2ab concluded). In the biographical information given him by the wife Sigrid, the king holds the key not only to their conversion but also to their reunion as father and son, and as in Greek romance all the strands are meant to be knotted up at once by the king's revelation. That a few loose ends and irrationalities remain is a qualification on the author's skill, but his intentions are clear. The new state (3ab) receives a bare mention at the end of the text.

Analogous two-part thattr plots may be recognized in *The Story of Svadi* and

Arnor, The Story of Ogmund Dint and Gunnar Half, and The Story of Egil and Tofi,²⁷ as well as in two stories I have already referred to, Svein and Helgi. As in these last two thaettir, the two parts of R&R are linked by paternity and a generation conflict. The historical figure underlying the thattr's first protagonist is probably the Rognvald of Aervik mentioned once in Snorri's *Heimskringla* as an opponent of Olaf Tryggvason.²⁸ Thorolf Cockeyed came from a well known family, and his son Erling married Olaf's sister Astrid and became one of Olaf's chief supporters in the south of Norway. Our two main sources for Olaf Tryggvason's short reign (995-1000) put the marriage of Erling Skjalgsson to the king's sister in 997 (Snorri) or 996 (Odd), and the thattr says that Erling (like Raud) was a child at the time of the burning. So the burning may have been in the mid or late 970s.²⁹ The thattr's geography is plausible and consistent, too, as long as it remains in southern Norway, the scene of the first half of the story.

Whether or not there is an historical core to the story of the burning of Thorolf Cockeyed, it seems likely that Raud or Gunnar is an invented character, probably imitated from Raud the Strong (inn rammi). Indeed, Finnur Jónsson stated flatly that the thattr is an expansion of Snorri's pages about Raud the Strong.³⁰ This archpagan, whose death at the hands of Olaf is told in *Heimskringla* and in *The Greatest Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, lived on an island or a group of islands that seems to be named for a heathen god.³¹ When Olaf tried to approach the island, he encountered a magical storm similar to the one Thor raised in the thattr. At last Christian countermagic prevailed, but unlike the pagan priest of Thor

in our story, Raud the Strong was not converted but horribly martyred. The author of our thattr may have borrowed the name and some of the character traits, the island home, and the magic storm from this source. In any case he linked the two parts of his story by making Raud the son of Rognvald--almost certainly an invented genealogy.³²

The writer of the thattr or some link in his tradition also made use of the materials of international popular tales, most obviously in the episode that connects the two parts of the story. Stith Thompson's **Mot. S141 Exposure in a boat** is very widespread, but none of the AT tale types in which it occurs seems to have more than a few similarities to our thattr, and this is true also of the other relevant **Motif-Index** entries for exposures: S142, S143.1, S301, and S331. Rognvald tied his son to the thwarts of a dinghy, leaving his hands free and a supply of food; the boat drifted ashore on the island, and the boy was rescued. We can compare L111.2.1 **Future hero found in boat (basket, bushes)**; L111.2.2, S351.2 **Abandoned child reared by herdsman**; and S354 **Exposed infant reared at strange king's court**. The abandoned child is often identified by his rescuer as royal through S334 **Tokens of royalty (nobility) left with exposed child**. While there is no clear analogue of this motif in **R&R**, the idea may be submerged, for the priest who discovered the boat "thought it strangely fitted out," and the boy's red tunic is a mark of high status. A rich garment and ring are left with the child in Marie de France's lay **Le Fresne**, and the Middle English **Sir Degaré** adds a pair of fairy gloves.³³ Such gifts tend to function also as recognition tokens later in the stories; but although **R&R** does conclude with a recognition scene,

Arnor, The Story of Ogmund Dint and Gunnar Half, and The Story of Egil and Tofi,²⁷ as well as in two stories I have already referred to, Svein and Helgi. As in these last two thaettir, the two parts of **R&R** are linked by paternity and a generation conflict. The historical figure underlying the thattr's first protagonist is probably the Rognvald of Aervik mentioned once in Snorri's **Heimskringla** as an opponent of Olaf Tryggvason.²⁸ Thorolf Cockeyed came from a well known family, and his son Erling married Olaf's sister Astrid and became one of Olaf's chief supporters in the south of Norway. Our two main sources for Olaf Tryggvason's short reign (995-1000) put the marriage of Erling Skjalgsson to the king's sister in 997 (Snorri) or 996 (Odd), and the thattr says that Erling (like Raud) was a child at the time of the burning. So the burning may have been in the mid or late 970s.²⁹ The thattr's geography is plausible and consistent, too, as long as it remains in southern Norway, the scene of the first half of the story.

Whether or not there is an historical core to the story of the burning of Thorolf Cockeyed, it seems likely that Raud or Gunnar is an invented character, probably imitated from Raud the Strong (**inn rammi**). Indeed, Finnur Jónsson stated flatly that the thattr is an expansion of Snorri's pages about Raud the Strong.³⁰ This archpagan, whose death at the hands of Olaf is told in **Heimskringla** and in **The Greatest Saga of Olaf Tryggvason**, lived on an island or a group of islands that seems to be named for a heathen god.³¹ When Olaf tried to approach the island, he encountered a magical storm similar to the one Thor raised in the thattr. At last Christian countermagic prevailed, but unlike the pagan priest of Thor

in our story, Raud the Strong was not converted but horribly martyred. The author of our thattr may have borrowed the name and some of the character traits, the island home, and the magic storm from this source. In any case he linked the two parts of his story by making Raud the son of Rognvald--almost certainly an invented genealogy.³²

The writer of the thattr or some link in his tradition also made use of the materials of international popular tales, most obviously in the episode that connects the two parts of the story. Stith Thompson's **Mot. S141 Exposure in a boat** is very widespread, but none of the AT tale types in which it occurs seems to have more than a few similarities to our thattr, and this is true also of the other relevant **Motif-Index** entries for exposures: S142, S143.1, S301, and S331. Rognvald tied his son to the thwarts of a dinghy, leaving his hands free and a supply of food; the boat drifted ashore on the island, and the boy was rescued. We can compare L111.2.1 **Future hero found in boat (basket, bushes)**; L111.2.2, S351.2 **Abandoned child reared by herdsman**; and S354 **Exposed infant reared at strange king's court**. The abandoned child is often identified by his rescuer as royal through S334 **Tokens of royalty (nobility) left with exposed child**. While there is no clear analogue of this motif in **R&R**, the idea may be submerged, for the priest who discovered the boat "thought it strangely fitted out," and the boy's red tunic is a mark of high status. A rich garment and ring are left with the child in Marie de France's lay **Le Fresne**, and the Middle English **Sir Degaré** adds a pair of fairy gloves.³³ Such gifts tend to function also as recognition tokens later in the stories; but although **R&R** does conclude with a recognition scene,

neither the red tunic nor the dinghy play any part.

Raud, like the foundlings in the two Breton lays just mentioned, is named by his rescuer for some aspect of his condition, for the heroine of **Le Fresne** is named for the ash tree in which she was hidden, and Degaré's name, according to the English poem, means "something that was almost lost." Stith Thompson does not seem to have regarded the adventitious naming as a separate motif, but Hibbard and Rickert pointed it out as a "mark of popular origin" and gave further examples.³⁴ Our text also employs L124 **Dumb hero**: "This boy seemed to them beautiful and worth keeping, and they were childless. They tried to learn whether he could speak at all. They could not get a word out of him." But here the motif has no application to the progress of the plot and is quickly forgotten.

This complex of motifs, then, is quite clear in our story and certainly borrowed from international tales. Yet no single AT tale type seems related, and one has the impression of an author employing the popular motif complex built around the concept of exposure to link parts of a tale that come from disparate origins. However, even analysis by motif can suggest how an author thought and worked. For example, we may glance at one more motif in this complex. The cause of an exposure is often fear of the child: M371 **Exposure of infant to avoid fulfillment of prophecy**. There is no prophecy in our thattr, but Rognvald's motivation for exposing his son implies an idea of this kind: "Segrid asked him about his trip and what he had done with the child. He answered and said that he would not say anything other than that the boy would never tell who had burned Thorolf

in his house." Given the usual requirements of saga realism, Rognvald's action is very improbable, but the thattr author may have learned the exposure motif in a form that included a version of M371 as its motivation. If so, he strained to find a realistic correlative of the original motivation; but he also allowed this motivation to be clouded by hinting that Thorolf and not Rognvald might have been the real father of Raud. Too many motives for a given action look like a sign of an author who is fabricating a single story from diverse, pre-existing materials.

Boberg offers relatively few parallels in early Norse literature to the complex of motifs built around the exposure and does not include Raud's ordeal. For Motif S301 Boberg presents one (or two) examples, for M371, one; L111.2 **Foundling hero** shows seven examples; L111.2.1 **Future hero found in boat**, two; L111.2.2 (on shore), two examples. Several of these Icelandic passages give an ultimately foreign impression, but none is significantly close to our text. Raud's silence resembles that of Aslaug in **The Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok** (Boberg L124.1 **Child silent till seventh year**); but although Aslaug is a foundling, she is not the victim of exposure. In fact I cannot discover any text in which the silent hero motifs (L124ff.) overlap with any exposure cluster. All this seems to underline the heterogeneous nature and to some extent the foreign flavor of the exposure story in **R&R**.

But if the complex of motifs around the exposure is borrowed from international story material, surely the same cannot be said for the climax of the first part of the tale, the burning of Thorolf? Such arson deaths are among the most memorable features of Norse literature, and Boberg gives

more than ninety examples of the *brenna*.³⁵ Yet there are indications that the burning of Thorolf has been colored by (if not borrowed from) a specifically Celtic narrative incident. Here is a closer summary:

Rognvald constructed the "great drinking hall" with his revenge in mind, and the structure was carefully prepared for the use it would be put to: "Rognvald had all the shavings and all the chips carefully stored up; and he fully supervised the craftsmen's work. But when the hall and the passageway around it were quite finished, he had the serfs bring in from the forest a great store of firewood and stack up piles as high as the walls on all sides of the hall." Rognvald explains away this strange arrangement when Thorolf returns. At the feast the "drink was extremely strong and served up with zeal. Rognvald took very good care to provide the beer and bring it in. Those Wendish craftsmen also acted as cupbearers." When Thorolf and his guests were thoroughly drunk, the Wends secured the door of the hall with stacks of wood and brought up the chips and shavings. "Then they set fire to it all, including the great stacks of firewood, and immediately all the hall began to blaze." The men inside all perished, and the *thattr* dispenses with the Wendish craftsmen, after their usefulness has ended, by means of a shipwreck.

This scene differs from the plentiful Norse house burnings in several ways, but most impressively in the special preparation of the hall and in the presence of those highly unlikely foreign craftsmen, and both these points are paralleled in the Celtic "Iron House" motif.³⁶ This motif, which Celtic scholars see as an intrusion from myth into heroic saga, is "evidently of sacrificial character," according to Sjoestedt-Jonval³⁷; it is found in the Welsh *Branwen Verch Lyr* (Branwen, Daughter of Llŷr = Br) and in the Irish *Orgain Denna Ríg* (Destruction of Dinn Ríg = ODR) and

Mesca Ulad (Intoxication of the Ultonians = **MU**).³⁸ For the purpose of comparison we may first quote Derick S. Thomson's outline (pp. xxxvii-xxxviii) of the incident in **Br** and **MU**:

Branwen

1. Llassar Llaes Gyfnawid and his wife made a nuisance of themselves.

2. Matholwch's council decides to build a house of iron. Charcoal is piled as high as the top of the chamber.

3. Every smith in Ireland was summoned, those who had tongs and hammers.

4. Llassar and his wife and offspring were served with ample meat and drink.

5. When they were intoxicated, the charcoal was set alight, and the bellows applied until the house was white-hot.

6. When the wall is white-hot, Llassar charges in with his shoulder, and breaks out, together with his wife. No one else escapes. But later it appears that a considerable number came to Wales from Ireland along with

Mesca Ulad

1. The Ulstermen had wandered in a drunken orgy into Connacht, the territory of their enemies.

2. The coming of the Ulstermen had been prophesied, and a house of iron, with inner and outer layers of board, and an earthen house below filled with firewood and coal, had been prepared for them.

3. Thrice fifty smiths were summoned.

4. Choice portions of food and drink were served to the Ulstermen.

5. The Ulstermen were intoxicated. The smiths had brought bellows with them. The Ulstermen feel the fierce heat of the fire from below and from above.

6. Cú Chulainn says that he will do with his sword **Cruadín** a deed by which all the men of Ulster shall go out (from the house). He then thrusts his sword to the hilt through the three walls of the house, thus

Llassar, as they were
quartered throughout the
country.

discovering that the interi-
or wall is made from iron.
The next part of the story
is missing, but we find
Cú Chulainn and the Ulster-
men at large afterwards.

Thomson goes on to surmise that **Br** and **MU** both derive from a lost version of the Iron House episode that would have lain more or less half-way between these two, but the only incident in the reconstructed common source of direct interest to us is that "the smiths were summoned in the first instance to build the house," not merely to man the bellows.³⁹

For our purposes the third Celtic version in **ODR** is also important. Outlined according to Thomson's six points, the story is as follows:

Cobthach Coel attained the kingship of Leinster by murdering his brother and nephew and secured it by exiling his grandnephew Labraid (who, incidentally, is a silent hero who first speaks late in youth). In exile Labraid acquires a princess and foreign supporters. The exile returns at the head of an army and sacks the royal stronghold. Labraid now controlled Leinster with his seat at Dinn Ríg, 1) and he kept peace with his great-uncle Cobthach, still the nominal king. At last the missing revenge is accomplished: "Once upon a time . . . he induced this Cobthach to do his will and meet his desire [i.e., to honor him with a visit]. 2) So a house was built by him to receive Cobthach. Passing strong was the house: it was made of iron, both wall and floor and doors. 3) A full year were the Leinstermen abuilding it, and father would hide it from son, and mother from daughter, husband from wife, and wife from husband, so that no one heard from another what they were about, and for whom they were gathering their gear and their fittings. To this refers (the proverb): 'not more numerous are Leinstermen than (their) secrets.' [. . .] 4) Then

Cobthach was invited to the ale and the feast, and with him went thirty kings of the kings of Erin. Howbeit Cobthach was 4a) unable to enter the house until Labraid's mother . . . went in. [. . .] Out of goodness to her son the woman went. On that 4b) night Labraid himself was managing household matters." (Digression: Labraid has to be reminded by an old foster-father to accomplish his revenge.) "Then Labraid dons (his mantle) and goes to them into the house. 'Ye have fire, and ale and food (brought) into the house.' 'Tis meet,' says Cobthach. Nine men [i.e., servants] had Labraid on the floor of the house. 5a) They drag the chain that was out of the door behind them, and cast it on the pillar-stone in front of the house; and the 5b) thrice fifty forge-bellows they had around it, with four warriors at each bellows, were blown till the house became hot for the host. 5c) 'Thy mother is there, O Labraid!' say the warriors. 'Nay, my darling son,' says she. 'Secure thine honour through me, for I shall die at all events.' 6) So then Cobthach Coel is there destroyed, with seven hundred followers and thirty kings around him. . ." (pp. 12-13).

Our thattr **R&R** resembles the general setting here in **ODR** more than in the other versions, since both **R&R** and **ODR** are revenge tales. Cobthach, like Thorolf, deprives the hero of his patrimony by murdering his father and usurping his land, and the hero's revenge is the result of patience and planning. The exile-and-return framework (with the foreign princess, foreign army, and first destruction of Dinn Ríg) is unparalleled in the Icelandic story, but we may compare the narrative cul-de-sac that results when Thorolf sells Rognvald's brother Ulf into slavery: "and he does not appear in this story." In point 6, the result of both burnings, unlike those of **Br** and **MU**, is the death of the oppressor. In 3, the craftsmen, "smiths" in all versions,⁴⁰ are employed in building the house in **ODR**, as in **R&R** (but also in the lost source of **MU**

and **Br**), and probably are identical with the "men" and "warriors" who help Labraid with the serving (4b), securing of the door (5a), and setting the fire (5b). In the form of **ODR** quoted here the craftsmen are explicitly local Leinstermen, but this is probably not the original situation. In fact, the Iron House motif seems to be an addition to the simple form of **ODR** in which there is exile, return, and a single destruction of Dinn Ríg.⁴¹ When the revenge was doubled by the addition of the Iron House episode, the workmen were at first, we may guess, the foreigners Labraid brought home with him, but the element of secrecy was already present. This suggested a connection with the proverb, and the extant version has rather illogically replaced the foreigners with locals and justified them by the proverb. Such, at least, is my suggested reconstruction.

In **R&R** the craftsmen are Wends, a role they play nowhere else that I know of in Norse literature and one which is unlikely to reflect reality. The secrecy of the planning and assistance of the Wends in the points of **R&R** that correspond to 4b, 5a, and 5b are clear. The drunkenness of the company inside is explicit in **MU**, **Br**, and **R&R**, but not in **ODR**. The two revenge narratives emphasize the role of the revenger himself in serving up the intoxicating drink (4b), and Rognvald (but not Labraid) also personally supervised the building of the house. Finally, **ODR** and **R&R** both give some prominence to the widow, the avenger's mother, and in both there is an illogical moment (5c) when, after the door has been secured and the fire set, the avenger realizes that a close relative (his mother, his son) is still inside. In **ODR** the mother sacrifices herself for the revenge, but in **R&R**

the hero somehow reenters the hall and carries the sleeping boy to safety.

Celtic scholars consider that the **Bórama**, a tenth or eleventh-century framestory, contains a third Irish version of the Iron House:

Cumascach, the son of the overking of Tara, came in force to Leinster to exact tribute from the local king in the form of a night with this Brandub's wife. Brandub responded with a deceitful invitation. Cumascach and three hundred princes were all quartered in a single house. There they were served, and Brandub took a personal hand. "They [Brandub and a henchman Oengus] came out again and shut behind them the huge door of the royal house (for in either man of the two was the strength of nine). Thereafter four fires were set to the house, one to every side, and it was then that Cumascach said, 'Who is attacking the house?' 'I!' said Brandub. . . ." A poet is granted free egress, but he exchanges clothing with Cumascach who then leaps out over the flames only to be discovered and slain a little later.⁴²

Proinsias MacCana tentatively identifies this as an example of our motif even though the iron itself is missing: "It is otherwise quite close to the versions [in **Br**, **MU**, and **ODR**], and it is just barely possible that the omission of the Iron House is merely accidental, since minor elements are freely added to or omitted from the different recensions of framework stories of the type of the **Bórama**. But, even if we reject this possibility, the passage still has its importance as providing an instance of the type of tale which was the immediate forerunner of the Iron House theme" (p. 22). So perhaps the iron house itself could be put in or left out depending on factors of performance, audience, memory, or generic intentions, and this notion is supported by the early variant of **MU** in which there is

no iron house but a house of stout oak "with vaulted roof, having a door of yew three full foot thick, in which were two hooks of iron, and an iron bolt through these two hooks."⁴³

Of course, the house could not be of iron in a realistic Icelandic story, and realism forbade the chain (**ODR**, **Br**, **MU**), subterranean chamber (**MU**), and the bellows (**Br**, **MU**, **ODR**). The Celtic texts specify that "all the faggots and inflammable materials and coal that were to be found" (**MU**) or "charcoal" (**Br**) are in the subterranean room (**MU**) or stacked "as high as the top of the chamber" (**Br**). In the realistic Icelandic transformation firewood is stacked as high as the walls, as in **Br**, and the chips hidden away for the moment they are needed. The "passageway" around the hall, a genuine feature of medieval Scandinavian architecture, may be where the firewood was stacked and thus may correspond to the subterranean chamber of **MU**, but the procedure of surrounding the hall with inflammable material is strange enough in the Norse context to require that the author assign a plausible, lying explanation to Rognvald.⁴⁴ Finally, I would like to point out a special resemblance between **R&R** and **Br**. In **Br** a husband, his wife, and a son of tender age are the targets of the arson; but although many apparently die in the iron house, Llassar and his wife and child escape (presumably by sea) to Wales. In **R&R** the arsonist and his wife and young child escape by sea after the fire. Of course, the roles are reversed, but in the realistic **R&R** the motivation for Rognvald's flight is murky; after all, the oppressor and all his friends, even his slaves, have already burned to death. However, this correspondence may well be accidental.

The foreign, probably specifically Celtic, tinge to the **brenna** in **R&R** is difficult to prove, but if one thinks over the many unquestionably native examples, for example in the widely read family sagas about Njál, Gisli Sursson, or Hen-Thorir, the peculiarity of the passage in **R&R** begins to emerge. Icelandic offers no parallel to the foreign craftsmen and none to the stacks of firewood. Among Boberg's more than ninety examples very few present a house especially built for the purpose of the arson. Arson for revenge is common, but Rognvald's stealth and patience seem un-Norse. There are naturally examples of drinking before a **brenna**, but the contexts are different. Many Norse burnings are inconclusive, and some prominent examples resemble **MU** and **Br** in having the victims break out through a wall.⁴⁵ This may have been common in real life, and I suspect that the origin of the "iron" in the Celtic Iron House is to be found in a house that is made so strong with iron fittings that no egress through a wall was possible (cf. **Beowulf**, 11. 771-75: Heorot would have collapsed during the fight with Grendel except that it was "firmly and wondrously smithed, inside and out, with iron bonds"). This guess receives some further support in the **Bórama**, the variant of **MU**, and the interpretation by MacCana discussed above. Occasionally in the Norse tradition, realistic considerations about the difficulty of successfully setting fire to a house lead to wood or other combustibles (the chickweed in **Njáls saga**) being brought up against the house, but nowhere do we find an analogue of the pre-arranged wood and chips of **R&R**.⁴⁶ In **Gautreks saga** the sister of the burners is killed inside like the mother in **ODR**, and the burners are soon lost in a storm like the Wends of **R&R**; but

the brief incident as a whole does not resemble **R&R**.⁴⁷

In fact, I have been able to find only three or four other Norse burnings, all very brief, that seem to bear some special resemblance to the mythic motif in Irish and Welsh.⁴⁸ In the unpublished **Haralds saga Hringsbana** a father, who is feuding with his own son because of the son's Tristan-like appropriation of a bride he had been sent to fetch, builds a **marble hall** in which he entertains his son and seeks to burn him alive.⁴⁹ The son and his men "force an exit," and a battle ensues. Since I must rely on Henry Goddard Leach's summary of this text, it is impossible to say how close the passage actually is to, for example, the **MU** version of the Iron House. According to Leach the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paper manuscripts of the saga present the younger version of a lost romantic saga of perhaps the thirteenth century, and this is supported by the existence of a rhymed romance (*rímur*) on the subject, dated by Leach before 1450; the romance would also have stemmed from the lost original. Unfortunately the romance is also unpublished, but in Leach's summary it appears that the marble hall and even the intention specifically to **burn** the son are missing from the equivalent scene.

In Snorri's **Ynglinga saga** King Ingjald the Bad increased his kingdom by slaughtering the district kings:

King Ingjald ordered a great feast to be prepared in Upsal, and intended at that feast to enter on his heritage after King Onund his father. He had a large hall made ready for the occasion . . . and this hall was called the Seven Kings Hall, and in it were seven high seats for kings. Then King Ingjald sent men all through Sweden, and invited to his feast kings, earls, and other men of consequence. [. . .] Now when the guests

had become drunk towards evening King Ingjald told Svipdag's sons, Folkvid and Hulvid, to arm themselves and their men, as had before been settled; and accordingly they went out, and came up to the new hall, and set fire to it. The hall was soon in a blaze, and the six kings, with all their people were burned in it.⁵⁰

Just a few chapters later Ingjald and his wife commit suicide by arson, taking their people, after heavy drinking, with them. This is obviously a sacrificial (or self-sacrificial) death like the burning of King Olaf Tree-feller in the same saga: "The Swedes . . . gathered together troops, made an expedition against King Olaf, surrounded his house and burnt him in it, giving him to Odin as a sacrifice for good crops."⁵¹ But Ingjald's coup d'état contains several of the elements of the Irish topos, especially the house constructed for burning, the deceitful invitation, systematic inebriation, and henchmen in the form of the sons of the Odin figure Svipdag the Blind; the passage even alludes to previous planning and hence implies secrecy. However, the similarity to the Iron House motif is less impressive than in *R&R*, especially since the Wendish "smiths," so incongruous in the Norse context, and the roof-high firewood are missing.

One is also reminded of another passage in *Heimskringla*, from Snorri's version of the saga of Olaf Tryggvason:

Queen Sigrid is being wooed by King Harald Graenske, who now comes to call. "The same evening came another king, called Visaveld, from Russia, likewise to pay his addresses to Queen Sigrid. Lodging was given to both the kings, and to all their people, in a great old room of an outbuilding . . . but there was no want of drink, and the watch, both inside and outside, fell fast asleep. Then Queen Sigrid ordered an attack on

them in the night, both with fire and sword. The house was burnt, with all who were in it, and those who slipped out were put to the sword. Sigrid said that she would make these small kings tired of coming to court her. She was afterward called Sigrid the Haughty.⁵²

Here the similarities to Ingjald's burning of the Seven Kings Hall would seem to weaken any possible direct relationship of either passage with the thattr or the Celtic motif.

Finally, Saxo Grammaticus tells of a near-fatal invitation of a similar kind.⁵³ Frode had set off to conquer the Western Isles; the king of Britain saw that direct resistance was hopeless, so he offered submission, tribute--and an invitation:

The Danes, suspicious, accepted but stationed an army at a distance, ready to be called by trumpet. "Then a select band, lightly armed, went to the banquet. The hall was decked with regal splendour. [. . .] In the midst of the hall stood a great butt ready for refilling the goblets, and holding an enormous amount of liquor. [. . .] Servants, dressed in purple, bore golden cups, and courteously did the office of serving the drink, pacing in ordered ranks. [. . .] The natives took care to drink more sparingly than the guests; for the latter felt safe, and were tempted to make an orgie; while the others, meditating treachery, had lost all temptation to be drunken. [. . .] The Britons, when they saw that the Danes were very drunk, began gradually to slip away from the banquet, and, leaving their guests within the hall, made immense efforts, first to block the doors of the palace by applying bars and all kinds of obstacles, and then to set fire to the house."

The Danes at last break out through a wall and sound the trumpet for their reinforcements.

Do we have the Iron House here? The special nature of the hall, its construction, the fuel, and the smiths are missing. On the other hand, the Danes are a nuisance

in Britain like the Ulstermen and giant clan of **MU** and **Br**; the secrecy, servants, drinking, and break-out agree to a considerable extent with **MU** and **Br**. Another feature that suggests Celtic origin is the setting of the incident in Britain just preceding a short Saxonian dissertation on Irish techniques of warfare; the Iron House incident in **Br** is thought to have been borrowed from Irish partly for similar reasons: an Irish setting and explicit reference to Irish peculiarities.⁵⁴

The relationship between Celtic and Icelandic oral story at the level of myth and heroic legend has long been an object of scholarly interest.⁵⁵ For the later saga literature these connections have been ably surveyed by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Nora K. Chadwick.⁵⁶ In most cases the Celtic concept, motif, or story is generally thought to have priority; though positive proof is usually impossible to mount, in a few cases (such as the character **Arawn** in Welsh and **Arán** in Icelandic) philology offers firm evidence of Celtic origin.⁵⁷ The Iron House is attested in Celtic texts long before the attenuated and doubtful reflexes I have traced in Icelandic, and in Irish the motif had probably already gone through an evolution from heroic realism to exaggeration by the time it first appears.

All the elements of **R&R** we have examined so far give a late, high-medieval impression, but one feature of the portrayal of Thor may be quite old, older even than the tenth-century setting of the thattr. Wooden staves of the gods are a historically accurate feature of Norse paganism that passed into the literature of the Christian period when the Church provided the idea of demonism to explain the misbelief of the pagans: devils inhabited the idols, and

sacrifice strengthened the demons so that the idols could walk and talk. There are other Icelandic tales involving direct contests between the representative of Christianity and an idol.⁵⁸ So most of the features of Raud's Thor worship are probably late literary conventions even where they reflect actual conditions. However, there is no late parallel to Thor's "beard-voice"; here is the passage in more detail:

When King Olaf was approaching Raud's Island carrying the good news of Christianity, Raud conferred with the idol about resistance. "Raud said, 'Make your beard-voice sound against them, and let us take a doughty stand against them.' Thor said that would have little effect; and yet they went outside, and Thor puffed hard into his moustaches and sounded the beard-voice."⁵⁹ The result was a great headwind against the king, a magic storm that temporarily kept the Christians at bay.

Long ago Müllenhoff proposed to connect this "beard-voice" with the mysterious **barditus**, a kind of battle-roar probably with sacral significance, of Tacitus' **Germania**:

barditus wäre demnach "die bartrede" und zwar des Hercules, des donnergottes, den die Germanen **ituri in proelia canunt**. altn. wird **skegggrødd** 'bartruf' vom unwetter gebraucht, das þórr gegen die feinde sendet . . . **barditus** bedeutet also ein donnerähnliches getöse, ein getöse in dem die stimme des gottes nachgeahmt wird. je nach dem ausfall erfuhren die krieger, ob der gott, den sie eben angerufen, ihnen beistehn wolle und gegenwartig sei. . . . für mehr als einen versuch, den dunkeln ausdruck aufzuhellen, möchte ich aber diese erklärung nicht ausgeben.⁶⁰

Despite the qualification of the last sentence quoted, I think Müllenhoff's explanation of **barditus** has great merit. The Norse "beard-voice" (which, however, is not itself the storm but the agent that raises the

storm) is here not an imitation of Thor-Hercules' thunderous voice but the thing itself. If the beard-voice is to be interpreted as somehow a survival of the ancient *barditus*, a survival a little more remarkable than the well-known beard of the thunder god and his association with the color red, then this late and largely confected *thattr* retains, after all, traces of pagan times which then fall into line with the authentic traces of a phallic cult in the late, fictional *Volsi* and genuine memories of Frey worship in *The Story of Ogmund Dytt and Gunnar Half*.

The ingredients of *R&R* seem thus very heterogenous, including pagan survivals, ecclesiastical concepts, historical tradition, borrowings from international story materials, and fictional reshaping of identifiable Norse sources, but they are combined according to a generic recipe, the conversion pattern, that we can arrive at by intra-Norse comparison. However, I think an intellectual or ethical pattern also helped to determine the disposition of the story material in *R&R*, for I suggest the author gave a distinctive sin to each of his protagonists and that the ideological framework of the story portrays those sins and how they were overcome.

The tale several times emphasizes Rognvald's "momentous deeds" and the "secrecy" with which they were accomplished. When Sigrid leaves him to seek out Olaf Tryggvason, she speaks of "these momentous things that we have in our hearts"; for her the appeal of "White-Christ" is that he "is so merciful that there is no man who has acted so wickedly in the past that he cannot be forgiven as soon as he is prepared to become Christian and have faith in Him." Later when Olaf preaches to Rognvald, he

stresses "true repentance and confession of your sins" and the power of baptism to wash away sins after confession. Rognvald's reason for not accepting Christianity at first is his failure to give full credence to this power of forgiveness: "'For a long time now I have not taken my religion very seriously, but your message is extremely satisfying to me, except for one thing: you say a man must go to confession . . . for I have experienced much more than I would care to confess completely.'" Finally, the king precipitated Rognvald's conversion by himself exposing the hidden crimes and making it clear that, like the generous god he represented, he would not "punish those deeds nearly so severely as many people would suppose." Rognvald then confessed and accepted the Faith.

For his part, Raud is a good man whose only sin is apparently his rather touching faith in his Thor. Olaf's words and deeds on Raud's Island are calculated to show how misplaced is this trust; his sermon opposes the True Faith to the worship of "graven images . . . fashioned like evil men," but in the end it is a physical demonstration of strength, in fact a judicial duel, that proves the superiority of the Christian god. Raud's actual conversion is saved for later, even though his particular sin has now been dealt with, and he vows never again to believe in Thor.

Thus the special sin of each hero--call them wanhope and idolatry--is separately handled; and more remarkably, the two maculate heroes complement each other precisely: Rognvald implies he has no faith in pagan gods, but he despairs of forgiveness for his crimes of the past, while Raud has apparently lived an unblemished life but sins by his faith in Thor. Yet the

author seems to have intended not only this complementary relationship but, more complexly, to show also that each of these sins somehow implies the other. This would seem to be the meaning of his otherwise inconsistent references to idolatry in connection with Rognvald and to crimes in connection with Raud.⁶¹ The implication of one sin in the other probably relates to the parallels Sigrid draws between Rognvald and Raud and perhaps justifies the unrealistic common conversion scene where Rognvald and Raud, who do not yet know each other, make a kind of mutual decision to convert. In any case such implication was good Church doctrine, and with the ethical structure I have just sketched the *thattr* betrays an example of the hamartiological archetectonics that we otherwise associate with the mainstream of European literature of the High Middle Ages.⁶²

I agree with John Lindow's conclusion that "the entire question of the relationship between *thaettir* and international folktales appears deserving of a thorough investigation," and with Dag Strömbäck when he writes "*The Thattr of Hroi* shows, like so many other short stories, Iceland's openness to wandering story material and the Icelanders' superior artistic power to adapt international material to its own store of historical narrative."⁶³ But I want to add that an adequate study of *thattr* and folktale must be prepared not only to list international folktale material in *thaettir* or to turn out generic speculations **about** the relationship, but first to deal in depth with the art of adaptation. And that can only be accomplished in close study of individual tales.

NOTES

1

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, **Verzeichnis isländischer Märchenvarianten, mit einer einleitenden Untersuchung**, Folklore Fellows Communication no. 83 (Helsinki, 1929); Heinz Dehmer, **Primitives Erzählungsgut in den Íslendinga-Sögur** (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1927); Hans Naumann, **Primitive Gemeinschaftskultur** (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1921).

2

Inger M. Boberg, **Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature**, Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana 27 (Copenhagen, 1966).

3

Knut Liestøl, **The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas**, trans. A.G. Jayne (Oslo: H. Aschehoug, 1930 [original 1922]), pp. 153-80; Toralf Berntsen, **Fra sagn til saga: studier i kongesagaen** (Kristiania: Gyldendal, 1923); Alfred Bock, "Die epische Dreizahl in den Íslendinga sögur," **Arkiv för nordisk filologi** 37, 38 (1921, 1922): 263-313, 51-83. Bock's work is a massive refutation of Olrik's comments on the paucity of epic triads in the sagas (A. Olrik, "Episke love i folkedigtningen," **Danske Studier** [1908]: 69-89).

4

Old Norse-Icelandic words will be presented as far as possible in English form because of typographical difficulties; in this word the *a* and *ae* are long vowels. On the etymology and semantics of the word see John Lindow, "Old Icelandic Þáttr: Early Usage and Semantic History," **Scripta Islandica** 29 (1978): 3-44; Lars Lönnroth, "Tesen om de två kulturerna: kritiska studier i den isländska sagaskrivningens sociala förutsättningar," **Scripta Islandica** 15 (1964): 19-21; Joseph Harris, "Genre and Narrative Structure in Some Íslendinga þættir," **Scandinavian Studies** 44 (1972): 21-27; and Lönnroth, Harris, and T.M. Andersson in **Scandinavian Studies** 47 (1975): 419-41.

5

Joseph Harris, "Theme and Genre in Some Íslendinga þættir," **Scandinavian Studies** 48 (1976): esp. pp. 17-22; André Jolles, **Einfache Formen** (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1930).

6

Harris, "Theme," p. 27, n. 48; T.M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: an Analytic Reading* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), ch. 3.

7

V.I. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, 2nd ed. rev. Louis A. Wagner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968); my comparison was made in a lecture in 1969.

8

Claude Bremond, "The Morphology of the French Fairy Tale: The Ethical Model," in *Patterns in Oral Literature*, eds. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), pp. 49-76.

9

For this group of *thaettir* cf. Harris, "Narrative Structure," pp. 1-20; Harris, "Theme"; and Harris, "*Ögöundar þáttir dyttis ok Gunnars helmings*: Unity and Literary Relations," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 90 (1975): 156-82.

10

Harris, "Theme"; cf. Lönnroth, "Tesen," pp. 25-29.

11

On *Hróa þáttir*, see Dag Strömbäck, "En orientalistisk saga i fornnordisk dräkt," in *Donum Grapeanum: Festskrift . . . Anders Grape* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1945), pp. 408-444 (also in Dag Strömbäck, *Folklore och filologi*, Skrifter utg. av Gustav Adolfs Akademien för Folklivsforskningen no. 48 [Uppsala, 1970], pp. 238-54); on *Hreiðars þáttir heimiska*, John Lindow, "Hreiðars þáttir heimiska and AT 326," *Arv* 34 (1978): 152-79 and Harris, "Theme," pp. 19-21; on *Þorsteins þáttir Austfirðings*, J. Harris, "The King in Disguise: An International Popular Tale in Two Old Icelandic Adaptations," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 94 (1979): 57-81.

12

Cf. John R. Reinhard, "Strokes Shared," *Journal of American Folklore* 36 (1923): 388-400; also see K1728 *The bear trainer and his bear* (AT 1161) and AT 1689, 1689A, and 1610 (=K187).

13

E.g., Vogt (cited below), p. 45, n. 1 on *Þórarins þáttir*

in *Tómasskinna*; Lindow "AT 326," p. 178 on *Þorsteins þátr skelks* (cf. Vogt, p. 55, n. 1); Friedrich Panzer, "Zur Erzählung von Nornagest," in *Vom Werden des deutschen Geistes: Festgabe Gustav Ehrismann . . .*, eds. P. Marker and W. Stammer (Berlin and Leipzig: W. de Gruyter, 1925), pp. 27-34 on *Norna-Gests þátr*; Sveinsson, *Verzeichnis*, p. xxxiii, and Lindow, p. 178 on *Þorsteins þátr forvitna*.

14

"Die sieben weisen Meister und der Teufelsbaumeister in der norwegischen Königssaga? (*Þórarin Nefjólffsson*)," *Festgabe für Anton Schifferer*, Veröffentlichungen der schleswig-holsteinischen Universitäts-Gesellschaft, no. 37 (Breslau, 1931), pp. 38-61.

15

On the Masterbuilder tale in general see Inger M. Boberg, "Baumeistersagen," *Folklore Fellows Communications* 151 (1955): 1-24; on the medieval Scandinavian forms, Joseph Harris, "The Masterbuilder Tale in Snorri's *Edda* and Two Sagas," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 91 (1976): 66-101.

16

On *Gísls þátr Illugasonar* and its literary relations see Jonna Louis-Jensen, *Kongesagastudier: Kompilationen Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*, Bibliotheca Arnarnæana 32 (Copenhagen, 1977), pp. 111-22, esp. pp. 121-22.

17

Eindriða þátr is found in *Flateyjarbók: en samling af norske konge-sagaer med inskudte mindre fortællinger . . .*, eds. G. Vigfusson and C.R. Unger, 3 vols. (Christiania: P.T. Mallin, 1860-68), 1: 456-64, anthologized in *Fornar smásögur úr Noregskonunga sögum*, ed. E. Gardiner (Reykjavík: Leiftur, 1949), pp. 89-101, discussed in Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, 1923), 2: 771; *Völva þátr* is found in *Flateyjarbók*, 2: 331-36, Gardiner, pp. 170-78, and widely discussed.

18

Flateyjarbók, 1: 387-93; Gardiner, pp. 71-80; cf. Finnur Jónsson, 2: 639-40.

19

Flateyjarbók, 3: 457-60; Gardiner, pp. 206-11; Finnur Jónsson, 2: 772.

20

Norna-Gests þáttir in Flateyjarbók, 1: 346-59; Tóka þáttir in Flateyjarbók, 2: 135-38 and Gardiner, pp. 129-32.

21

Flateyjarbók, 1: 275-83 and Gardiner, pp. 1-14.

22

Flateyjarbók, 1: 242-46 and Gardiner, pp. 42-49.

23

Flateyjarbók, 1: 288-99, Gardiner, pp. 50-64; Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson, Editiones Arnarnagæðar, ser. A, vol. 1, I (Copenhagen, 1958), 313-33, 349-51. The translations from RER are those of an anthology in preparation by J. Harris and Elisabeth Whitelaw; the Flateyjarbók text is the source of the translations, but no page references to this short work seem necessary.

24

The only commentary on RER is Finnur Jónsson, 3: 85-86.

25

On the issue of independence see Harris, "Theme," pp. 2-4 and Heinrich Gimmler, "Die Thættir der Morkinskinna: Ein Beitrag zur Überlieferungsproblematik und zur Typologie der altnordischen Kurzerzählung" (Diss. Frankfurt, 1976), pp. 8-18.

26

The interpolations in the Flateyjarbók text are 1: 293-94 (cap. 245), 295-96 (cap. 247 and beginning of 248), and 298 (end of cap. 248); they come from Snorri's Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar, ch. 56-58, ch. 59 (first half), and ch. 59 (conclusion) (Heimskringla, ed. Bjarni Aðalbarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit no. 26, 3 vols. (Reykjavík, 1941), 1: 306-307, 308, 308-309. The other texts (cf. Ólafur Halldórsson above) are more extensively interpolated.

27

Svaða þáttir ok Arnórs kerlingarnefs in Flateyjarbók, 1: 435-39; Ögmundar þáttir dytts ok Gunnars helmings, edited from all manuscripts in Eyfirdinga sögur, by Jónas Kristjánsson, Íslenzk fornrit 9 (Reykjavík, 1956), pp. 101-126; Egils þáttir Síðu-Hallssonar in Flateyjarbók, 2: 142-48 and in Guðni Jónsson, ed., Íslendinga þættir (Reykjavík: S. Kristjánssonar, 1945), pp. 21-33.

28

Aðalbjarnarson, p. 279; Finnur Jónsson, 3: 85-86.

29

Aðalbjarnarson, pp. 304-307; Oddr Snorrason, **Saga Ólafs Tryggvasonar**, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, 1932), p. 104; Aðalbjarnarson, p. CXVII.

30

Finnur Jónsson, 3: 85; however, we cannot be so certain that the thattr is as late as Finnur Jónsson puts it and that Snorri is its only source. Cf. E.H. Lind, **Norsk-isländska dopnamn ock fingerade namn från medeltiden** (Uppsala and Leipzig: Lundequist, 1905-15), col. 849-50, for instances of the name **Rauðr**.

31

Aðalbjarnarson, pp. 324-28; **Flateyjarbók**, 1: 393-95.

32

Cf. Finnur Jónsson, 3: 85-86.

33

Laura A. Hibbard (Loomis), **Mediaeval Romance in England**, new ed. (New York: B. Franklin, 1960), pp. 297, 302-303, cf. p. 276.

34

Hibbard, pp. 296, n. 5, and 301.

35

Boberg, **Index**, K812 **Victim burned in own house**; cf. K811.1 **Enemies invited to a banquet (visit) and killed**.

36

Tom Peete Cross, **Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature**, Indiana University Publications, Folklore Series, no. 7 (Bloomington, Ind., 1952; rpt. 1969), K811.4*, S112.6*, K811.1.

37

Thomas F. O'Rahilly, **Early Irish History and Mythology** (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1946), p. 109; Marie Louise Sjoestedt-Jonval, **Gods and Heroes of the Celts**, trans. Myles Dillon (London: Methuen, 1949), p. 54.

38

Branwen Uerch Lyr, ed. Derick S. Thomson (Dublin, 1961) and translated in **The Mabinogion**, trans. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (London and New York: Everyman, 1949), pp. 25-40; for the Irish texts I am entirely dependent

on translations: "The Destruction of Dind Ríg," trans. Whitley Stokes, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 3 (1901): 1-14; "The Intoxication of the Ulstermen," trans. William M. Hennessy, in *Ancient Irish Tales*, eds. Tom Peete Cross and Clark Harris Slover (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1936). pp. 215-38.

39

Thomson, p. xxxix.

40

However, *smiðr* in Old Norse covers a wide range of craftsmen or wrights, as well as blacksmiths.

41

O'Rahilly, p. 109; the simple form is preserved in two variant texts discussed by O'Rahilly, pp. 107-109.

42

The *Bórama* is edited and translated complete by Standish H. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica* vol. 2 (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1892), 401-23, this passage pp. 409-410; however, my quotations are from the version of the burning in Proinsias MacCana, *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr: A Study of the Irish Affinities and of the Composition of the Second Branch of the Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958), pp. 20-22.

43

MacCana's translation, p. 20.

44

"[Thorolf] asked Rognvald why he had such a huge heap of wood brought home. He answered, 'Because there are always complaints in the winter about the lack of firewood since much is needed, and in the second place I did not want the sun to cause cracks in the new and lightly tarred wooden walls.' Throlf wasted no more thoughts on that."

45

E.g., *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, ch. 3; *Gull-Þóris saga*, ch. 18.

46

Cf. *Gull-Þóris saga*, ch. 10; *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, ch. 9; *Völsunga saga*, ch. 8.

47

Ch. 3.

48

Reading through the synopses of sixteen burnings from

Orkneyinga saga in Alfred W. Johnston, "Some Medieval House-Burnings by the Vikings of Orkney," **Scottish Historical Review** 12 (1914-15): 157-65, one notices so many features held in common among the Norse burnings and between the Norse and Celtic that some community of (oral) literary tradition seems certain; but Richard Heinzel's distinction between "Auswahl aus dem Leben" and "Auswahl aus der Ueberlieferung" in such burnings seems arbitrary ("Beschreibung der isländischen Saga," **Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften**, Philos.-hist. Cl., 97 Bd., Heft IV-VI (Vienna, 1881), 107-308, here 144-45).

49

Henry Goddard Leach and Gertrude Schoepperle, "Haralds-saga Hringsbana and the Tristan and Svanhild Romances," **Scandinavian Studies** 2 (1914-15): 264-76.

50

Quoted from Snorri Sturluson, **Heimskringla**, part two: **Sagas of the Norse Kings**, trans. Samuel Laing, rev. Peter Foote (London and New York: Everyman, 1961), p. 34 (ch. 40 = ch. 36 in Aðalbjarnarson edition).

51

Laing, p. 37 (ch. 44 = ch. 40); Laing, p. 38 (ch. 46 = ch. 43).

52

Heimskringla, part one: **The Olaf Sagas**, trans. Samuel Laing, rev. Jacqueline Simpson, 2 vols. (London and New York: Everyman, 1964), 1: 44 (ch. 48 = ch. 43 in Aðalbjarnarson edition).

53

Quoted from Saxo Grammaticus, **The First Nine Books of the Danish History**, trans. Oliver Elton (London: D. Nutt, 1894), pp. 206-207 (= **Gesta Danorum**, ed. Alfred Holder [Strassburg: K.J. Trübner, 1886], pp. 166-69 [Book 5, end]); cf. Paul Herrmann, **Erläuterungen zu den ersten neun Büchern der dänischen Geschichte des Saxo Grammaticus**, zweiter Teil: Kommentar (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1922), p. 376.

54

MacCana, p. 23.

55

E.g., Jan de Vries, "Keltisch-Germanische Beziehungen

im Gebiete der Heldensage," **Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur** 75 (1953): 229-47; and **Kelten und Germanen**, *Bibliotheca Germanica* 9 (Bern, 1960); C.W. von Sydow, "Tors färd till Utgard," **Danske Studier** (1910): 65-105, 145-82.

56

Nora K. Chadwick, "Literary Tradition in the Old Norse and Celtic World," **Saga-Book of the Viking Society** 14 (1953-55): 164-99; Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, "Celtic Elements in Icelandic Tradition," **Béaloideas** 25 (1957): 3-24.

57

Chadwick, pp. 175-77.

58

E.g., **Ógmundar þáttur dytts ok Gunnars helmings**; see Harris, "Unity."

59

All manuscripts of the **Greatest Saga** give some spelling of the terms **skeggrodd** and **skeggraust**, both literally "beard-voice," for the two words so translated here; only **Flateyjarbók** gives **skeggbroddar**, **skeggraust**, "beard-bristles" and "beard-voice"; **-broddar** is an obvious scribal error.

60 .

Karl Müllenhoff, **Die Germania des Tacitus**, Vol. 4 **Deutsche Altertumskunde** (Berlin: Weidmann, 1900), 4: 136; cf. Rudolf Much, **Die Germania des Tacitus**, 3rd ed. rev. Herbert Jankuhn, ed. Wolfgang Lange (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1967), p. 78, rejects Müllenhoff's explanation.

61

Olaf to Rognvald: "'With this faith you must forsake the devil and all his will and wiles and the heresy of graven images and belief in them.'" Rognvald would accept Christianity "' . . . except for one thing: you say a man must go to confession and say that he will forsake his belief in graven images--for I have experienced . . .'"
Olaf to Raud: "' . . . as if a graven image can give them [idolators] some assistance in the crimes which those who believe in such idols want to perpetrate.'"

62

I have in mind not only such obvious examples as Gower's **Confessio Amantis** but the more subtle architectonics of sin in romances such as Chrétien's **Yvain** and **Percival**.

Lindow, p. 179; Strömbäck, p. 425.

NOTE

The **Forum** editors take special pride in announcing that former editor Simon J. Bronner received an award from the American Folklore Fellows at the 1980 meeting of the AFS for his essay "Concepts in the Study of Material Aspects of American Folk Culture," which appeared in **Folklore Forum** 12:2-3 (1979). Bronner recently received his Ph.D. in Folklore and American Studies at Indiana University.

We might add that the special issue on material culture in which Dr. Bronner's article appeared is a must for students of this area of folkloristics (available for \$5 from **Folklore Forum**).