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## 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' and *Landnámabók*: Another Narrative Tradition

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Annal 755 (757) in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recounts a royal family's internecine struggle for the throne of Wessex. Conflict begins when Cynewulf, supported by his councillors, first deposes and then exiles Sigeberht when he slays his ealdorman, Cumbra. A swineherd loyal to the ealdorman takes blood vengeance on the exiled king. Altogether, Cynewulf reigns for twenty-nine years until Cyneheard, Sigeberht's brother as well as Cynewulf's kinsman, musters a force and attacks the king and his bodyguard, leaving only one survivor. Cynewulf's remaining troops, led by Osric and Wigfrith, retaliate by killing Cyneheard and his followers, except for Osric's godson.<sup>1</sup>

Old English scholars have long been fond of 'this precious bit of OE prose narrative'.<sup>2</sup> For one thing, its inclusion in many anthologies of Old English literature has made it widely known.<sup>3</sup> For another, its dramatic character has occasioned a surprising number of studies of its literary style and political dimensions.<sup>4</sup> In addition, it has often been compared to the Icelandic family saga. At first an observation made either in passing or in reference to specific points,<sup>5</sup> the notion began to assume theoretical character in an article by C. L. Wrenn in 1940,<sup>6</sup> much of which he repeated in his literary history in 1967<sup>7</sup> despite G. Turville-Petre's trenchant criticism in the meantime (see note 4), and seems to have achieved the status of a minor dogma in one formulation.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the most recent and elaborate comparison of the annal entry to the sagas is that of R. W. McTurk (see note 1),<sup>9</sup> in an article which is both an edition of the annal entry and the richest single source of information about it. If style is defined as 'a kind of variation which distinguishes the object we are considering from a norm established by other members of its class',<sup>10</sup> then we can sympathise with the attempt to find a class in

which to place the annal, even while not endorsing its results. But the quality that makes 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' precious within the Anglo-Saxon corpus is its uniqueness, the classifying of which is a worthy challenge to the hardest of literary theorists. Despite the imprecision of the alleged similarities between annal and saga, they do resemble each other where 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' dramatises conflict in a manner that constitutes the trademark of a saga. Nevertheless, the annal reads for the most part like a drastic summary of a saga stripped of the rhetorical devices that constitute saga style (*pace* Cassidy and Ringler), however we may choose to define it. Such an unremarkable observation would not need stating had not the annal-as-saga school drawn the original comparison in the first place. To repair the damage, such as it is, the present essay will argue that the annal entry is reminiscent of a form of narrative chronicle writing practiced by the compilers of the Old Icelandic *Landnámabók*.

Before I turn to *Landnámabók*, however, I would like to dispose of the notion that 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' resembles a saga. Whereas the annal is no more than a gripping but sometimes inexpertly rendered story, a saga imparts a coded message that the literal sense alone does not convey. Like all imaginative reconstructions of the past, a saga possesses certain features that set it apart from retrospection of a primarily commemorative character. Put simply, a saga tell us more than even a scrupulously accurate summary of its plot can manage to convey. Among the many differences between a chronicle and a saga that account for the kind of information we can extract from each, three seem to be paramount.

The first is intertextuality.<sup>11</sup> Because sagas can be read in relation to each other, each one has a dimension extending beyond itself. In the same way that indispensable commentary on *Hamlet* can be gained from the Shakespeare canon itself, a knowledge of all sagas, irrespective of the genre distinctions modern scholars have imposed upon them, informs a reading of any one saga. Sagas represent a body of semi-holy script that creates a national myth by repeating universal observations again and again. As many readers have remarked, sagas consist of stereotyped characters, a limited stock of actions, and a fixed repertoire of conduct.<sup>12</sup> The reading process consists of *déjà lu* experiences in which characters, events, and conduct are weighed against the composites drawn from the corpus at large. Typical characters are, for example, 'the unbalanced man',<sup>13</sup> the inciting female,<sup>14</sup> the vain hero returning from abroad,<sup>15</sup> the wise counsellor, and the overreaching litigant. Stereotyped actions are, among others, the recruiting of support for a lawsuit, the delayed betrothal, the wooing scene, the marriage forced

upon the bride, the hostile visit to a neighboring farm, and the triumphal return from abroad. Typical conduct, to name but a few kinds, is the denial of provocation, the awarding of self-judgment, the hesitation in seeking vengeance, and reluctance to predict the future. Virtually no major character or significant action exists outside these parameters, which are ultimately not just a matter of literary artifice but a way of observing, organizing, explaining, and comprehending the world. Moreover, as the composite defines the norm, departures from it characterise the abnormal, the exceptional, and the deviant. So much of what is initially confusing or unclear in the sagas becomes comprehensible when we recognise the norms operating in any given scene. First-time readers of *Brennu-Njáls saga*, for example, experience a sense of disorientation in the early chapters not only because the narrator does little to dispel the long-ago-and-far-away quality of the action but also because the conduct of *Morðr gígja*, *Hrútr*, and *Gunnarr* can best be comprehended in the context of what happens later in the saga and elsewhere in the corpus. And much social criticism in traditional literature is exercised by means of contrast, exaggeration, pastiche, and parody, all of which require a clear sense of the ordinary and the typical in order to function. This rather obvious but too infrequently acknowledged principle has a special relevance to the sagas both in view of the relative scarcity of direct authorial intrusion in the action and of the lack of commentary that characterises the novel – in other words, the celebrated and imprecisely designated objectivity of the narrator.<sup>16</sup>

The paradigmatic relation between one saga and its corpus differs from the intertext of 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' in two ways. First, as mentioned above, the entry is a virtual narrative *hapax legomenon*. As a consequence, most of the figures are not really characters at all but merely names or titles: the *Witan*, *Sigeberht*, *Cumbra*, the swain, *Cynewulf's* mistress, *Osric*, his godson, and *Wigfrith*. Unique characters in traditional literature, those by definition lacking a second level – the general, the typical, or the symbolic – can exist only on the literal level. In contrast, a traditional hero, for example, *Beowulf* – whose tradition has by no means survived *in toto* – receives our attention most when his conduct, set against the stereotype, gives him depth and individuality that raise him above the norm. At times, the contrast is so strong that his behavior approaches the allegorical.<sup>17</sup> Second, even the characters in 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' – *Cynewulf*, *Cyneheard*, and the loyal retainers – who arguably have counterparts in the Icelandic, Anglo-Saxon, or Middle High German literary traditions, lack context because the annal does not or cannot consistently develop them as stereotypes. For example, *Cynewulf* resembles the type of alert warrior defending against attack paralleled in

the *Finnsburh Fragment*<sup>18</sup> and numerous other texts. But, in addition, because he is overcome during a dalliance, he resembles a parody of heroic response to attack as represented by Holofernes in *Judith*.<sup>19</sup> The annal seems to mix the two types: Cynewulf is brave in his own defense, but careless in not preventing its necessity. We cannot tell whether we ought to regard Cynewulf as a king grown complacent, not to say decadent, with age,<sup>20</sup> or as one foully betrayed. Depending on the reader's inclination, the text either abounds in tantalising hints or lacks authorial control. Cyneheard, likewise, looks like an overreaching avenger whose undertaking misfires because of his own miscalculations, forcing him twice to command loyalty with offers of money. But perhaps he is a just scourge, like Hamlet, who achieves his goal at the cost of his own life. Clearly, the portrait remains too fuzzy for the reader to decide, and such questions place too many demands upon the text. Finally, the loyal retainers receive our sympathy because of their heroic dying words, but what does their conduct contribute to our perception of the feud? Why are they given such good lines when we do not even know who they are? The annalist's failure to give us enough information to understand the significance of events causes confusion instead of developing a fascination with the ambiguity and mystery of human conduct. Why, after all, does Cynewulf want Cyneheard banished? Has the king's network of spies revealed his kinsman's plotting? Or has the king grown tyrannical? On the other hand, why does Cyneheard attack Cynewulf? Is he seeking revenge, is he merely ambitious, or is his attack a preemptive strike designed to counter the king's plotting? Perhaps all three? Where has Cyneheard been during the twenty-nine years of Cynewulf's reign? Perhaps merely growing old enough to seek revenge, but we cannot be sure. Are they cousins or uncle and nephew? How old are they? Such questions are obviously misplaced given that the function of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is to commemorate past events in a form that the tradition of annal writing permitted. That events in this annal can be given an extra-literal sense seems, therefore, highly unlikely, because the lack of context fails to provide a dimension in which events have meaning beyond themselves. We should be thankful for its inclusion in the *Chronicle* if for no other reason than what it shows us about the difficulty of reading narrative cut loose from its context.

The second feature distinguishing annal and saga is their treatment of subject matter, specifically feud. Sagas are never impartial in their depiction of conflict; actions are rarely presented as if they merely happened; insults are seldom delivered simply for the sake of the plot; killings are not chance occurrences that reveal the

harshness of the saga world; legal wranglings do not take place in order to demonstrate the dispute customs of a bygone era; characters are not cantankerous or idealised figures preserved as a legacy to succeeding generations.<sup>21</sup> All these narrative elements fit together as part of a fictional world controlled by a narrator who guides us on our way. None of these elements can be isolated from the fabric of the sagas themselves but must be approached as parts of the whole. In contrast, insofar as any narrative can be said to operate only on the level of plot, the chronicle episode looks like narrative whose meaning is to be sought merely in what happens. This is not just because, as Cecily Clark has so persuasively observed, 'annalists . . . simply record events as they occur',<sup>22</sup> or because their 'chief virtue' is always 'objectivity' (p. 224), but also because the treatment of characters in the annal is inconsistent. To be sure, Cynewulf dethrones Sigeberht with the apparent approval of the *Witan*, sends him into exile only after Cumbra's death, fights successfully against the Britons, and reigns for twenty-nine years. Yet in presenting these virtues the chronicler shows a measured restraint which a saga author seldom attempts. Much the same impartiality is observable in the presentation of Cyneheard. Nothing suggests that his claim to the throne is less worthy than his kinsman's, no character flaws explain his failure, and nothing in his conduct implies that he would be unsuitable for the office of king. His challenge to Cynewulf and his temporary victory simply happen. Cynewulf seems to have maintained power, if any explanation at all is offered, because of his prowess in battle and, following Sverre Bagge,<sup>23</sup> his ability to attract adherents; he loses throne and life because Cyneheard surprises and overcomes him. We might conclude that the annalist's creed, his commitment to objectivity, prevents him from taking sides, but contradicting this view is the occasional lowering of his shield of neutrality. For example, Sigeberht's 'unjust acts', his killing of Cumbra, and his ignominious fall at the hands of the swain suggest the annalist's lack of regard for Sigeberht and all his works. Furthermore, one passage in particular violates all the rules of annalistic impartiality:

Ond þā gebēad hē him hiera āgenne dōm fēos ond londes, gif hīe him þæs rīces uþon; ond him cýþdon þæt hiera mægas him mid wæron, þā þe him from noldon. Ond þā cuædon hīe þæt him nænig mæg lēofra nære þonne hiera hlāford, ond hie næfre his banan folgian noldon. Ond þā budon hīe hiera mægum þæt hīe gesunde from ēodon; ond hie cuædon þæt tæt ilce hiera gefērun

beboden wære þe ær mid þām cyninge wærun. þā cuædon hīe þæt hīe hīe þæs ne onmunden 'þon mā þe eowre geferan þe mid þam cyninge ofslægene wærun'. Ond hīe þā ymb þā gatu feohtende wæron oþ þæt hīe þærinne fulgon ond þone æþeling ofslogon ond þā men þe him mid wærun, alle būtan ānum, sē wæs þæs aldormonnes godsunu; ond hē his feorh generede, ond þēah hē wæs oft gewundad.

[And then he offered them money and land according to their own judgement, if they would permit him the kingdom, and told them that their kinsmen, who would not (go) from him, were inside with him. And then they said that that no kinsman was dearer to them than their lord, and they never would follow his killer. And then they offered their kinsmen that they go away in health; and they said that that same offer had been made to their comrades who had been with the king. Then they said that they would no more consider it, 'than (did) your companions who were slain with the king'. And then they were fighting around the gates until they broke in and slew that atheling and those men who were with him, all except one alone, that was the godson of the ealdorman; and he saved his life, although he was often wounded.]

We observe how the annalist compromises balance by allowing Cyneheard's adherents to express their loyalty before dying at his side. They achieve a heroic stature almost equalling that of Cynewulf himself. The verbal exchange is almost certainly a fiction apparently designed to make some statement about the event. But, indeed, what statement? Because the chronicler focuses on minor characters and creates speaking parts for them, their verbal exchange must be important. But what, apart from expressing obvious loyalty, do the heroic last words signify? We would gladly witness such an exchange between Cynewulf and Cyneheard, especially one in which a discussion of past grievances would dispel much of the mist surrounding their history. At least the dialogue shows that the annalist had the ability to depict such a scene between the two mighty opposites even if he lacked judgment in reserving it for the anonymous peripheral retainers. Why the annal took its present shape can only be a matter of speculation, but whatever the reasons it looks like a skeleton of historical facts – Cynewulf seized power, reigned long, died violently –

upon which the flesh of traditional narrative devices has been grafted for dramatic effect.

A third difference between annal and saga involves their respective narrative voices.<sup>24</sup> The saga author poses as an historian who relates only what has been preserved by tradition and what, therefore, is true. He purports to invent nothing. This feature is all part of seeing everything from a distance, a narrative mode that creates the atmosphere of second-hand narration that is, nevertheless, rarely impartial or unbiased. Sometimes footnotes in the form of skaldic verse document an event. Thus, this purveyor of second-hand information is omniscient in that he is reliable, well informed, and informative. But he is reticent and reserved and, on occasion, even hesitant. He often tells us what to think of the characters – they are promising, quarrelsome, or agreeable – but hardly ever what they are thinking. Even on the rare occasion when he hints at a character's thoughts – 'hann sagðist þaðan af . . .' [he said from then on . . .] – they are seen to be a matter of public record, for recording the unknowable seems, as a matter of unwritten narrative law, to have been prohibited. We are never invited inside characters' minds or expected to imagine ourselves performing their feats, for saga heroes are too grand to be emulated. But we are meant to understand how and why they act. Peter Brooks characterises this narrative feature as 'laconic chasteness'.<sup>25</sup> The saga narrator's chasteness is nevertheless limited, for all literary conventions are illusions, slight of hand manoeuvres designed to disguise the reported as the real. Another saga illusion is the apparently greater interest shown in characters' deeds rather than in their motives. This cannot really be the case or sagas would be considerably less fascinating than they, in fact, are, but such nonchalance accounts for the misguided notion – still current – that sagas are objective. Sagas always take sides, though occasionally we wonder why. Sometimes we cannot even be sure where the narrator's sympathies lie. This feature of apparent objectivity arises from observing behaviour from a distance, recording traditional data, and passing along community wisdom. If ever there were a case of a supreme authority standing aloof pairing his fingernails while his creations make their own way through the text, it is this phlegmatic Icelandic voice. Reading a saga, finally, is to participate in a conspiracy with a narrator who never tells us what characters are thinking or rarely why they act but who lays down a trail of clues that allows us to imagine the possibilities.

The Anglo-Saxon chronicler, in contrast, is more or less what the saga author pretends to be, a recorder of a tradition with less than perfect command of the facts. He was not present when events took place, and he must rely on what others have



told him, written down, recorded in oral tradition, perhaps even witnessed first-hand. If he does not tell us a character's name, then this is probably because the tradition has not preserved it and not because the omission fits some design. In comparison to a saga narrative voice, the annalist gives the impression that he has not been talking to the right people or that he has been inattentive. Of course, this lack of information density probably derives from the undeveloped nature of the traditions, both the oral and the written ones. We can imagine that the Icelandic tradition once looked like this, but what has survived represents what must be a much later development. In this sense there are no origins of the family saga; it was born in full flower, perfectly and fully evolved for its task.<sup>26</sup> From the earliest to the latest extant sagas, insofar as we can date them at all,<sup>27</sup> everything bears the mark of highly refined craftsmanship. The narrator of the annal, on the other hand, is still groping for a comprehensible tale. He has a few rhetorical aces up his sleeve, even though they seem to drop out at the wrong moments. Guiding us through the murky paths of history by means of helpful comment here and there is not, however, one of his long-suits. His withheld commentary obfuscates the relation between events without achieving a compensatory balanced point of view. We sense his sympathy for Cynewulf, and his opposition to Cyneheard, without being shown why we should share these emotions. The narrative voice of the annal is, finally, not so much unbiased as unfocused. The result is that 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' tells us scarcely more about their feud than would a tabular listing of the facts.

2

In looking outside the Anglo-Saxon tradition for the missing context of 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard', Old English scholars have unfortunately overlooked C. E. Wright's cogent suggestion that 'it is with the few short vivid sagas of the *Landnámabók* . . . that we must compare the Anglo-Saxon sagas – the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard, of Queen Eadburh, of St. Gregory and the slave boys, of the scene in the Northumbrian Council chamber, of the murder of Abbot Byrhtnoth'.<sup>28</sup> Wright might well have been thinking of the tribulations of the blood-brothers, Ingólfur Arnarson and Leifr Hróðmarsson (SH6), of Björn Hrólfsson's quarrels with Norwegian noblemen (S217), of Þorbjörn enn digri's lawsuits and demise (S79), of Ljótr á Ingjaldssandi's tempestuous career (S142), or of numerous other short sketches that comprise a tradition of vigorous narrative writing based on

oral or written accounts of parahistorical figures.<sup>29</sup> In proposing to demonstrate the validity of Wright's notion, I wish to test the claim made above that sagas tell us more about the past than can any summary of their plot by comparing 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' with three types of entries narrating extended conflict in *Landnámabók*. Most like 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard', the first type tells a story that has no saga analogue. The second type resembles 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' in style but differs from it in having a saga analogue which tells the story more fully. Finally, the third type tells a complete story and, in addition, has a saga counterpart that treats character and event differently.<sup>30</sup> But first a few words about this document.

If we assume, along with Jón Jóhannesson and Jakob Benediktsson,<sup>31</sup> that *Landnámabók* was compiled (1) to counter foreigners' insults about the nature of Icelanders, (2) to provide a handbook on genealogy, and (3) to follow the examples of other nations in recording the country's origins, then it follows that the work is unlikely to be objective.<sup>32</sup> We might regard its accounts as balanced, persuasive, restrained, accurate, or even reliable, but they cannot by definition be neutral or impartial or unbiased. Naturally, this perspective does not mean that *Landnámabók* glorifies Iceland's earliest ancestors, but rather suggests that the book will have a certain slant to it; we are not apt to confuse its tone with the negative attitudes expressed in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* or by other English chroniclers recounting viking attacks.<sup>33</sup> At the very least, we expect that the Icelandic settlers who did anything memorable will find their way into the collection and that inclusion in *Landnámabók* encodes a favourable attitude towards them. This attitude embraces the vast majority of those who only settled land, did not in any way distinguish themselves, and appear only as names, accounting for a certain monotony in the book and no doubt explaining why it is little studied by literary historians. Those settlers who behaved nobly are given pride of place, the occasional Christian among the early inhabitants singled out, and acts of valour, generosity, courage and even eccentricity dwelled on fondly. The sub-text to all this is 'Here are people we Icelanders can be proud of!' To be sure, there were rogues among these early settlers, people whose greed, sense of their own importance, and downright nastiness caused friction. These people must also be brought on stage, if for no other reason than to complete the picture. On the other hand, settlers are repeatedly said to be proud people who refused to bow to Norwegian kings and petty despots and who were thus forced to flee Norway. This dispossessed nobility must be expected to act independently, if not obstreperously, now and then, so the compilers

might have argued, but such stiff moral fibre was necessary to forge a viable society in a rough world lacking centralised authority. A less sympathetic way of reading this text, of course, is to say that many of these settlers came to Iceland to practice their own brand of tyranny, first come, first serve, and everybody else keep out of the way. All in all, expressing an attitude towards this range of human types was not necessary given the work's agenda, and the reticent narrator was thus an ideal mediator between those wishing to prop up a flagging sense of national pride and those extolling a golden age of larger-than-life, real flesh-and-blood ancestors. We can now turn to the narrative types themselves.

3

Type One in *Landnámabók* consists of occasionally fuzzy narrative summaries having no saga analogues. Similar to 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' in that they stand alone, some, but by no means all,<sup>34</sup> of these entries are inferior to the *Chronicle* entry in narrative power and technique. The following entry, S111, for example, has all the ingredients for a stirring tale of deception, betrayal, and treachery, but something has obviously gone wrong in its telling:

I. (A) Kjallakr hét maðr, son Bjarnar ens sterka, bróður Gjaflaugar, er átti Björn enn austroeni; hann fór til Íslands ok nam land frá Døgurðará til Klofninga ok bjó á Kjallaksstoðum. Hans son var Helgi hrogn ok Þorgrímr þongull undir Felli, Eilífr prúði, Ásbjörn vøðvi á Orrastoðum, Björn hvalmagi í Túngarði, Þorsteinn þynning, Gizurr glaði í Skoravík, Þorbjörn skrofuðr á Ketilsstoðum, Æsa í Svíney, móðir Eyjólf's ok Tin-Forna.

(B) Ljótólfr hét maðr; honum gaf Kjallakr bústað á Ljótólf'sstoðum inn frá Kaldakinn; hans synir váru Þorsteinn ok Björn ok Hrafsi; hann var risaættar at móðerni. Ljótólfr var járnsmiðr. Þeir réðusk út í Fellsskóga á Ljótólf'sstaði. Vífill var vin þeira, er bjó á Vífillstöptum.

(C) Þórunn at Þórunnartóptum var móðir Oddmars ok fósttra Kjallaks, sonar Bjarnar hvalmaga.

[I. (A) Kjallakr was the name of a man, the son of Björn the Strong, the brother of Gjaflaug, who was married to Björn the

Easterner; he went to Iceland and settled land between the Þogurðará and Klofningar and lived at Kjallaksstaðir. His sons were Helgi Roe and Þorgrímr Tangle-Weed of Fell, Eilífr the Magnificent, Asbjörn Muscle of Orrastaðir, Björn Whale-Belly of Túngarðr, Þorsteinn the Thinning, Gizurr the Gleeful, Þorbjörn the Chatterer of Ketilsstaðir, Æsa of Sviney, the mother of Eyjólfur and Tin-Forni.

(B) Ljótólfr was the name of a man; Kjallakr gave him farmland at Ljótólfsstaðir east of Kaldakinn; his sons were Þorsteinn and Björn and Hrafsi; he was descended from giants on his mother's side. Ljótólfr was a smith. They moved out to Ljótólfsstaðir in Fellsskógi. Vífill was a friend of theirs and lived at Vífillstöftir.

(C) Þórunn of Þórunnartóptir was the mother of Oddmarr and foster-mother to Kjallakr, the son of Björn Whale-Belly.]

II. Álöf, dóttir Þorgríms undir Felli, tók ærsl; þat kenndu menn Hrafsa, en hann tók Oddmar hjá hvílu hennar, ok (1) *sagði hann sik valda*. Þá gaf Þorgrímr (2) *honum* Deildarey. (3) *Hrafsi kvazk mundu hoggva Oddmar á Birni áðr hann bætti fyrir hann*. (4) *Eigi vildi Kjallakr láta eyna*. Hrafsi tók fé þeira ór torfnausti. Kjallakssynir fóru eptir ok náðu eigi. Eptir þat stukku þeir (4) [Eilífr] ok Hrafsi í eyna. Or kom í þarminn [Eilífs ígrás], ok hamaðisk hann.

[Álöf, the daughter of Þorgrímr of Fell, went insane; Hrafsi was blamed for this, but he took Oddmarr by her bed and (1) Oddmarr said he was guilty. (2) Þorgrímr then gave Hrafsi [?] Deildarey. Hrafsi said he would kill Oddmarr 'on' Björn<sup>35</sup> before [unless?] he [Björn] paid him compensation. (3) Kjallakr did not want to give up the island. Hrafsi took their money from a boat house. The sons of Kjallakr went after him but did not catch him. (4) Afterwards Eilífr and Hrafsi fled to the island. An arrow hit Eilífr the Greyish in the gut, and he writhed in agony.]

III. Björn hvalmagi vá Björn Ljótólfsson at leik. Þeir Ljótólfur keyptu at Oddmari, at hann kæmi Birni í færi. Kjallakr ungi rann

eptir honum. Eigi varð hann sótt, áðr þeir tóku sveininn. Kjallak vágu þeir á Kjallakshóli. Eptir þat sóttu Kjallakssynir Ljótólf ok Þorstein í jarðhús í Fellsskógum, ok fann Eilífr annan munna; gekk hann á bak þeim ok vá þá báða.

[Björn Whale-Belly killed Björn Ljótólfsson in a game. Ljótólfr and his sons bribed Oddmarr to lure Björn into range. Kjallakr the Younger ran after him. He [Björn] was not attacked until they had taken the boy. They killed Kjallakr at Kjallakshóll. Afterwards the sons of Kjallakr attacked Ljótólfr and Þorsteinn in an underground house in Fellsskógi, and Eilífr found the other [secret] opening; he came up behind them and killed them both.]

IV. Hrafsi gekk inn á Orrastaðum at boði; hann var í kvenfötum. Kjallakr sat á palli með skjöld. Hrafsi hjó hann Ásbjörn banahogg ok gekk út um vegg.

[Hrafsi walked in to a feast at Orrastaðir; he was dressed in women's clothes. Kjallakr sat on the dias with a shield. Hrafsi gave Ásbjörn a deathblow and went out through the wall.]

V. Þórðr Vífilsson sagði Hrafsa, at yxni hans lægi í keldu; hann bar skjöld hans. Hrafsi fleygði honum fyrir kleif, er hann sá Kjallakssonu. Eigi gátu þeir sótt hann, áðr þeir felldu viðu at honum. (5) *Eilífr sat hjá*, er þeir sóttu hann. <sup>36</sup> (S 111: 147-48)

[Þórðr Vífilsson told Hrafsi that his oxen were mired in the mud; he [Þórðr] bore his [Hrafsi's] shield. Hrafsi threw him over the cliff when he saw the sons of Kjallakr. They were not able to overcome him until they bore him down with boards. (5) *Eilífr sat idly by when they attacked him.*]

I have attempted to make sense of this jumbled story,<sup>37</sup> sometimes referred to as a summary of *\*Kjalleklinga saga*, by dividing the entry into five parts; I, the list of characters, and II-V, the narrative segments. Within part I, I have further divided the feuding parties into three groups, A, B, and C. The eleven names in bold font in I appear on stage in II-V where, in addition, *Álqf* and *Þórðr Vífilsson* appear without being named in I. The italicised bits constitute special problems. The entry is reminiscent of some of the elements in Cassidy and Ringler's characterization (see

above, note 8) of 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' the obligation to seek vengeance, split loyalties (Eilífr's), the objective tone, and pronoun ambiguity. Most of all, however, the two entries resemble each other in raising unanswerable questions by biting off more plot than they can chew.<sup>38</sup> The following attempt to summarise this entry demonstrates where it goes wrong.

(II) A woman, Alþf, loses, her sanity, and Hrafsi is blamed. But he then discovers Oddmarr by her bed, who confesses to causing her breakdown.<sup>39</sup> As a result Þorgrímr gives Hrafsi an island, but the latter threatens to kill Oddmarr if not compensated by Björn. Kjallakr refuses to hand over the island, and in retaliation Hrafsi and Eilífr Kjallaksson<sup>40</sup> take money belonging to the sons of Kjallakr and escape to the island where Eilífr is wounded. (III) Björn Whale-Belly, the son of Kjallakr, kills Björn Ljótólfsson in a game, and in revenge Ljótólfr and his sons, Þorsteinn and Hrafsi, kill Björn and his young son, Kjallakr. The sons of Kjallakr retaliate by killing Ljótólfr and his son Þorsteinn; Eilífr plays the major role here. (IV) Hrafsi evens the score somewhat by killing one of Kjallakr's sons, Ásbjörn, at a feast. (V) The entry concludes with Hrafsi's death.

Nothing will be gained by listing all of the difficulties in this reading, but a brief look at the five passages numbered with Arabic numerals will help to demonstrate the entry's similarity to 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard'. (1) and (2) show a difficulty with pronoun reference; (3) is obscure because it is unidiomatic, whereas the confusion of (4) results from crowding too much plot into the summary; (5) Eilífr has the makings of a tragic hero but for the lack of detail that renders his allegiance to Hrafsi unclear. In fact, if this entry were the only lengthy narrative in this part of *Landnámabók*, then scholars might well have performed the kind of imaginative interpretations on Kjallakr and Hrafsi that have accumulated around Cynewulf and Cyneheard.<sup>41</sup> In short, the entry presents us with an Icelandic counterpart to the *Chronicle* account of Anglo-Saxon feud.

4

Type Two: In demonstrating that 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' resembles a *Landnámabók* entry, I have in a sense already proved that the *Chronicle* entry is not like a saga. But a comparison that concentrates exclusively on similarities is of limited value; to be effective it must show that the object being defined also differs in essential features from like members of its class. That is, all apples may be round,

but in classifying them we feature their differences. For this reason my discussion of type two will focus on a difference between the Icelandic and the Anglo-Saxon entries, for while this type resembles 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' in telling a memorable, yet occasionally indistinct, tale, it differs from the Old English passage in having a saga analogue that shows how annal and saga vary in handling the same narrative events. S79 is an example of type two and can be divided into two parts, the first of which narrates four events similar both to those in 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' and in *Eyrbyggja saga*. The italicised sections correspond to their analogues in the saga. The second part will be dealt with later.<sup>42</sup>

Ormr enn mjóvi hét maðr, er kom skipi sínu í Fróðárós ok bjó á Brimilsvöllum um hrið. (1) Hann rak á brutt Ólaf belg ok nam Víkina gömlu milli Ennis ok Hofða ok bjó þá at Fróðá. Hans son var Þorbjörn enn digri; hann átti fyrr Þuríði, dóttur Ásbrands frá Kambr, ok váru þeira börn Ketill kappi, Hallsteinn ok Gunnlaugr ok Þorgerðr, er átti Onundr sjóni. Þorbjörn átti síðar Þuríði, dóttur Barkar ens digra ok Þórdísar Súrsdóttur. (2) *Þorbjörn enn digri stefndi Geirríði Bægifótsdóttur um fjölkynngi, (3) eptir þat er Gunnlaugr, son hans, dó af meini því, er hann tók, þá er hann fór at nema fróðleik at Geirríði. Hon var móðir Þórarins í Mávahlíð. (4) Um þá sök var Arnkell goði kvaddr tólfarkvoð, ok bar hann af, því at Þórarinn vann eið at stallahring ok hratt svá málinu.* (S79: 112, 114)

[Ormr the Slender was the name of a man whose ship landed at Fróðárós and who lived at Brimilvellir for a while. (1) He drove Óláfr Bag away and took possession of Vík gamla between Enni and Hofði and then lived at Fróðá. His son was Þorbjörn the Stout; he had been married to Þuríðr, the daughter of Ásbrandr from Kambr, and their children were Ketill the Champion, Hallsteinn, Gunnlaugr, and Þorgerðr, who married Onundr the Atoner. Þorbjörn later married Þuríðr, the daughter of Þorkr the Stout and Þórdís, the daughter of Súrr. (2) *Þorbjörn the Stout summoned Geirríðr the daughter of Þórófr the Club Foot for sorcery (3) after his son Gunnlaugr died from the injury that he had sustained when he went to take instruction in magic from Geirríðr. She was the mother of Þórarinn of Mávahlíð. (4)*

*Arnkell the Chieftain was called on to form a panel of twelve in the case, and he pronounced Geirriðr not guilty because Þórarinn swore an oath on the sacred ring and thus invalidated the case. ]*

At least four similarities between this summary and 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' require comment. First, incident (1) resembles in its reticence 'Hēr Cynewulf benam Sigebyrht his rīces ond Westseaxna wiotan for unryhtum dǣdum, būton Hamtūnscīre' [Here Cynewulf and the West-Saxon Witan deprived Sigebyrht of his kingdom, except for Hampshire, because of his unjust deeds]. The information imparted, in both cases unreported outside their entries, whets without satisfying our curiosity. While we do not know why Ormr drove Óláfr away, we may surmise that this was simply a landgrab of the kind reported elsewhere in *Landnámabók* and the sagas.<sup>43</sup> Whereas we do know why Cynewulf banished Sigebyrht, we know nothing of the latter's 'unjust deeds'. Second, event (2) offers more information than (1), but still is stylistically reminiscent of 'ond hē hæfde þā oþ hē ofslōg þone aldormon þe him lengest wunode' [and he (Sigebyrht) retained that until he slew that ealdorman who had supported him the longest]. Again both the Icelandic and English statements dangle events before us but tell us less than we would like to know. Third, like 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard', S79 as a whole raises questions it does not answer (1) Does Geirriðr really cause Gunnlaugr's death? (2) If not, who does and why? (3) How could a chieftain exonerate his sister simply because her son swore that she was innocent? Fourth and most important, S79's apparent impartiality, like that of 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard', is a by-product of summary rather than the consequence of a political or philosophical commitment. We will see later that Sturla was capable of developing an attitude towards character and event, but in this entry we cannot tell whether the implied narrator regards the verdict as just or not.<sup>44</sup> In short, both annal entries summarise potentially exciting stories without providing the reader with narrative focus; things merely seem to happen. This difficulty arises, I would argue, chiefly from crowding too many incidents and characters into too little narrative space (see note 38). A chronicler, after all, simply does not have the leisure to expound on matters in the manner of a saga. Whether Sturla had the motive remains to be seen.

The chief reason for examining S79 is to demonstrate the differences between a saga's and an annal's narrative modes: a saga frames incidents, whereas an annal strings them together, often leaving out explanatory connecting links. For example, S79 summarises a tale so drastically that we cannot confidently reconstruct the



original episode. On the other hand, *Eyrbyggja saga* shows us one possible treatment of these events. It tells not so much a more complete story as a completely different one. More than a précis of its parts, it prepares the lawsuit in advance and develops a point of view towards the litigants. In *Landnámabók*, in contrast, the lawsuit is important apparently because it initiates the enmity between two prominent chieftains, Snorri and Arnkell 'Af þessu gerðisk fjándskapr þeira Arnkels ok Snorra goða'. (ÍF, I, p. 114) [As a result the enmity between Arnkell and Snorri began]. The saga (in Chapters 15-16), however, is more specific, condemning the prosecution and explaining why Snorri loses this his first lawsuit.<sup>45</sup> Let us examine how the saga accomplishes the framing.

First, the saga dramatises Geirríðr's innocence. The saga agrees with *Landnámabók* that she instructs Gunnlaugr in the mysteries of magic, but adds that she must compete for his attention with Katla, a stunning but dangerous witch who repeatedly offers to introduce the young man to some of life's physical mysteries as well. Stung by his rebuffs, Katla finally retaliates by 'riding'<sup>46</sup> him. Thus, Katla is responsible for Gunnlaugr's subsequent injury – from which, in contrast to *Landnámabók*, he apparently recovers. Geirríðr is suspected only because Oddr, obviously acting as a tool to deflect guilt away from his evil mother, accuses her of the crime. Thus, Þorbjörn and Snorri sue the wrong woman.<sup>47</sup>

Second, the saga hints at Þorbjörn's and Snorri's motives for conducting the suit. Þorbjörn must prosecute *someone* for his son's injuries; for psychological reasons, he must seek retribution, and he will lose face if punishment does not occur. Arguably, Þorbjörn chooses to sue Geirríðr in order to reactivate the feud between the Þórsnesingar (Chapters 9 and 10), to whom he belongs by marriage, and the Kjalleklingar, a family from whom Vermundr mjóvi, Geirríðr's son-in-law, is a descendant; as a new in-law, he may be trying to increase his standing in the Þórsnesingar-family. Perhaps for this reason, he naively believes Oddr's testimony or, alternatively, cynically exploits it to build his flimsy case. In either event, Þorbjörn is guilty of faulty judgement. Another possibility is that, as Konrad Maurer points out,<sup>48</sup> Geirríðr comes from Halogaland, a region in northern Norway where contact with Lapps, famous for sorcery, was a feature of daily life. Thus, she would automatically be regarded with suspicion by the community at large. This circumstance may have convinced Þorbjörn that he could easily obtain a conviction against her, as he is, after all, a bully 'Þorbjörn var mikill fyrir sér ok ósvífr við sér minni menn' (ÍF, IV, p. 27) [Þorbjörn was a powerful man and overbearing towards lesser men]. Finally, Þorbjörn's motives may be irrelevant to the narrative;

given his character type, whatever he does is evil. Snorri, on the other hand, appears to be drawn into the suit because, as a member of the Þórsnesingar by birth, he must support his brother-in-law, Þorbjörn – 'ok veitti Snorri goði Þorbirni, mági sínum' (ÍF, IV, p. 30) [and Snorri goði supported his kinsman, Þorbjörn]. Perhaps because he seems not to have been a party to the original decision to prosecute, he gets off rather lightly when the verdict goes against them. Part of the subtlety of the narration is that we wait for later developments in order to form an opinion as to what Snorri thinks of this pack of evil-doers. Whatever Þorbjörn's motives, and no matter what Snorri thinks of them, their case collapses.

Third, the saga's exoneration of Geirriður is difficult for legal historians to explain,<sup>49</sup> but Helgi Hofgarðagoði's verdict makes sense if we regard it as the community's (and the narrator's) vote in favour of Arnkell over Snorri. In *Landnámabók* Arnkell delivers the verdict, but surely the saga is more effective in allowing non-family members to exercise this function.<sup>50</sup> The saga has the panel of twelve say, in effect, that only someone foolish enough to believe Oddr would regard Geirriður guilty as charged. They explicitly accept the testimony of her brother and her son over Oddr's, and the reader accepts this verdict regardless of how much it may violate legal procedure. As Snorri's role in the suit is passive, the implicit lesson he learns from this defeat is either to avoid disputes contested by stupid and evil relatives, or to align himself with men whose power compensates for their lack of character. This is arguably one reason why he marries Víga-Styrr's daughter Ásdís, to form an alliance that will increase his influence: 'var Snorri goði ráðagorðarmaðr meiri ok vitrari, en Styrr atgöngumeiri' (ÍF, IV, p. 75) [Snorri was a better legal advisor and more clever, but Styrr was more aggressive]. And the lesson he learns he bears in mind for the rest of his life.

The second half of the entry further treats the aftermath of the lawsuit:

- (1) En eptir þat hurfu Þorbirni stóðhross á fjalli. Þat kenndi hann Þórarni ok fór í Mávahlíð ok setti duradóm. Þeir váru tólf, en þeir Þórarinn váru sjau fyrir: Álfgeirr Suðreyingr ok Nagli ok Björn austmaðr ok húskarlar þrír. Þeir hleypðu upp dóminum ok þorðusk þar í túninu. Auðr, kona Þórarins, hét á konur at skilja þá. Einn maðr fell af Þórarni, en tveir af Þorbirni. Þeir Þorbjörn fóru á brutt ok bundu sár sín hjá stakkgarði upp með Vágum.
- (2) Hønd Auðar fannsk í túni; því fór Þórarinn eptir þeim ok fann þá hjá garðinum. Nagli hljóp grátandi um þá ok í fjall upp. Þar

vá Þórarinn Þorbjörn ok særði Hallstein til ólífis. Fimm menn fellu þar af Þorbirni. Þeir Arnkell ok Vermundr veittu Þórami ok hǫfðu setu at Arnkels.

(3) Snorri goði mælti eptir Þorbjörn ok sekði þá alla, er at vígum hǫfðu verit, á Þórsnesþingi. Eptir þat brenndi hann skip þeira Álfgeirs í Salteyrarósi. Arnkell keypti þeim skip í Dögunarnesi ok fylgði þeim út um eyjar. Af þessu gerðisk fjándskapr þeira Arnkels ok Snorra goða. Ketill kappi var þá útan; hann var faðir Hróðnýjar, er átti Þorsteinn, son Víga-Styrs. (S79: 114)

[(1) But afterwards Þorbjörn's stud horses disappeared from their mountain pasture. He blamed Þórarinn for that and went over to Mávahlíð and held a door-court. They were twelve, and Þórarinn and his men were seven against: Álfgeirr the Hebridean and Nagli and Björn the Easterner and three farmhands. They broke up the court and fought there in the home-field. Auðr, Þórarinn's wife, ordered the women to separate them. One man from Þórarinn's side fell, and two from Þorbjörn's. Þorbjörn and his men went away and bound their wounds beside a haystack near Vágar.

(2) Auðr's hand was found in the home-field. As a result Þórarinn went after them and found them beside the haystack. Crying, Nagli ran past them up the mountain. Then Þórarinn killed Þorbjörn and wounded Hallsteinn mortally. Five men from Þorbjörn's side fell. Arnkell and Vermundr supported Þórarinn and kept a force of men at Arnkell's.

(3) Snorri the Chieftain took over the case relating to Þorbjörn's killing and at the Þórsnes assembly got all of them who had been at the killing outlawed. After that he burned Álfgeirr and his men's ship at Salteyraróss. Arnkell bought them a ship in Dögunarnes and accompanied them out to the islands. As a result the enmity between Arnkell and Snorri began. Ketill the Champion was abroad at the time; he was the father of Hróðný, who was married to Þorsteinn Killer-Styrsson. ]

Like the account of Cynewulf's deposing of Sigeberht, the treatment of the three narrative events above is remarkably impartial, especially in light of their slanted

depiction in *Eyrbyggja saga*. We cannot tell whether Þórarinn is guilty of stealing the horses, or why he broke up the 'door-court'. We perceive that one of Þorbjörn's men injured Auðr and that it causes Þórarinn's violent attack, but details are lacking. Even if the story explains why Arnkell and Snorri became enemies, more questions are raised than are answered. Moreover, as in 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard's' attention to the loyal retainers, the concern that *S79* shows the minor character, Nagli, seems misplaced. Once again, the summary is too compact to do narrative justice to the events.

*Eyrbyggja saga*, however, shapes these raw materials to expose Þorbjörn's lawsuit as trumped up and to characterise his death as just. The saga shows Þorbjörn twisting the law to gain revenge for the humiliation he suffered at losing the lawsuit against Þórarinn's mother, Geirriðr. Once again, Þorbjörn picks on an assumed easy victim, but this time his miscalculation costs him his life. Once more Oddr's lies form the basis for Þorbjörn's action, but as he becomes more desperate, his scheming becomes more obvious. In the first lawsuit Þorbjörn may have been duped by Oddr's lies, but here Þorbjörn obviously plans on their incriminating Þórarinn. In possession of a phony charge, Þorbjörn rides over to Þórarinn's and, after having begun but then broken off the 'rannsókn' [search], summons him for theft. The resulting skirmish routs Þorbjörn and his men, who retreat to another field where they lick their wounds before Þórarinn descends upon them.

This partisan narrative portrays Þórarinn as pushed beyond the limits a reasonable man can be expected to tolerate. He submits to Þorbjörn's search of his house – as, indeed, according to law he must<sup>51</sup> – but then allows Þorbjörn to summon him without proof of his guilt. It is only after his mother's goading that he breaks up the *duradómr*, in the circumstances a legally justifiable reaction.<sup>52</sup> Nothing serious happens – a couple of *húskarlar* ('servants') on Þorbjörn's side and one on Þórarinn's fall – before Auðr and her female helpers part the men. But then disaster strikes when a severed hand is discovered on the ground. *Landnámabók* makes no attempt to dramatise this event, but the saga's handling of it is masterful (ÍF, IV, p. 36). Although the tension does increase in proportion to Þórarinn's growing realization that Auðr has suffered grievous injury, the delay in identifying the hand does more than simply create suspense. More importantly, as the narrator takes us methodically through the stages of Þórarinn's discovery – he asks about his wife, learns that she has taken to her bed, goes to her, asks about her well-being, receives her reassurance, sees that she is missing a hand, requests his mother to care for her, and then rushes off to pursue Þorbjörn (ÍF, IV, p. 36) – we sense that the

narration's deliberate pace represents Þórarinn's attempts to curb his mounting rage. Usually, sagas communicate a character's anger by describing his appearance.<sup>53</sup> But in *Eyrbyggja saga* the code operates on a higher frequency by directing our attention to what a character observes in order to express what we must imagine him thinking. This time he needs no mother's urging to act the part of an avenging hero. Oddr adds insult to Auðr's injury when he jokes that Þórarinn himself cut off his wife's hand, a remark that Þórarinn overhears just before he kills Þorbjörn. That it later is revealed that Oddr had been boasting of cutting off Auðr's hand merely adds to our satisfaction in seeing raw saga justice meted out. We know that a lawsuit must follow and that Þórarinn must pay a price for his act, but our sympathies are completely with him against Þorbjörn and his accomplices. No matter what clever strategies Snorri will devise to exact compensation or revenge, we sense that he will scarcely be able to remove the shame Þorbjörn has brought down upon the family. In fact, Þórarinn gets off lightly and is ushered formulaically out of the saga, and people regard Arnkell's support as noble indeed.

If 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' had analogues that filled in the gaps in our knowledge of the two kinsmen, it would, in some respects, resemble this second type. Moreover, this *Landnámabók* entry provides a classic example of how intertextuality works. Once we know the *Eyrbyggja saga* analogues, we are better equipped to appreciate the difficulties in *Landnámabók*. Indeed, the analogues allow us to fill in gaps in the record, to understand what is not clear and what is different. The entry itself thus has a meaning that depends upon its relationship to a text outside *Landnámabók*. As matters stand with respect to the Anglo-Saxon tradition, however, we must live with 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard's' narrative incompleteness.

## 5

Type Three: This type, which consists of narratives that differ significantly from their saga analogues, completes the picture I am attempting to draw of a context in which to place 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard'.<sup>54</sup> One of the types, S142, develops a coherent plot, a unified theme, and appealing sketches of the settlers it commemorates. In addition, while the saga analogue (Chapter 14 of *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*) serves as a foil that highlights and defines the special character of the type, it in no way changes how we read the *Landnámabók* entry, which stands on its own as a definitive source of information. If we knew nothing else about these

characters than what the entry tells us, we would still have a sense of what some *Landnámabók* personages were like and why they performed the deeds ascribed to them. Let us look at S142, in which the chief figure, Ljótr inn spaki ('the Wise'), occupies the spotlight

(1) Ljótr enn spaki bjó at Ingjaldssandi, son Þorgríms Harðrefssonar, en móðir hans var Rannveig, dóttir Grjótgarðs jarls. Þorgrímr gagarr var son Ljóts. Halldísi systur Ljóts átti Þorbjörn Þjóðreksson, en Ásdísi, aðra systur Ljóts, nam Óspakr Ósvífrsson; um þá sök sótti Ljótr Óspak til sekðar. Úlfr hét son þeira; þann fæddi Ljótr.

(2) Grímr kǫgurr bjó á Brekku; hans synir váru þeir Sigurðr ok Þorkell, litlir menn ok smáir. Þórarinn hét fósterson Ljóts. Ljótr kaupir slátr at Grími til tuttugu hundraða ok galt læk, er fell meðal landa þeira; sá hét Ósómi. Grímr veitti hann á eng sína ok gróf land Ljóts, en hann gaf sök á því, ok var fátt með þeim. Ljótr tók við austmanni í Vaðli; sá lagði hug á Ásdísi.

(3) Gestr Oddleifsson sótti haustboð til Ljóts; þá kom þar Egill Völu-Steinsson ok bað Gest, at hann legði ráð til, at fǫður hans bættisk helstríð, er hann bar um Ǫgmund, son sinn. Gestr orti upphaf at Ǫgmundardrápu. Ljótr spurði Gest, hvat manna Þorgrímr gagarr mundi verða. Gestr kvað Þórarin fóstara hans, frægra mundu verða ok bað Þórarinn við sjá, at eigi vefðisk hár þat um hǫfuð honum, er lá á tungu hans.

(4) Óvirðing þótti Ljóti þetta ok spurði um morguninn, hvat fyrir Þorgrími lægi. Gestr kvað Úlf systurson hans mundu frægra verða. Þá varð Ljótr reiðr ok reið þó á leið með Gestu ok spurði: 'Hvat mun mér at bana verða?' Gestr kvazk eigi sjá ǫrlǫg hans, en bað hann vera vel við nábúa sína. Ljótr spurði: 'Munu jarðlýsnar, synir Gríms kogurs, verða mér at bana?' 'Sárt býtr soltin lús', kvað Gestr. 'Hvar mun þat verða?' kvað Ljótr. 'Heðra nær', kvað Gestr.

(5) Austmaðr reiddi Gest á heiði upp ok studdi Gest á baki, er hestr rasaði undir honum. Þá mælti Gestr: 'Happ sótti þik nú, en brátt mun annat; gættu, at þér verði þat eigi at óhappi'. Austmaðurinn fann grafsilfr, er hann fór heim, ok tók af tuttugu

penninga ok ætlaði, at hann mundi feta til síðar; en er hann leitaði, fann hann eigi; en Ljótr fekk tekitt hann, er hann var at grefti, ok gerði af honum þrjú hundruð fyrir hvern penning. Þat haust var veginn Þorbjörn Þjóðreksson.

(6) Um várit sat Ljótr at þrælum sínum á hæð einni; hann var í kápu, ok var hōttrinn lerkaðr um hálsinn ok ein ermr á. Þeir Kogurssynir hljópu á hæðina ok hjoggu til hans báðir senn; eptir þat snaraði Þorkell hōttinn at hōfði honum. Ljótr bað þá láta gott í búsigfum sínum, ok hrōpuðu þeir af hæðinni á goðu þá, er Gestr hafði riðit: þar dó Ljótr.

(7) Þeir Grímssynir fóru til Hávarðar halta. Eyjólfur grái veitti þeim øllum ok Steingrímr son hans. (S142 184-86)

[(1) Ljótr the Wise lived at Ingjaldssandr, the son of Þorgrímr Harðrefsson; his mother was Rannveig, the daughter of Jarl Grjótgarðr. Þorgrímr Dog was Ljótr's son. Halldís, a sister of Ljótr's, was married to Þorbjörn Þjóðreksson, and Ásdís, another sister of Ljótr's, was taken by force by Óspakr Ósvífrsson. For this offence Ljótr had Óspakr outlawed. Úlfr was their son, whom Ljótr raised.

(2) Grímr Kogurr lived at Brekka; his sons were Sigurðr and Þorkell, little, insignificant men. Þórarinn was Ljótr's foster son. Ljótr buys meat from Grímr for twenty hundreds and paid for it with a brook which flowed between their land; it was called Ósómi ('Dishonour'). Grímr irrigated his meadow with it and dug a channel through Ljótr's land, and he [Ljótr] sued over the matter, and matters were cool between them. Ljótr took in a Norwegian at Vaðill; he fell in love with Ásdís.

(3) Gestr Oddleifsson was a guest at a fall feast at Ljótr's. Egill Völu-Steinsson arrived and asked Gestr for advice as to how his father might overcome the grief he bore at the death of his son, Ögmundur. Gestr composed the beginning of *Ögmundardrápa*. Ljótr asked Gestr what kind of a man Þorgrímr Dog would become. Gestr said that Þórarinn, his foster son, would be more famous and bade Þórarinn be careful that the hair that lay on his tongue did not get tangled around his head.

(4) This struck Ljótr as disgraceful, and he asked the next

morning what lay before Þorgrímr. Gestr said that his nephew Úlfr would be more famous. Ljótr got angry then but nevertheless rode with Gestr on his way and asked: 'What will cause my death?' Gestr said he could not see his future, but bade him be good to his neighbours. Ljótr asked: 'Will these lice, the sons of Grímr kǫgurr, cause my death?' 'A hungry louse bites hard', said Gestr. 'Where will this happen', said Ljótr. 'Not far from here', said Gestr.

(5) The Norwegian rode with Gestr up onto the heath and steadied Gestr on his horse when it stumbled. Then Gestr said 'You are now in luck, and soon you will be again; be careful that the second [occasion] does not bring you misfortune'. The Norwegian found some silver on his way home, and took twenty coins from it and thought he would seek it out later. But when he looked for it, he could not find it. But Ljótr discovered him while he was digging, and fined him three hundreds for each coin. That fall Þorbjörn Þjóðreksson was killed.

(6) In the spring Ljótr sat among his slaves on a certain hill. He was in a single-sleeved coat, and the hood was fastened about his neck. The sons of Kǫgurr ran up the hill and both struck him a blow. After that Þorkell pulled the hood over his head. Ljótr bade them be good neighbours, and they rolled down the hill to that trail that Gestr had ridden along. There Ljótr died.

(7) The sons of Grímr went to Hávarðr the Lame's. Eyjólfur the Grey and Steingrímr his son supported them all.]

Prose like this, stripped of ornament and commentary, seems to resemble the objectivity, where it exists, of 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard'. In presenting Ljótr the narrative events follow each other like beads on a string, and the reader alone must determine their significance with virtually no help from the reticent narrator. That is, the narrative voice in *Landnámabók* closely resembles the voice in the sagas, which I have characterised above (pp. 63-64), and if we concentrate on this one aspect of narrative rhetoric, then it is apparent that saga-age writers knew only one way to tell a story. Nevertheless, no sensitive reader would maintain that the characterization of Ljótr lacks focus. We sense his energy, his will to power, and his uncompromising nature, and we recognise an aspect of Sturla's programme: here is a settler to re-



member, a valuable ally and a ruthless enemy; perhaps a worthy kinsman, but assuredly a neighbour to be handled with the utmost care and respect. But because Sturla never makes any of this explicit, I will examine his treatment of Ljótr in order to extract the important clues to the code by which this attitude is communicated. We will then be in a position to examine the entry's intertext.

In the first place Ljótr's inclusion in *Landnámabók* testifies to his purported historical importance, for only characters who perform memorable deeds are granted such extended coverage as that lavished on Ljótr. Second, the entry exemplifies his contentious behaviour, which elevates him above the run-of-the-mill settler: his first lawsuit (1), dubbing him a man to reckon with, has him outlawing Óspakr, apparently with justice; segment (2) portrays the typical dispute with a neighbour, a restrained account confirming the natural law that where there are neighbours, there will be friction – if Ljótr reacts too hastily in suing Grímr, then this is not clear from the incident; yet Ljótr's ambitious, prickly personality gradually and unmistakably emerges in incidents (3-5) where his suit against the Norwegian seems motivated by envy of the good fortune Gestr predicted for him. Ljótr's *Landnámabók* career spans three lawsuits, not unusual for a saga figure perhaps, but the aggregate nevertheless testifies to a fractious personality. Moreover, the code contrasts Ljótr's pungent indignation at Gestr's refusal to predict his son's future with the conduct of the foil characters, Egill and the Norwegian, both of whom receive Gestr's favour for reasons we must infer. In contrast to gratifying Ljótr's vain hopes for his son, Gestr is disposed to healing a father's present misery and is ready to reward the Norwegian's good deed with sound advice, but remains understandably reluctant to predict the gloom and doom in store for Ljótr and his dependants. After all, oracles may be accused of willing their predictions – an analogue to the topos where messengers of bad news suffer because of the suspicion that they enjoy delivering it. Besides, as Ljótr's house guest, Gestr would ill reward his host by pronouncing his death sentence. Perhaps, after all, the point is that persistent appeals to a reluctant oracle – we should remember Oedipus – preclude a comforting future.<sup>55</sup> Generally, people like Ljótr who pressure people in this way are likewise overbearing in other ways. He confirms this impression by scoffing at Gestr's hint that Grímr or his sons are to be feared. Whatever the cause of Ljótr's death – residual animosity or the insult – the sober narrative subtly captures his abrasiveness and intractability without treating him as an 'ójafnaðarmaður' [an unbalanced man]. We can imagine that some of his contemporaries did not much mourn his passing. Thus, the code characterising Ljótr employs traditional devices of linear narration – selection,

exemplification, repetition, and contrast – to define his indomitable will.

When we turn to the entry's counterpart in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* we observe the clear difference between chronicle and saga styles. *Landnámabók* is a skilful summary of events that portray a national hero in a favourable light. The contours of Ljótr's character are shaped by what he does and says and by how he differs from other figures in the entry. Sturla treats him as a unique settler who actually performed the deeds ascribed to him. The saga, on the other hand, takes a type – the 'ójafnaðarmaður mikill' [the unbalanced man] – and, by fitting it into the saga context, ridicules it. Saga-Ljótr does not owe his presence in the saga to his own exploits but rather to the saga's need for his type. He already existed in the corpus as a fictional type before appearing in a saga that frequently has puzzled readers,<sup>56</sup> but which I read as a conscious parody of the literary conventions governing the narration of feud. In keeping with this purpose the saga episodes corresponding to the *Landnámabók* incidents exaggerate his abrasiveness. Ljótr and his neighbour Þorbjörn (in *Landnámabók* Grímr) each has sole use on alternate summers of a jointly-owned irrigated pasture; Ljótr manages to cut off the water supply each time Þorbjörn uses the pasture and to make known to Þorbjörn that he ought to give up his claim to it. When Þorbjörn asks whether he intends to carry out this rumoured threat, Ljótr responds in a manner worthy of his reputation and sufficient to seal his fate. Faithful to the saga's black and white characterization of people and conflict, this mocking portrayal of Ljótr shows a man virtually begging to be brought before the bar of harsh saga justice. The reader need not wait long to see Ljótr tried, convicted, and executed.

*Landnáma*-Ljótr's death is cast as a matter of inexorable fate that operates best when aided by the vices of its victims. In addition, while *Landnáma*-Ljótr's dying words characterise him as pushed rather than fallen into a trap, they also guarantee him a distinction that his ambition might not have achieved for him: his utterance is memorable and, therefore, commemorable. Saga-Ljótr's death, in contrast, occurs because the saga requires it. Like all members of his type, he seems to be greasing the wheel of his own downfall, an event that occasions unrestrained *schadenfreude*. Moreover, the saga, as opposed to Sturla's relatively balanced account, offers a tidy version of Ljótr's lamentable career, according to which he bears all the guilt, while his enemies are innocent. If the saga were not pastiche, we would be in a fairy-tale world.

Roberta Frank has recently observed that 'a useful working principle for the student of Germanic legend is that all the details in the text are capable of explanation, even at the cost of oversubtlety and error'.<sup>57</sup> While I agree with this principle in general, I think that many of the discussions of 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' suffer from over-explication. The entry just will not stand up to a close rhetorical analysis of the kind we can perform on a saga for the same reasons that most of the entries in *Landnámabók* do not: they summarise stories the author obviously thought the reader knew in written or oral form. Thus, the parts omitted from the summary blur the narrative motivations of some of the entries. As I have argued above, three types of entries in *Landnámabók* help us to understand this point and to see more clearly that a summary cannot sustain the kinds of analysis that the *Chronicle* entry has had to endure, especially the kind in which a unity of authorial purpose was thought to be a universal narrative law. 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' is analysable as a product of Anglo-Saxon prose narrative, but we must be aware of its limitations as well as appreciative of its merits. 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' is not a saga but rather a tantalising summary of a complicated story that we are no longer able to reconstruct completely.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The standard edition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is that by C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon chronicles parallel*, 2 vols (Oxford), 1892-99, rept. 1952 with a bibliography by Dorothy Whitelock. Bright's *Old English grammar and reader*, eds Frederic G. Cassidy and Richard N. Ringler, third ed. (New York, 1971), pp. 138-42, offers excellent notes to 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard'. Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, *A guide to Old English*, fourth ed. (Oxford, 1986), pp. 192-95, also has useful notes. All quotations from 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' are from *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon reader in prose and verse*, fifteenth ed., rev. Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford, 1967), pp. 2-3. Here, too, the notes are indispensable. The best translation is that of Dorothy Whitelock in *English historical documents, c. 500-1042*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford, 1968), pp. 162-63, or that of Dorothy Whitelock, D. C. Douglas and S. I. Tucker, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A revised translation* (London, 1965), pp. 30-31. I have also consulted Janet M. Bately, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A semi-diplomatic edition with introduction and indices* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 36-38, and Rory McTurk, ' "Cynewulf and Cyneheard" and the Icelandic family sagas', *Leeds Studies in English*, ns 12 (1981), 81-127.

<sup>2</sup> Francis P. Magoun, 'Cynewulf, Cyneheard, and Osric', *Anglia*, 57 (1933), 361-76, at 374.

<sup>3</sup> See, in addition to those anthologies listed in note 1, James W. Bright, *Anglo-Saxon reader*, rev. James R. Hulbert (New York, 1957), pp. 14-15; Roger Fowler, *Old English prose and verse* (London, 1966), pp. 3-6; A. J. Wyatt, *Anglo-Saxon reader* (Cambridge, 1919), pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Joseph Battaglia, 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 755: the missing evidence for a traditional reading', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 81 (1966), 173-78; Karen Ferro, 'The king in the doorway: The "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle", A.D. 755', *Kings and kingship, Acta*, XI (1984), 17-30; Charles Moorman, ' "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 755" ', *N & Q*, 199 (1954), 94-98; Tom H. Towers, 'Thematic unity in the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 62 (1963), 310-16, rept. in Martin Stevens and Jerome Mandel eds, *Old English literature: Twenty-two analytical essays* (Lincoln, Neb., 1968), 89-96; G. Turville-Petre, 'Notes on the intellectual history of Icelanders', *History*, n.s. 28 (1942), 111-23; Joan Turville-Petre, 'The narrative style in Old English', *Iceland and the mediaeval world: Studies in honour of Ian Maxwell*, ed. Gabriel Turville-Petre and John Stanley Martin (Melbourne, 1974), pp. 116-25; Rory McTurk (see above, note 1); Ruth Waterhouse, 'The theme and structure of 755 Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 70 (1969), 630-40; Stephen D. White, 'Kinship and lordship in early medieval England: The story of Sigeberht, Cynewulf, and Cyneheard', *Viator*, 20 (1980), 1-18; James H. Wilson, 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard: The fall of princes', *Papers on language and literature*, 13 (1977), 312-17; C. L. Wrenn, 'A saga of the Anglo-Saxons', *History*, 25 (1940), 208-15.

<sup>5</sup> Plummer (see above, note 1), at II, 47, and 'the annal which most recalls the Sagas is the slaying of Cynewulf and Cyneheard under 755' (II, xx); Wyatt (see above, note 3), at p. 201; Magoun (see above, note 2), at p. 361.

<sup>6</sup> See note 4. Fowler (see above, note 3), at p. 4, saw the entry as 'the story of several stages of a feud reminiscent of the family feuding in the Icelandic sagas'.

<sup>7</sup> *A study of Old English literature* (New York, 1967), pp. 202-05.

<sup>8</sup> Cassidy and Ringler (see above, note 1), at p. 138: 'Not only its central themes (the duty of vengeance; loyalty to one's lord vs. loyalty to one's kin), but several of its motifs (*sjálfðæmi*, *útgánga* . . .), its objective tone, and certain features of its style (the colloquialism, the sudden switch from indirect to direct discourse, the rather unclear use of pronouns throughout) are reminiscent of the Icelandic family saga . . .'.

<sup>9</sup> Earl R. Anderson, 'The Battle of Maldon: A reappraisal of possible sources, date, and theme', in *Modes of interpretation in Old English literature: Essays in honour of Stanley B. Greenfield*, eds Phyllis Rugg Brown, Georgia Ronan Crampton and Fred C. Robinson (Toronto, 1986), pp. 247-72, summarises and criticises (at p. 253) McTurk's belief that the entry 'reflects an oral tradition of prose saga'. Mitchell and Robinson (see above, note 1) also support the belief in the saga-like character of the entry.

<sup>10</sup> P. J. C. Field, *Romance and chronicle: A study of Malory's prose style* (London, 1971), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> By intertextuality I mean repeated reworkings of traditional themes and stylistic devices within the sagas as a corpus. For a definition of this term and its application to a saga, see my article, 'Intertextuality in *Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa*', forthcoming in *Saga-Book*. For excellent reviews of the term and its history, see Hans-Peter Mai, 'Bypassing intertextuality: Hermeneutics, textual practice, hypertext', in *Intertextuality*, ed. Heinrich S. Plett (Berlin and New York, 1991), pp. 30-59, and Erhard Reckwitz, 'Intertextualität postmodern: J. M. Coetzee, *Foe*; John Fowles, *A Maggot*; Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*', in Kunibert Bering and Werner L. Hohmann eds, *Wie postmodern ist die Postmoderne?* (Essen, 1990), pp. 121-56. See also Joseph Harris, 'Reflections on genre and intertextuality in eddic poetry (with special reference to *Grottasǫngr*) in *Poetry in the Scandinavian middle ages* (Spoleto, 1990), pp. 231-43.

<sup>12</sup> See T. M. Andersson, *The Icelandic family saga: an analytic reading* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 31-64; Richard F. Allen, *Fire and iron: Critical approaches to Njáls saga* (Pittsburg, 1971), pp. 95-127; Carol J. Clover, 'Scene in saga composition', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 89 (1974), 57-83; Fredrik J. Heinemann, 'Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða and type-scene analysis', *Scandinavian studies*, 46 (1974), 102-19; Lars Lönnroth, *Njáls saga* (Berkeley, 1976), pp. 42-103.

<sup>13</sup> This is Paul Acker's suggested English equivalent for *ófafnaðarmaður* in his excellent translation of *Valla-Ljóts saga* in *Comparative Criticism*, 10 (1988), 207-37, at 232, n. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Rolf Heller, *Die literarische Darstellung der Frau in den Isländersagas* (Halle, 1958); Carol Clover, 'Hildigunnr's lament', in John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, Gerd Wolfgang Weber eds, *Structure and meaning in Old Norse literature: New approaches to textual analysis and literary criticism* (Odense, 1986), pp. 141-83; Jenny M. Jochens, 'The female inciter in the kings' sagas', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 102 (1987), 100-19; Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking age* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 189-91; William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and peacemaking: Feud, law, and society in saga Iceland* (Chicago, 1990), pp. 212-14.

<sup>15</sup> Fredrik J. Heinemann (see above, note 12), at 107-09; Fredrik J. Heinemann, 'Hrafnkels saga Freygoða: The old problem with the new man', *Scandinavian Studies*, 47 (1975), 448-52, at 451.

<sup>16</sup> See Lars Lönnroth, 'Rhetorical persuasion in the sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, 42 (1970), 157-89, for a discussion of objectivity in the sagas.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The mode and meaning of Beowulf* (London, 1970), pp. 210-44.

<sup>18</sup> See the following articles for a discussion of this type: David K. Crowne, 'The hero on the beach: An example of composition by theme in Anglo-Saxon poetry', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 61 (1960), 362-72; Alain Renoir, 'Oral-formulaic theme survival, a possible instance in the *Nibelungenlied*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 65 (1964), 70-75; Donald K. Fry, 'The hero on the beach in Finnsburh', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 67 (1966), 27-3; Fredrik J. Heinemann, 'The hero on the beach in *Fóstbræðra saga*', *Neophilologus*, 68 (1984), 557-61. For a discussion of a similar type, see E. Anderson, 'Formulaic typescene survival: Finn, Ingeld, and the *Nibelungenlied*', *English Studies*, 61 (1980), 293-301.

<sup>19</sup> See Fredrik J. Heinemann, '*Judith* 236-291a: A mock-heroic approach-to-battle type-scene', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 71 (1970), 83-96.

<sup>20</sup> See T. A. Shippey's discussion of Cynewulf's motivation and the chronicler's sympathy towards him, 'Boar and badger: An Old English heroic antithesis?', *Leeds Studies in English*, ns 16 (1985), 220-39, at 221-22.

<sup>21</sup> For the most recent, and best informed, treatment of feud in the sagas, see William Ian Miller (see above, note 14).

<sup>22</sup> 'The narrative mode of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle before the Conquest', in P. Clemoes and K. Hughes eds, *England before the Norman Conquest: Studies in primary sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 215-35, at 220.

<sup>23</sup> *Society and politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 86-87, comments on the importance of this feature in determining a king's legitimacy to rule.

<sup>24</sup> For an interesting discussion of the narrative mode in sagas, see Judith Jesch, 'Narrating *Orkneyinga saga*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 64 (1992), 336-55.

<sup>25</sup> *Reading for the plot* (New York, 1984), p. 9. Brooks says Walter Benjamin found this feature 'characteristic of the great oral stories, a refusal of psychological explanation and motivation'

in his 'The storyteller' (*Der Erzähler*) in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1969).

<sup>26</sup> G. Turville-Petre, ed. *Víga-Glúms saga* (second ed.; Oxford, 1960), expresses an old-fashioned view, still occasionally encountered: 'Like other forms of art, the family saga had primitive beginnings; it developed, culminated, and subsequently declined' (p. xx).

<sup>27</sup> See Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic sagas: An essay in method* (London, 1958). The methods advocated in this book surely require a re-examination, one perhaps resembling William Busse's questioning of the dating of Old English poems in his *Altenglische Literatur und ihre Geschichte* (Dusseldorf, 1987). Recently, Richard Perkins, 'Objects and oral tradition in medieval Iceland' in Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn eds, *Úr Döllum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon centenary essays*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, ns 11 (Leeds, 1989), pp. 239-66, at 259, has also called for a discussion of this matter in 'a clear, well thought-out general methodological essay based on modern saga-research'.

<sup>28</sup> *The cultivation of saga in Anglo-Saxon England* (Edinburgh, 1939), pp. 69-70.

<sup>29</sup> All quotations of Old Icelandic are taken from the Íslenzk Fornrit editions (ÍF). References in my text (thus: S142: 184-86) are to the entry and page numbers in *Landnámabók: Íslendingabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, ÍF, I (Reykjavík, 1968). S designates *Sturlubók*, the version of *Landnámabók* ascribed to Sturla Þórðarson and written in perhaps 1275-80; H designates *Hauksbók*, a version written sometime later (ca. 1306-08) and ascribed to Haukur Erlendsson and which often differs from S. Jakob Benediktsson discusses these two versions (pp. 1-li and liv-lxxxii), and in their introduction to their translation (*The Book of Settlements: Landnámabók* [Manitoba, 1972], at pp. 3-4) Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards summarise a few of his conclusions.

<sup>30</sup> The classification of conflict narratives in *Landnámabók* into three groups oversimplifies matters, but a more precise classification into sub-groups would detain us without sharpening my definition of the narrative genre to which 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' belongs. Inevitably, some overlap between the types exists, for it is a matter of judgement whether a saga analogue tells the same story differently or whether it tells a different story. In the course of my discussion I will attempt to give some sense of the complexity of the narrative texture of *Landnámabók*. Indeed, the relationship between *Landnámabók* entries and their saga analogues is an interesting subject for another essay.

<sup>31</sup> Jón Jóhannesson, *Gerðir Landnámabókar* (Reykjavík, 1941), pp. 203-06; Jakob Benediktsson (see above, note 29), at pp. cii-iv. Both quote the passage from *Landnámabók* in which the three reasons are stated. See also Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (see above, note 29), at p. 6, for a translation of the passage.

<sup>32</sup> On the whole question of objectivity in reporting, see Roger Fowler, *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press* (London and New York, 1991), pp. 25-45. What Fowler says about the press can apply to any kind of reporting, whether in newspapers or chronicles.

<sup>33</sup> See R. I. Page, 'A most vile people': *Early English historians on the Vikings* (London, 1987) for a discussion of this topic.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the following sharply-rendered tales: SH8, the story of Hjørleifr Hróðmarsson's death and Ingólfr Arnarson's vengeance; H21/S24, the narrative of Ásólfr the Christian hermit; (S42, H30), the account of the feud between Kári Kýlanson and Karli Konálfsson; H184, the rendering of Björn Hrólfsson's difficulties with Grímr; H195, the recounting of Qndóttir Kráka's sons' revenge on Grímr; (S284, H245), the tragedy of Uni enn danski Garðarson, and the comic 'revenge' of his kinsman Tjörvi; (S289, H250), the saga of the magical origins of Jökulsá; (S348, H307), a recounting of Mjörðr gígja's legal counsel. As already mentioned (see above, note 30), the borderline between the types is fluid. H21, for example, has an analogue in *Óláfs saga Tryggvassonar en mesta*, but the versions are so similar in theme and treatment that it is reasonable to class the entry as a first, rather than a second, type. In addition, while H195 has no saga analogue, it resembles S229, which varies little from the similar narrative in *Grettis saga*, ÍF, VIII, pp. 14-19, but the radical differences between the two annal entries led Jón Jóhannesson (see above, note 31, at p. 197) to posit a \**Kræklinga saga* as the source of H195.

<sup>35</sup> If we think of the *German auf seine Rechnung, auf seine Kappe*, in the sense of 'his responsibility', then perhaps this phrase is intelligible. But only up to a point, for what does it mean to say you will kill someone and 'put the blame on someone else', as Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards render this phrase in their translation (see above, note 29, at p. 56)?

<sup>36</sup> The considerable textual difficulties in this entry are too complex to be gone into here; see Jakob Benediktsson's discussion (see above, note 29, at pp. lxvii-lxix) and his notes to the entry, pp. 148-50; Jón Jóhannesson (see above, note 31, at pp. 181-82).

<sup>37</sup> Jakob Benediktsson comments that this entry is virtually incomprehensible ('nánast óskiljanlegur', see above, note 29, at p. 149, n. 6). Magnús Fjalldal of Háskóli Íslands comments in a letter (September 27, 1992) that he would hesitate to call the entry a summary, but rather notes 'intelligible to someone who knows the story but not to anyone else'.

<sup>38</sup> I have borrowed and modified this idea from T. A. Shippey's discussion of one of Tolkien's tales in *The road to Middle-Earth* (London, 1982), where he claims that '[i]n "Beren and Lúthien" as a whole there is too much plot' (p. 193). In the second edition (London, 1992), this reference occurs on p. 229.

<sup>39</sup> Hermann Pálsson and Edwards (see above, note 29, at p. 56) render *ok sagði hann sik valda* as 'and said that Oddmarr was responsible'. Whether Hrafsi accuses him of wrong-doing or whether (as I read this clause) Oddmarr, caught red-handed (doing something unspecified but harmful), admits to driving the woman insane, the passage incriminates Oddmarr and not Hrafsi.

<sup>40</sup> There is another name in the manuscript of *Skarðsárþók*, which Jakob Benediktsson emends, probably because of Eilífr's role later in the entry. Jakob acknowledges that the context is unclear.



<sup>41</sup> Of course, one reason 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' has been so thoroughly analysed is the scarcity, in comparison to the Icelandic tradition, of prose narrative in Old English. Literary scholars have virtually ignored *Landnámabók*, because they have understandably found the sagas more interesting.

<sup>42</sup> The largest group, type two has approximately twenty entries. Some of the most interesting examples are a large part of (SH 6), the short feud between Ingólfr Arnarson and Leifr Hróðmarsson on the one hand and the sons of Atli jarl on the other (analogue: the first three chapters of *Flóamanna saga*, ÍF, XIII); (S75/H63), the conflict between Launarbrennu-Einarr and his namesake Lón-Einarr (analogue: *Bárðar saga*, ÍF, XIII, pp. 120-21); (S168, H137), the lawsuit against Sleitu-Helgi for rustling (analogue: *Hrómundar Þáttur Halta*, ÍF, VIII, pp. 305-15; (S278/H240), which relate an incident also covered in *Droplaugarsona saga*, ÍF, XI, pp. 138-40; (S376, H331), the feud between Hrafn on the one hand and Atli Hásteinnsson and his son Þórðr on the other (analogue: Chapters 6-9 in *Flóamanna saga*).

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, the entry S86, H74 and also its analogue in *Eyrbyggja saga*, ÍF, IV, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> See Jesch's discussion (above, note 24, at p. 350) of an author's '[engagement] in a historical enterprise'. In S79 we have no sense of Sturla's inviting the narratee to question the rationale of the action.

<sup>45</sup> Vésteinn Ólason, ' "Máhlíðingamál": authorship and tradition in a part of *Eyrbyggja saga*', in Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn eds, *Úr Döllum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon centenary essays*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, ns 11 (Leeds, 1989), pp. 187-203, at 188, believes that 'the most important result of what happens in this tale is the beginning of the rivalry between the two chieftains Snorri and Arnkell . . .'. Vésteinn's observations provide excellent commentary on this episode, but I think it is possible to be more precise as to this episode's significance for the saga as a whole.

<sup>46</sup> See Vésteinn's explanation of this term (see above, note 45, at p. 200, n. 11).

<sup>47</sup> Katla later confesses to causing Gunnlaugr's injuries (p. 54), but a reader who does not guess her guilt by the end of Chapter 16 has not been attentive to the text. Vésteinn Ólason (see above, note 45, at pp. 188-89) sees this and much else, but does not show how the text establishes Katla's guilt, perhaps regarding it as obvious. I mention here only the saga's use of character types, dialogue, context, and intertext.

<sup>48</sup> 'Zwei Rechtsfälle aus der Eyrbyggja', *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-philologischen und der historischen Classe der k. b. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München*, 1897, pp. 148, at p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Konrad Maurer (see above, note 48) has difficulty accounting for the difference between *Eyrbyggja saga*, where Helgi Hofgarðargoði delivers the verdict (at p. 22), and *Landnámabók*, where Arnkell exonerates his sister, but finally attributes it to the influence of oral tradition on the latter (at p. 24). Jón Jóhannesson (see above, note 31, at p. 44) agrees with Maurer about Sturla's

changes. Jakob Benediktsson (see above, note 29, at p. 114, n. 1) cites both.

<sup>50</sup> Whether Sturla or the saga came first is hard to say, but I favour the former, because it is hard to see why, if Sturla knew the version in the saga, he would have Arnkell pronounce the verdict. However, two saga versions may have existed in which differing narrative contexts justified each character's delivering the verdict, so that when Sturla chose one over the other for reasons we can no longer infer, these distinctions became blurred.

<sup>51</sup> Maurer (see above, note 48, at p. 35). The relevant sections in *Grágás* Ia, Ib 1852, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen (Odense, 1974) are sections 227-30, pp. 162-68. Andreas Heusler, *Islandisches Recht: Die Graugans* (Weimar, 1930), pp. 392-94, translates these sections. Maurer points out (at p. 37) that because Þorbjörn unsatisfactorily answers Þórarinn's questions, the latter is justified in refusing to allow the search.

<sup>52</sup> Maurer, see above, note 48, at p. 35.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, the depiction of Víga-Glúmr's rage, ÍF, IX, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> There are only a few such types, because all of the analogues are either parody or pastiche, a subject too complex to be gone into here. See also S219/H185 for another example of an entry whose analogue narrates a different tale. S376, H331, which is mostly a type-two entry, contains some elements that partake of type-three, especially where annal and Chapter 10 of *Flóamanna saga* treat Hrafn's appearance at his death.

<sup>55</sup> We find another example of the conjunction of an overbearing supplicant and an unhappy prediction in S68: 94, 96, 98/H56: 97, 99. Grímr has hooked a merman while fishing and demands a prophecy. The brusqueness of the merman's unadorned replies suggests that Grímr's peremptory demands have exceeded the bounds of proper conduct when supplicating a seer. In both entries the merman means that Grímr's hope for an old age is in vain; Grímr dies in the same paragraph.

<sup>56</sup> Guðni Jónsson, ed., *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, ÍF, VI, p. lxxxviii, accounts for many of the oddities by positing a lost *Hávarðar saga* which the author of the extant saga misremembered in writing his version; Theodore M. Andersson regards it as 'a kind of saga's saga' in his influential book, *The Icelandic family saga: An analytic reading* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p. 197, but later in his oft-cited article 'The displacement of the heroic ideal in the family sagas', *Speculum*, 45 (1970), 573-93, at 582, sees the saga as 'characteristic of a late stage given to hyperbolic imitation', a part of which 'partakes a little too much of musical comedy', and as 'parodistic or an epigonous construction . . . [of] well-worn conventions'. Paul Schach regards the heroics and exaggeration as bordering on the 'burlesque': *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (New York, 1985), VI, 115.

<sup>57</sup> 'Germanic legend in Old English literature', in Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge eds, *The Cambridge companion to Old English literature* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 88-106, at 102.