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Tree Dreams and Versions of *Harðar saga*¹

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Among the rich array of motifs employed in saga dreams we find one which involves a tree or a plant symbolising the unborn progeny of the dreamer.² This manifests itself in several different sagas and in a number of different ways. Among them is the little-known family saga that tells the story of Hörðr Grímkelsson. The text is preserved complete in a single medieval manuscript AM556a 4^o (written c.1475-1500) where it is titled *Hólmverja saga* ('Saga of the Isle-dwellers'). A fragment of the saga is preserved in AM564a 4^o (written c.1390-1425) with the title *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar*. The story is a tale of potential unfulfilled. After a preamble describing Hörðr's parents and ancestors, Hörðr himself is introduced. His early life proves a great success, as he wins wealth, renown and even an Earl's daughter for a wife during his travels abroad. Yet, upon his return to Iceland, Hörðr becomes embroiled in a dispute with his own uncle Torfi. When Hörðr burns a farmer named Auðr in his farmstead (an act of aggression that the saga never sufficiently justifies), Torfi prosecutes and, thanks to a series of mishaps, questionable alliances and misunderstandings, Hörðr is undefended in court and becomes outlawed. In contrast to the stories of his fellow Icelandic outlaws Grettir Ásmundarson and Gísli Súrsson, Hörðr's outlawry is not characterised by solitary travels. Instead he establishes himself on a small island in Hvalfjörður, the Hólmr ('Isle') of the title. The island proves a safe haven for crooks, outlaws and vagabonds and the formerly law-abiding Hörðr is gradually driven to ever-greater acts of villainy. Hörðr is finally killed when the local farmers band together, led by Indriði Þorvaldsson (another of Hörðr's kinsmen), tricking the isle-dwellers into leaving the island.

The two dreams on which I propose to concentrate in this article occur near the beginning of the saga. Hörðr's mother Signý Valbrandsdóttir is married to Grímkell in a loveless marriage when she has the following dream:

Þat er sagt, at Signýju Valbrandsdóttur dreymdi draum einn. Hon þóttist sjá tré eitt mikit í rekkju þeira Grímkels, fagrt mjök ok svá rótmikit, at í öll húsin heima þar á bænum tóku rætr trésins, en ekki þótti henni blómit svá mikit á vera sem hon vildi. Hon sagði drauminn Þórdísi, fósturu sinni, en hon réð svá, at þau Grímkell mundu barn eiga ok mundi þat vera mikit ok virðuligt; kveðst hon hyggja þat svein vera,—'ok mun mörgum þykkja mikils um hann vert sakir framkvæmdar sinnar, en ekki kæmi mér þat á óvart, þó at eigi stæði hans hagr með inum mesta blóma, áðr lúki, sakir þess at þér þótti tréit þat it mikla eigi með svá miklum blóma sem þú vildir, ok ekki er víst, at hann hafi mikit ástríki af flestum frændum sínum.³

[It is said that Signý Valbrandsdóttir dreamed a certain dream. She thought that she saw a large tree in their bed, hers and Grímkell's, very beautiful and with such large roots, that the tree's roots touched all the buildings of the farm. However it seemed to her that there was not as much blossom on the tree as she wanted. She told the dream to Þórdís, her foster-mother, and she interpreted it thus, that Signý and Grímkell would have a child and it would be large and worthy; she said that she thought it would be a boy—and he will be thought great by many on account of his accomplishments, but it would be no surprise to me, if his affairs did not blossom at the end, because you didn't think the tree had as much blossom as you wished, and it is not certain that he will have much affection from most of his kinsmen.']

The same dream is preserved in the fragment AM564a:

Signýju dreymdi draum þann, at hon þóttist sjá tré mikit í hvílu þeira Grímkels ok fagrt mjök ok svá miklar limar á, at henni þótti taka yfir húsin öll, en engi á blómin á limunum. Hon sagði Þórdísi, fósturu sinni, drauminn. Hon réð svá, at þau Grímkell mundu barn eiga.⁴

[Signý dreamed a dream in which she thought that she saw a large tree in their bed, hers and Grímkell's, very beautiful and with such large branches on it that she thought they reached over

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all the buildings, but there was no blossom on the branches. She told the dream to Þórdís, her foster mother. She interpreted it thus, that they, Signý and Grímkell, would have a child.]

As the dream indicates, Signý soon gives birth to a baby boy, Hörðr, the saga hero. As mentioned above, Hörðr's early life is a success, but he is later outlawed and killed. Some three to five years later Signý has a second dream. The AM556a text reads:

Enn dreymdi hana draum, at hon sæja tré eitt mikit sem fyrr, í rótum mest, limamargt, ok gerði á blóm mikit. Þann draum réð fóstura hennar enn til barngetnaðar þeira á milli, ok mundi vera dóttir ok lifa eptir ætt stór, er henni sýndist limamargt tréit,—'en þar er þér þótti þat bera blóma mikinn, mun merkja siðaskipti þat, er koma mun, ok mun hennar afkvæmi hafa þá trú, sem þá er boðin, ok mun sú betri.⁵

[Again she dreamed a dream, that she saw a certain large tree as before, greatest at the roots, many branched and which produced a great bloom. Her foster-mother interpreted that dream as signifying the further conception of a child between the two of them and that it would be a daughter and a great family would live on after her, since it seemed to her the tree was many branched—'and that fact you thought it had a great deal of blossom, will signify the change in faith which is to come, and her descendants will have the faith which will be preached then, and that will be a better one.']

Again AM564a gives a slighter briefer and unfortunately partly damaged text:

Enn dreymdi Signýju, at hon sæi tré eitt [mikit] ok ****⁶ í rótum, en visnaði upp þaðan, ok væri á blómi [mikill]. Þórdís kvað hana eiga mundu meybarn ok sagði m[undu] koma frá henni mikla ætt.⁷

[Again Signý dreamed, that she saw a certain large tree and **** at the roots, but was withering from the roots upwards, and there was much blossom on it. Þórdís said that she would have a girl child and said a great family would come from her.]

Shortly afterwards Signý dies in childbirth while staying with her brother, Torfi. Torfi seems to blame the new-born baby, Þorbjörg, for her mother's death and orders her to be exposed, but the man sent to expose her decides instead to place her where she will be found and cared for. Throughout the latter half of the saga, Þorbjörg Grímkelsdóttir is one of the central characters. She is torn between loyalty to her husband Indriði and her brother Hörður, proving loyal to her husband when Hörður tries to separate them, but later providing refuge for Hörður's widow and sons and pursuing vengeance for his death.

Versions of Harðar saga and Their Relationship with Landnámabók

To understand Signý's dreams in *Harðar saga* it is necessary first to consider the age and preservation of *Harðar saga* and its relationship to other texts, such as *Landnámabók*. Most scholars doubt that the version of the saga we have preserved in AM556a can be dated to before the fourteenth century in view of the late features in the language and the fantastic elements which occur frequently in the saga.⁸ AM564a is a single page fragment of the saga collection referred to as *Pseudo-Vatnshyrna*.⁹ The text of this fragment seems to reflect a shorter, more compact version of the saga. The exact relationship between these versions remains unclear. Formerly AM564a was thought to preserve an older, relatively original version of the saga, which was then expanded in AM556a.¹⁰ More recent scholarship, however, has supported the view that the text in AM564a has been shortened and preserves a version separate from that in AM556a.¹¹

There is evidence to suggest that Styrmir Kárason (d. 1245) may have been the author or composer of a version of *Harðar saga*.¹² In the final chapter of AM556a the author tells us that Styrmir prestr inn fróði considered Hörður to be greater than other outlaws.¹³ Styrmir was the author of a now lost version of *Landnámabók* and a life of Saint Óláfr (which is also lost, although several stories thought to stem from Styrmir's text are preserved in *Flateyjarbók* and Snorri's *Separate Saga of Óláfr helgi*).¹⁴ While the evidence suggesting Styrmir's authorship of *Harðar saga* is circumstantial, it is nonetheless considerable. He was abbot at the monastery on Viðey, not that far from the saga's Hvalfjörður locale and was very distantly related to Hörður's family. His access to Snorri Sturluson and his other literary works would suggest a man easily capable of writing such a saga.¹⁵ All of this, taken together with the otherwise irrelevant mention of him at the end of the text, provides the basis on which to build a fairly

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convincing case. Nonetheless it seems unlikely that the saga of Hörðr written by Styrmir was identical to that preserved in AM556a but was rather an earlier and somewhat different version of the story.

That a tradition regarding Hörðr Grímkelsson's life and death existed well before the advent of the fourteenth century can be seen from three references to him in *Landnámabók*. *Hauksbók* records the following account of Hörðr's mother:

Signý hét dóttir Valþjófs, er Signýjarstaðir eru við kenndir; hana átti Grímkell, son Bjarnar gullbera; þeira synir váru þeir Hörðr, er drepinn var í Geirshólmi, ok Gnúpr, faðir Birnings, föður Gnúps, föður Eiríks Grœnlendingabyskups.¹⁶

[The name of the daughter of Valþjófr was Signý, after whom Signýjarstaðir is named. Her husband was Grímkell, the son of Björn gullbera. Their sons were Hörðr, who was killed on Geirshólmr, and Gnúpr, the father of Birningr, the father of Gnúpr, the father of Bishop Eiríkr of the Greenlanders.]

There is some discrepancy between the presentation of Hörðr's family here and in the saga as, according to the saga, Signý's father is called Valbrandr and Valþjófr is her grandfather. The brother Gnúpr is not mentioned in *Harðar saga*, but his descendant, Eiríkr Grœnlendingabyskup, is mentioned in *Konungsannáll* for the year 1121 and *Lögmannsannáll* for the years 1112 and 1121, where it is told that he not only travelled to Greenland but also that he went in search of Vínland.¹⁷ The *Sturlubók* redaction of *Landnámabók* also records Hörðr's family:

Björn gullberi nam Reykjardal enn syðra ok bjó á Gullberastöðum. Hans son var Grímkell goði í Bláskógum; hann átti Signýju Valbrandsdóttur, Valþjófssonar; þeira son var Hörðr, er var fyrir Hólmsmönnum.¹⁸

[Björn gullberi settled South Reykjardalr and lived at Gullberastaðir. His son was Grímkell goði of Bláskógar. He was married to Signý Valbrandsdóttir, Valþjófsson. Their son was Hörðr, who led the men of Hólmr.]

Thus Sturla's text agrees with the saga as regards Signý's father and grandfather, suggesting that the anomaly in *Hauksbók* is an error. *Sturlubók* also mentions Hörðr's uncle Torfi, who, in the saga, proves instrumental in having him outlawed:

Torfi [Valbrandsson] drap Kroppsmenn tólf saman, ok hann réð mest fyrir drápi Hólmsmanna.¹⁹

[Torfi [Valbrandsson] killed twelve men from Kroppr altogether, and he was most responsible for the killing of the men of Hólmr.]

The most striking reference to Hörðr's story, however, is found in both *Hauksbók* and *Sturlubók*:

Rauðr hét maðr, er nam land et syðra upp frá Rauðsgili til Gilja ok bjó at Rauðsgili; hans synir váru þeir Úlfr á Úlfsstöðum ok Auðr á Auðsstöðum fyrir norðan á, er Hörðr vá. Þar hefsk af saga Harðar Grímkelssonar ok Geirs.²⁰

[There was a man was named Rauðr, who settled land in the south from Rauðsgil to Giljar, and lived at Rauðsgil. These were his sons: Úlfr at Úlfstaðir and Auðr at Auðsstaðir on the north of the river, whom Hörðr killed. It is at this point that the saga of Hörðr Grímkelsson and Geirr begins.]

From these scattered fragments we can tell that by the beginning of the fourteenth century (*Hauksbók*, probably the later of the two redactions, is dated to between 1302-1310), a saga about Hörðr existed (in either oral or written form). In addition to Hörðr, this saga told about his mother Signý, his father Grímkell, the conflict with his uncle Torfi, a character named Geirr (who is Hörðr's fosterbrother in AM556a), the burning of Auðr at Auðsstaðir, the Hólmr, the Hólmsmenn and Hörðr's death. If such a story could be included in *Landnámabók* at the beginning of the fourteenth century, then it may well have existed early enough to have been known, told or written by Styrmir Kárason.

The Use of the Dream of the Tree of Descent in Harðar saga

If we return to the dreams at the beginning of *Harðar saga* we find that both dreams use the symbol of a tree to signify the birth of a child. In the first dream this is a male child, in the second it is a female. The tree in the first dream in the AM556a manuscript has large roots which cover the entire house. This is interpreted by Þórdís to mean that the child, Hörðr, will be large, worthy and well thought of, on account of his accomplishments. The tree, however, lacks blossom.

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According to the foster-mother's interpretation, this indicates that at the end of his life the child's affairs will not flourish. The foster-mother also correctly predicts the sex of the child and the fact that he will not enjoy much love from his kinsmen. The roots and their spread across the farm seem to represent the extent of Hörðr's property. The lack of blossom further up the tree in the dream represents Hörðr's lack of success in later life, in particular when he is driven into outlawry and forced to survive by stealing. The foster-mother's comment that Hörðr will not receive much love from his kinsmen relates to the fact that both his brothers-in-law and his uncle are involved in the attack in which Hörðr is killed. Thus, in Signý's first dream in AM556a, the lower parts of the tree are specifically related to the early parts of the child's life and the higher portions to his later life. There is a play on words when the foster-mother comments that his affairs in later life will not blossom. This word-play links the tree symbol in the dream linguistically as well as symbolically to its meaning. The reader's attention is drawn to the word-play by the change from reported speech to direct speech shortly before the relevant phrase.

There are several differences here from the description of the same dream in AM564a. In AM564a the tree is beautiful and lacks blossom, but it has large branches which extend over the house. Þórdís's interpretation is less detailed. She merely says that Signý and Grímkell will have a child, but gives no indication of the sex of that child. Furthermore, there is no indication of what the lack of blossom symbolises.

The tree in the second dream in AM556a is said to have large roots and limbs and a great deal of blossom. Þórdís interprets the dream as indicating that Signý will have a second child, that the child will be a girl and that a great family will descend from her. The blossom is interpreted as indicating the coming change of faith and the piety of Signý's descendants. Although the saga-author clearly intended these two dreams to function as a pair, the code by which they are interpreted is subtly different. In both dreams a tree represents unborn progeny, but in the first dream the upper portions of the tree represent the child's later life, whereas in the second they represent the child's offspring (that is, the dreamer's grandchildren and later descendants). Furthermore, in the first dream, the lack of blossom represents (in AM556a at least) a lack of prosperity, that is, Hörðr's position as an outlaw; whereas in the second dream the presence of blossom (again only in AM556a) indicates piety and Christianity. This shift of symbolism in two such clearly paired dreams shows that saga readers saw no problem in adjusting and adapting their interpretation as directed by the text.

Regardless of whether we believe the details of AM556a to have been expanded (something I will deal with later), the reader of the saga as it is preserved was expected to understand such complex and varied symbolism.

In AM564a the second dream is even more briefly related and the text is damaged. Something is said about the tree's roots, but this is undecipherable. The stem, further up from the roots, is withered (a detail missing in AM556a). Nevertheless this tree produces abundant blossom. The foster-mother says that the tree signals the birth of a female child from whom a great family will descend. It is not clear in AM564a whether the blossom relates to the success of Signý's descendants or to their piety. There is no explicit statement of what the withered stem symbolises, but it seems likely that it represents Signý's death. In both AM556a and AM564a Signý dies during the birth of Þorbjörg. Shortly after this the manuscript AM564a breaks off.

The symbolism of these two dreams might be summarised in the following way: a tree in the dream of a pregnant woman foretells the birth of a child; the point at which the tree grows, that is, the bed, is symbolic of the union between the husband and wife; the spread of the tree, either the roots or branches, indicates the extent of the wealth of the child, that is, the whole farm; the health of the tree is directly linked to the health or success of the person it represents, with the suggestion of word-play on the idea of something blossoming both literally and metaphorically; the upper parts of the tree represent the latter part of the child's life; and in the second dream (at least in AM556a) the branches indicate the descendants of the child.

The Spread of the Tree of Descent in the North

Variations of this dream can be found in a number of texts in Old Norse. For example, in *Flóamanna saga*, Þorgils ørrabeinstjúpr has a dream in which he thinks he is in Iceland and he sees five *hámlaukar* growing from his knee. From these stalks many more grow, including one which is tremendously large and beautiful.²¹ The identification of these *hámlaukar* or *hjámlaukar* (as the shorter version reads) is problematic. They may be leeks or garlic,²² but may also be angelica.²³ Regardless of the exact nature of the plants, the dream is similar to that in *Harðar saga*, in that once again progeny are represented by a botanical symbol in a dream. In Þorgils's dream the five plants (or stems of a single plant) represent his five children (his son Þorleifr is excluded, perhaps because of his different

mother, or perhaps because he chooses to remain in Greenland rather than return to Iceland),²⁴ and the plants that grow from them represent his descendants, just as the branches do in Signý's second dream. As in Signý's dream, the location from which they grow is important. The bed has clear sexual significance in *Harðar saga*, whereas in *Flóamanna saga* the plants grow directly from his body, the knee having particular significance in relation to the concept of lineage.²⁵ In the dreams of Signý and Þorgils geographical or topographical details are important. In Signý's first dream, the tree covers (either with its roots or branches) the whole farm, and in Þorgils's dream it is specified that the plants grow in Iceland (while he has the dream in Greenland), indicating where his family will live. Once again word-play is used linking the unborn progeny to the symbol. In the case of *Flóamanna saga* this word-play is on the verb *kvísla*, usually used in the reflexive *kvíslask* ('to branch off' of a river or tree; relating to the noun *kvísl*, 'a branch'). In the narration of Þorgils's dream this is used first of the plant itself, and then, in the interpretation, it is used of the family symbolised by the plant. *Flóamanna saga* expands on one element not exploited by *Harðar saga* to the same extent. One particularly beautiful *laukr* is used to represent a descendant of particular note. The beauty of this *laukr* represents the piety of Þorgils's descendant Saint Þorlákr, in an exaggerated version of the motif of the blossom in Signý's second dream representing the piety of her descendants.

This type of dream is found in one other *Íslendingasaga*. At the beginning of *Bárðar saga*, Bárðr Dumbsson has a dream while he is living with his foster-father, the giant Dofri.²⁶ In the dream, Bárðr sees a tree growing from the hearth, coiling out through the rock of Dofri's cave and eventually shading the whole of Norway. Bárðr notices that the blossom on one branch is particularly lush and golden. This is the clearest example yet of the genealogical tree – by which I mean not only a diagrammatic means of portraying a family, but also the use of an actual tree or other plant to represent this – being used to symbolise both the individual and their descendants. The tree represents Haraldr inn hárfagri, who is also later fostered with Dofri. The branches, like the roots in Signý's first dream, represent Haraldr's dominion, which, like the tree, grows from its base in Dofri's cave so that eventually it covers all Norway. At the same time, however, the branches represent Haraldr's descendants, like the branches in Signý's second dream. The branch of particular note, which represents Saint Óláfr Haraldsson, is similar to the stem in Þorgils's dream overshadowing the others. Bárðr's dream, which is of little relevance to his saga, is exceptional in that the dreamer is not a blood relation of the person represented in the dream. The saga writer mentions a

Saga Haralds konungs Dofrafóstra at this point and it is possible that he took the dream directly from this source.

A similar dream occurs in *Hálfðanar saga svarta* in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, where it is attributed to Queen Ragnhildr, Haraldr's mother.²⁷ In Ragnhildr's dream she takes from her blouse a thorn that suddenly grows into a twig, takes root, and quickly becomes a massive tree with branches spreading across Norway. The lowest part of the tree is red, the trunk green and the top white. The interpretation of this dream is not given until *Haralds saga ins hárfagra*, the next saga in Snorri's work:

Ok þýða menn þat nú, at vitat hafi um tré þat it mikla, er móður hans sýndisk í draumi fyrir burð hans, er inn nehti hlutr tréssins var rauðr sem blóð, en þá var legginn upp frá fagr ok grænn, at þat jartegndi blóma ríkis hans. En at ofanverðu var hvítt tréit, þar sýndisk þat, at hann myndi fá elli ok hæru. Kvistir ok limar tréssins boðaði afkvæmi hans, er um allt land dreifðisk, ok af hans ætt hafa verit jafnan síðan konungar í Nóregi.²⁸

[And now men explain what was signified by the large tree that appeared to his mother in a dream before his birth. The lowest part of the tree was red as blood, but the trunk was fair and green further up – that signified the blossoming of his kingdom. And on top the tree was white; there it showed that he would get old and hoary. The branches and limbs of the tree symbolised his offspring spreading over the whole land and the kings of Norway have been from his family ever since.]

This dream is probably the closest match so far to Signý's first dream in *Harðar saga*. As in Signý's dream, so in Ragnhildr's dream, the further up the tree one moves the later the period of Haraldr's reign that is represented. Red at the bottom of the trunk represents the violence that occurs as Haraldr seeks to unite Norway under his rulership. The green section symbolises the blossoming of his kingdom, and the same pun on the metaphorical use of 'bloom' is used in the interpretation of Ragnhildr's dream as in Signý's dream.²⁹ The white at the top of the tree is said to represent Haraldr's old age and hoariness. The branches once again symbolise both the descendants and also the extent of their dominion as some of the branches trail out of Norway representing the success of Ragnhildr's descendants

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beyond Norway's borders. Interestingly, the motif of the single branch that outshines or overshadows all others is missing from Ragnhildr's dream.

Alongside Ragnhildr's dream Snorri relates another similar dream. Unlike his wife, King Hálfðan rarely dreams, until he speaks to a wise man named Þorleifr who advises him to sleep in a pigsty, whereupon he has the following dream:

Honum sýndisk sem hann væri allra manna bezt hærðr, ok var hár hans allt í lokkum, sumir síðir til jarðar, sumir í miðjan legg, sumir á kné, sumir í mjöðm eða miðja síðu, sumir eigi lengra en á háls, en sumir ekki meirr en sprotnir upp ór hausi sem knýflar, en á lokkum hans var hvers kyns litr, en einn lokkr sigraði alla með fegrð ok ljósleik ok mikilleik. Þorleifi sagði hann þann draum, en Þorleifr þýddi svá, at mikill afspringr myndi koma af honum ok myndi sá löndum ráða með miklum veg ok þó eigi allir með jafnmiklum, en einn myndi sá af hans ætt koma, er öllum myndi meiri ok æðri, ok hafa menn þat fyrir satt, at sá lokkr jartegndi inn helga Óláf konung.³⁰

[It seemed to him as if he had the best hair of all men and his hair was all in locks, some long down to the ground, some to half-way down his leg, some to his knees, some to his hip or middle, and some no further than to his neck and some no more than sprouting up from his skull, like horns. And on the locks was every kind of colour. But one lock surpassed all in beauty and brightness and size. He told that dream to Þorleifr and Þorleifr interpreted it this way, that a great line of descendants would come from him and would rule the land with great honour, though not all of them to the same extent, and that one would come from his family who would be greater and more honourable than the rest. And men reckon it true that that lock symbolised Saint Óláfr the king.]

This is not a dream of a tree as such, but it does work in the same way and shares many of the same characteristics as tree-dreams. There is a rough similarity between the botanical symbols and the hair of Hálfðan's dream in that both grow and both represent the unborn progeny of the dreamer. The extent of that growth represents the extent of the success of the progeny. The nature or colour of the hair is of symbolic importance, in the same way that the colour of the tree in

Ragnhildr's dream and the healthiness of the tree and the extent of its blossom in Signý's dreams are also of symbolic importance. Even the language of Hálfðan's dream is similar to the accounts of the tree-dreams—for example, the shortest locks sprout from his head. Unlike Ragnhildr's dream, for which there is no immediate source, Hálfðan's dream appears in two works thought to have been used by Snorri for *Hálfðanar saga svarta*. These are *Fagrskinna* and *Hálfðanar þátr svarta*.³¹ Snorri changes his sources comparatively little. In *Fagrskinna*, Hálfðan is naked in the dream, but otherwise the account of the dream differs little from Snorri, and both *Fagrskinna* and *Hálfðanar þátr* conclude the interpretation of the brightest lock by extolling the virtues of Saint Óláfr: *Óláfr Haraldsson er öllum Noregs konungum er meiri með helgi sinni ok bjartari á himni ok á jörðu, svá at allir viti*³² [Óláfr Haraldsson, who is greater in his piety and brighter in heaven and on earth than all other kings of Norway, as everyone may as well realise].

We can find an interesting variant of this motif in *Laxdæla saga*. Guðrún's fourth husband Þorkell Eyjólfsson has a dream in which his beard spreads across the whole of Breiðafjörður.³³ When he discusses this dream with his wife each of them offers a different interpretation. Þorkell explains the dream as follows: *at þar mun standa ríki mitt um allan Breiðafjörð* [it means my domination will extend over the whole of Breiðafjörður]. Guðrún gives an altogether more sensible interpretation of the dream—that it represents his drowning in that fjord. I have considered elsewhere the way in which the dream relates to its fulfilment.³⁴ Here, however, Þorkell's misinterpretation interests me more than Guðrún's accurate one. It seems plausible that the *Laxdæla saga* author based Þorkell's interpretation of his dream on a combination of the two dreams in *Hálfðanar saga svarta*, specifically taking the hair motif from Hálfðan's dream, but using the geographical extent of the dream-symbol in a way more similar to the tree in Ragnhildr's dream. Þorkell is presented as somewhat pompous and overreaching in *Laxdæla saga*. His bravery is never questioned, but there is little evidence of the success of his endeavours (for example, he is defeated in chapter 58 by the outlaw Grímr and, in chapter 75, fails to force Halldórr Ólafsson into selling Hjarðarholt). In Norway he compromises what had been a close friendship with King Óláfr Haraldsson by deciding to build a church to the same specifications as that of the king in Trondheim (chapter 74). Ármann Jakobsson has identified royal themes in the representation of some of the central characters in *Laxdæla saga*, particularly Unnr, Óláfr pái and Kjartan.³⁵ If such descriptions deliberately invited direct comparison with the presentation of royal figures in the

konungasögur, then the portrayal of Porkell and, in particular, his incorrect interpretation of the dream may have been used as ironic comparison with the same. It seems that the *Laxdæla saga* author was not only influenced by the tree dream tradition, but intended Porkell's interpretation as a deliberate parody of it. Through his wishful interpretation Porkell is casting himself as 'king' of Breiðafjörður, with his dominion covering the whole fjord just as his beard does in the dream.³⁶ It is highly likely that the author of *Laxdæla saga* knew one or more of the *konungasögur*. It is even plausible, in the fictive world of the saga at least, that stories of Hálfðan and Ragnhildr's dreams had circulated in Iceland by Porkell Eyjólffsson's day. The realist might argue that, since both dreams predict the sanctity of Saint Óláfr, they could not possibly have been known by that date, but since the *Laxdæla saga* author is firmly committed to a view that dreams potentially offer accurate predictions of the future (for example in Guðrún's four dreams in chapter 33), this objection need not trouble us. Porkell's interpretation is an expression of his own ambition and desire. He believes, just as a king might, that it is his right and destiny to hold sway over the whole of the district around Breiðafjörður.

There are several further versions of the tree-dream in saga literature, though none with such obvious similarity to Signý's dreams. In *Morkinskinna*, King Sigurðr Jörsulafari dreams that he is standing at Jaðarr looking out to sea as a black cloud moves towards the land.³⁷ As the cloud approaches it becomes apparent that it is a tree, standing vertically with its roots in the water and its branches above. When the tree reaches the coast it breaks apart and pieces of all sizes are washed up into every bay in Norway. The same dream is also narrated in the *Magnússona saga* section of *Heimskringla*.³⁸ Sigurðr's dream foretells the arrival of his half-brother Haraldr Gilli, who comes to share the kingdom with him. The dream does not use the tree symbol in quite the same way as *Harðar saga*, since there is no sense of the tree growing or branching off. However, the dream is in some respects similar to the one in *Harðar saga*. Once again specific geography or topography is used. Rather than the spread of the branches or roots, it is the spread of the broken fragments that indicate the sphere of influence of Haraldr's descendants. Furthermore, the size of those pieces indicates their importance, just as the size of the tree in Signý's first dream indicates that her child will be worthy (*virðuligt*). Further examples can be found where animal dream symbols, rather than a botanical symbol, are used to represent either the extent of authority or unborn progeny, for example a bird (as in *Sverris saga*)³⁹ or a snake (as in *Guta saga* and *Mirmans saga*).⁴⁰

There is even an eddic parallel to the dream of the tree of descent in stanza 40 from *Guðrúnarkviða II*. Atli tells his wife Guðrún of several ominous dreams which he has had:

Hugða ec hér í túni teina fallna,
þá er ek vildigac vaxna láta,
rifnir með rótom, roðnir í blóði,
bornir á becci, beðit mic at tyggva.⁴¹

[I thought that here in the yard, saplings which I wanted to let grow to their full extent had fallen. Torn up by the roots, reddened in blood, [they were] brought to the benches, and [I dreamed] that I was bidden to chew them.]

Atli's dream is almost an inversion of the tree-dream motif. The two saplings or sprouts (*teinar*) represent the sons of Guðrún and Atli. The fact that these are mere shoots, rather than full-grown plants as in Signý's dreams, brings home the fact that the boys will die before they reach maturity. Rather than the extent of the plant or its lush beauty, it is the failure of the plant that is of importance in the dream, and which invites comparison with the withered stem in the second of Signý's dreams in the fragmentary text. Guðrún denies that Atli's dream is foreboding, but, unlike Þorkell Eyjólfsson, she does this through cunning, not ignorance, as she herself will kill the boys. This verse of *Guðrúnarkviða II* is imitated in a stanza by Gísli Súrsson in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*:

Teina sák í túni
tál-gríms vinar fölu,
Gauts þess 's geig of veittak
gunnbliks þáamiklu;
nú hefr gnýstærir geira
grímu Þrótt of sóttan,
þann lét lundr of lendan
landkostað ábranda.⁴²

[I saw shoots on the greatly thawed homefield [i.e. burial mound] of the tricker of the giantess's friend -grímr [i.e. Þorgrímr], that god of the glint of battle [i.e. warrior], the one that I killed. Now the stealer of the spears' din [i.e. warrior, here

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Gísli] has killed the Óðinn of the helmet [i.e. warrior]. The tree of river-fires [i.e. man] granted land to the land-eager man.]

Gísli speaks this verse shortly after his secret killing of Þorgrímr goði. The riddling kenning *tál-grímr vinar fölu* [tricker of the friend of the giantess –*grímr*] represents Þorgrímr's name. The giantess's friend is a giant, and his tricker is Þórr, added to the undisguised element –*grímr* (which is left almost as a clue as to how to resolve the kenning) gives the name *Þorgrímr*. The homefield is Þorgrímr's burial mound, which is always miraculously free of snow, perhaps because of his dedication to Freyr in life. The similarity between *Hugða ec hér í túni teina fallna* and *Teina sák í túni* is sufficiently striking to allow the conclusion that the *Gísla saga* verse is a direct imitation of the eddic poem. At first the similarity would seem to be merely linguistic and poetic imitation; however, on closer inspection it appears that many of the themes of the *Gísla saga* verse are similar to those of the tree-dreams above. The poet represents Þorgrímr's burial mound in terms of land, that is as a homefield, similar to roots or branches spreading across the whole farm in Signý's dreams. This concept is expanded in the second *helmingr* where Gísli (assuming the speaker is he) says that he granted Þorgrímr land and Þorgrímr is described as eager for land. Again the land in question is the burial mound and, by extension, to be eager for land is to look forward to death. Furthermore, not only is the preoccupation with land shared by the *Gísla saga* verse and the tree-dreams (albeit, in the case of the verse, with possession of land as a metaphor for death), there is also a hint of the idea of progeny, both in the verse and in its placing in the saga. Gísli who, as the saga stresses, is a man who dreams true dreams may already realise that he is destined to die childless. As he looks over at Þorgrímr's burial mound he sees Þorgrímr's wife, his own sister, Þórdís, sitting on the conveniently snow-free grass. With her would have been Þorgrímr's son who would go on to become the famous Icelandic chieftain Snorri goði. Thus, growing on Þorgrímr's mound are not only the literal shoots of grass, but also Þorgrímr's metaphorical shoots, his son. Although neither a dream, nor a tree as such, is in question here, Gísli's verse is undoubtedly a part of this puzzle, its wording being inspired directly by *Guðrúnarkviða II*, but also making use of the themes of a botanical symbol to represent both dominion and lineage from the tree-dream motif more generally.

Origins and Relationships

The image of the tree is at the very heart of pagan belief, most noticeably in the form of the world ash Yggdrasill, whose roots connect the worlds.⁴³ The very first humans are said to have their origins in trees, as Borr's sons found logs (*tré*) on the shore and breathed life into them.⁴⁴ The first man is named Askr ('Ash') and the first woman Embla ('Elm'). Thus, in the pagan mindset, trees are irrevocably connected to human life from its very inception. Synonyms for tree (such as *meiðr*, 'tree'; *runnr*, 'bush'; *hlynr*, 'maple') are commonly used as base-words in kennings for 'warrior', often modified by words meaning weapons, helms or shields.⁴⁵ Similarly, tree words are also used as base-words in female kennings, usually modified by references to gold, linen or jewellery.⁴⁶ This association of human life with trees seems to me quite in keeping with the dream of the genealogical tree and its use in sagas.

Of course, a pre-existing link between human life and trees does not preclude foreign influence and, indeed, such pre-existing associations would make it all the more easy for dreams of the genealogical tree to be adapted and adopted into the saga mind-set. Several scholars have tried to suggest origins for the genealogical tree in the North. Larsen associates Signý's dreams (together with those of Þorgils in *Flóamanna saga* and Ragnhildr in *Heimskringla*) with that of King Astyages, described in book I of Herodotus's *Histories*.⁴⁷ Astyages dreams that a large vine grows from the body of his daughter and overshadows all Asia. Larsen suggests that the Old French *Roman de Rou* by Robert Wace may have assisted the spread of this motif throughout Europe. In Wace's work (written c.1160) the dominion of William the Conqueror over Normandy is portended by his mother's dream that a tree grows from her body and shades all Normandy.⁴⁸ Joan Turville-Petre compares Signý's dreams to omens foretelling the birth of Emperor Vespasian in Suetonius's *The Twelve Caesars*.⁴⁹ Each time Vespasian's mother Vespasia Polla gives birth, an ancient oak-tree sacred to Mars puts out a new shoot. The first shoot withers quickly, representing Vespasian's elder sister, who dies in infancy. The second grows strong and represents his brother Sabinus, who becomes City Prefect of Rome. The third tree, finally, seems 'more like a tree than a branch', and represents Vespasian himself. The withered branch in Suetonius's story resembles the withered stem of the tree in Signý's second dream in AM564a, which seems to foretell her death.

Both Kelchner and Hilda Ellis Davidson identify parallels between the dream of the genealogical tree and Celtic folklore.⁵⁰ However, the most

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comprehensive survey of the dream of the genealogical tree in Old Norse is that of Paul Schach.⁵¹ In addition to several of the examples already mentioned, Schach refers to further analogues. In the first of his two articles on the subject, Schach seeks to identify sources for and borrowings from the dream of Ruodlieb's mother, in which she sees a high linden tree at the top of which she thinks she sees Ruodlieb reclining with his army.⁵² While undoubtedly part of the same motif, this example has little obvious similarity to Signý's dreams. However, among the analogues cited by Schach is the dream of Saint Godehard in Wolfeherius's *Vita Godehardi episcopi Hildenesheimensis*.⁵³ Saint Godehard dreams of a tree standing in the courtyard of the monastery with branches spread out to form an arbour. In the dream he receives a message that the tree must be sent to the Emperor. As he digs out the tree he notices that the upper part of the tree is withered but that the roots remain healthy. Upon waking, Godehard misinterprets the dream as portending the dissolution of the monastery. The true interpretation, given somewhat later, is that the withering represents Godehard's weak physical condition (a consequence of fasting and over-exertion). The withered stem corresponding to Godehard's weakened physical condition resembles the withered trunk in Signý's second dream in AM564a.

One final possible area of influence on Signý's dreams must also be considered. The book of Isaiah contains the following prophecy:

Then a shoot shall grow from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall spring from his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.⁵⁴

This is in essence a description of a genealogical tree. Jesse is the grandson of Boaz and father of King David, and thus an ancestor of Jesus. These lines came to be represented pictorially in Christian art across Europe. In the motif, often referred to as the tree or root of Jesse, Jesse is usually depicted lying on his back in sleep or in vision as a genealogical tree grows from his loins. Scrolls naming ancestors of Jesus are depicted on its branches. This concept, the earliest examples of which date back to the eleventh century,⁵⁵ proved an important illustration of Christ's ancestry and was used in many manuscripts and religious buildings across medieval Europe, including Scandinavia.⁵⁶ Turville-Petre considers the possibility that Snorri Sturluson knew of the motif, at least by

reputation, from the stained glass window of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Denis in Paris.⁵⁷

We must now return to *Harðar saga* to see what light this wealth of parallels can throw upon Signý's dreams. Firstly, if we compare the two manuscripts, then we find that elements unique to both versions seem likely to have been in the original saga. This supports the view that the two versions are independently descended from a common original. Regarding the first dream, the text of AM556a may be closer to the original. In AM556a the roots portray the extent of Hörðr's inheritance, and the top of the tree represents the poverty and ignominy of his later life. The idea of moving up the tree to indicate a later time in the progeny's life is also found in the closely related dream of Ragnhildr in *Heimskringla* and seems likely to have been in the original text of *Harðar saga*. In AM564a this idea is confused. I believe that a scribe or writer mistakenly tried to correct the dream in the version preserved in AM564a, changing the roots to branches to make the dream more closely resemble those preserved in *konungasögur*, despite the fact that this did not agree with the story of Hörðr who ended his days an outlaw. In contrast, the second dream is better preserved in AM564a. The withered trunk, which is mentioned only in the AM564a fragment, fits well with the idea of the saplings being torn up in *Guðrúnarkviða II* and resembles several of the foreign parallels. The text of AM564a, however, does show signs of being shortened, most noticeably in the character of Þórdís the foster-mother. Þórdís's interpretations of the dreams in AM564a have been shortened to the extent that they tell us almost nothing compared to AM556a, where they elucidate the more complex aspects of the dreams and give information that could not otherwise be gleaned by the reader.

But what of other examples of this dream—how might they influenced one another? One might argue that the tree image is something so basic and inherent that it is built into the human psyche at some level, but that is not to say that texts did not influence one another. There are of course dangers in suggesting directions of influence. We can rarely be totally certain that a text was known by a particular author. Nor can we be certain that we know all of the texts that might have influenced medieval writers. Several of the influences, however, are almost beyond doubt. For example, we know with relative certainty that Snorri used *Morkinskinna* as a source for some of the later portions of *Heimskringla*,⁵⁸ so that he may be assumed to have taken Sigurðr's dream from there, while also depending perhaps on other sources and influences. I have already suggested that the sources for *Hálfðanar saga svarta* in *Heimskringla* included *Fagrskinna* and

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Páttir Hálfðanar svarta and it seems probable that Hálfðan's dream came from those two sources. As the account of the dream is slightly closer to the *páttir* than to *Fagrskinna*, it may have a relatively direct relationship to the former. Gísli's verse is a clear imitation of *Guðrúnarkviða II* and the influence of that same poem can be found in a number of verses in that saga.⁵⁹ Þorkell Eyjólfsson's interpretation of his dream in *Laxdæla saga* is a clear and conscious imitation of a *konungasaga* motif. Since it combines elements from both Hálfðan's dream and Ragnhildr's dream, the most obvious possible source is *Heimskringla* (the earliest extant version of Norwegian history to contain both of the dreams). One can be less certain about the dreams of Bárðr and Þorgils. Both *Bárðar saga* and *Flóamanna saga* are post-classical sagas. Both dreams combine the botanical symbol (as in Ragnhildr's dream) with the motif of one particular branch surpassing the others in beauty or brightness (similar to the lock of hair in Hálfðan's dream), again making *Heimskringla* the most likely candidate. Bárðr's dream in particular seems to have been lifted directly from a *konungasaga*. It predicts the same events as Ragnhildr's dream and has little to do with its present surroundings. One notes the phrase *Hafa menn þat fyrir satt* [Men say it to be true] in both *Heimskringla* and *Bárðar saga*, but whether the author knew *Heimskringla* directly or another lost text is hard to know.

This analysis produces a very tentative schema such as that in Figure 1 (see Appendix). This is not to deny the possibility of additional influence from foreign texts, and indeed motifs created by artisans such as the tree of Jesse on church walls, at each stage. Signý's dreams are clearly most closely related to Ragnhildr's dream in *Heimskringla*. Both dreams share the concept that the upper parts of the tree represent the later stages of the progeny's life and both have word-play involving the transferred sense of blossoming. Both Schach and Turville-Petre portray the genealogical tree as a motif that Snorri Sturluson was fundamental in popularising in Iceland, and indeed my own schema suggests that his influence was important. Nevertheless, the motif was already established in various forms prior to his compilation of *Heimskringla* (for example *Morkinskinna* and *Guðrúnarkviða II*). Furthermore, ideas associating humans with trees date back to pagan creation myths. These ideas assisted the blossoming, so to speak, of the motif as the growth of monastic and secular literacy in Iceland resulted in foreign texts becoming available. As for Signý's dreams in *Harðar saga*, it is striking that the dreams show some of the hallmarks of accounts of dreams found in foreign texts but not in other Icelandic texts. Most noticeably, the withered tree-trunk in AM564a, is not found in other Icelandic versions of the dream, but is present in

Suetonius and Wolferius. This would suggest a relatively direct link with foreign texts and not one entirely dependent on Snorri's *Heimskringla*. The references to Hörðr in *Landnámabók* imply the existence of a saga about him considerably earlier than our current text and it seems entirely plausible that Styrmir Kárason fróði was its author. *Íslendinga saga* connects Styrmir with Snorri Sturluson,⁶⁰ and it is not unlikely that Styrmir lived for some time with Snorri, and was perhaps even his scribe.⁶¹ It is possible that Styrmir's life of Saint Óláfr provided a source for Snorri's separate saga of Óláfr, but as only fragments of Styrmir's text remain, this cannot be regarded as anything more than a possibility.⁶² The earliest version of *Harðar saga* may therefore not only have been contemporary with *Heimskringla*, but there may have been a direct link between the two, which in turn would mean that there was a direct relationship between Signý's dreams in *Harðar saga* and Ragnhildr's in *Heimskringla*. This proximity, if established, however, would not make it any easier to judge the direction of this influence.

Signý's dreams are interesting examples of what had become a popular motif in the later period of saga writing. There seems little doubt that this motif owed a great deal to the influence of foreign stories, literature and perhaps even art. However, this motif flourished because it fitted well with pre-existing concepts within the saga mind-set, creating cycles of influence and meta-influence. Although *Harðar saga* is rarely counted among the finest examples of the *Íslendingasögur*, these dreams are skilfully handled, foreshadowing the story with the use of techniques that are more commonly found in *konungasögur*, but which here have been naturalised to fit the more everyday world of post-settlement Iceland. While, as previous scholars have stressed, Snorri Sturluson was highly influential in the spread and flourishing of the tree-dream motif in saga literature, it seems likely that a version of *Harðar saga*, perhaps by Styrmir Kárason, existed at a similar date and that it contained two examples of the motif. One might imagine a scene at Reykjaholt while Styrmir was staying with Snorri, perhaps acting as his scribe, when the two men discussed a literary motif that one of them had read, perhaps in a foreign text or perhaps on a church wall or window, whereby future progeny could be represented in a dream using a tree symbol. That both men went on to make cunning and creative use of the motif in their texts seems likely (or nearly certain in the case of Snorri) but which of the pair encountered the idea first is hard to ascertain.

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Speculation as to the Content of Styrmir's Harðar saga

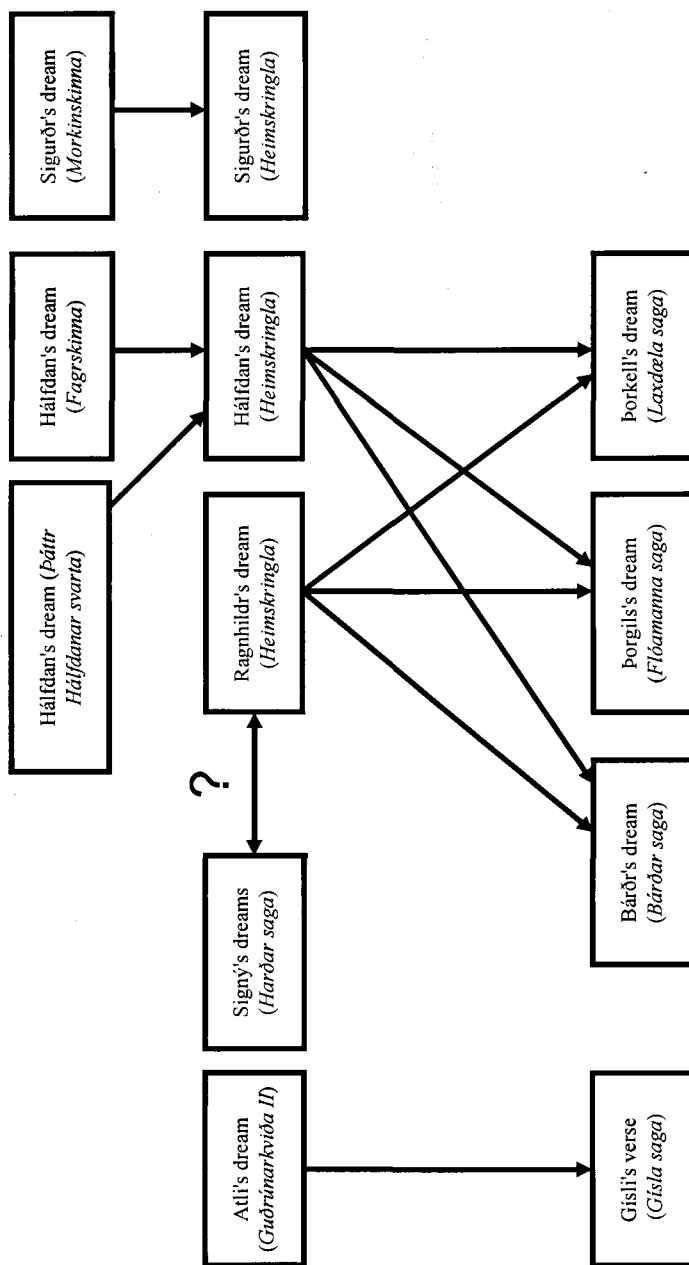
Yet, the exact form the dreams took in Styrmir's saga must remain in the realm of speculation. The analysis above provides some suggestions as to the likely content of the dreams in early versions of *Harðar saga*. Yet this analysis is based primarily on the surviving text of the saga. How might Styrmir's text (if indeed it was a written saga) have differed from the extant saga and fragment? The glimpses of Hörðr's life given to us in versions of *Landnámabók* may provide some clue. The fact that the dream occurs in both extant versions suggests that it may be part of the oldest material concerning Hörðr. Looking at the evidence in *Landnámabók*, one might suppose that, in Styrmir's *Harðar saga*, Hörðr's biography was not entirely dissimilar. The reason for his conviction—the killing of Auðr at Auðsstaðir—is mentioned in *Landnámabók* and probably featured in Styrmir's story. One might even wonder whether Hörðr's uncharacteristically violent attack was better explained than in the extant text. *Landnámabók* also mentions his disagreement with Torvi (something mentioned in the foster-mother's interpretation of Signý's first dream in AM556a), and similarly his flight to the Hólmr and eventual death; these details were thus probably the same in Styrmir's *Harðar saga* as in *Landnámabók* and the preserved version of *Harðar saga*. Even his friendship with his foster-brother Geirr was probably part of this early version, as *Landnámabók* describes the island as Geirshólmr. Yet, nowhere in *Landnámabók* do we find mention of Hörðr's wife Helga or his sons Grímkell and Björn. The statement: *þeira synir váru þeir Hörðr, er drepinn var í Geirshólmi, ok Gnúpr, faðir Birnings, föður Gnúps, föður Eiríks Grænlandingabyskup*⁶³ ('their [Signý and Grímkell's] sons were Hörðr, who was killed on Geirshólmr, and Gnúpr the father of Birningr, father of Bishop Eiríkr of the Greenlanders') in *Hauksbók* even seems to contrast Gnúpr's descendants with Hörðr's death on the Hólmr. In the saga, Hörðr's elder son, Grímkell, dies trying to avenge him, and his younger son Björn goes on to kill many men in revenge for his father's death, yet neither is mentioned in any other saga. This suggests that Björn and perhaps his brother were fictional. Similarly Helga and her father Earl Haraldr of Gotland are not mentioned in any other texts and therefore seem to be invented. Furthermore the fact that neither Helga nor her sons are mentioned in *Landnámabók* suggests that not only are they fictional, but that they are late additions to Hörðr's story (although *Landnámabók* by no means records the names of wives of all settlers or their descendants, one might expect such a notable attachment as an earl's daughter or the bloody vengeance meted out by

her son to receive some mention). Thus in any version of the story known to Styrmir, Hörðr may well have died childless and perhaps unmarried.

In fact, both powerful women in the story appear to be late additions, as Þorbjörg Grímkelsdóttir is not mentioned in *Landnámabók* either. Although it is hardly remarkable that a female child should not be included in a list of children or descendants, it is nonetheless surprising that not one of the passages mentioning Hörðr, Grímkell, or Signý mentions her. Conversely it is remarkable that Hörðr's brother Gnúpr, as he is named in *Hauksbók*, is not mentioned in the extant *Harðar saga* (either the complete saga or the fragment). It seems possible that in the earliest version of the saga, Hörðr's sibling was a younger brother and not a sister. Perhaps in Styrmir's *Harðar saga* the second tree-dream represented the life of Gnúpr Grímkelsson, rather than Þorbjörg, and the blossom represented his descendant Bishop Eiríkr of the Greenlanders (mentioned in *Hauksbók*, the Annals and *Flateyjarbók* and, for what it is worth, on the so-called Vínland map). The use of the tree image in this way would be entirely consistent with the beautiful branch in *Heimskringla* representing Saint Óláfr Haraldsson or with the beautiful stem in *Flóamanna saga* representing Saint Þorlákr and indeed with several of the foreign parallels. Such an explanation of the dream is perhaps even preferable to that in the preserved saga, where the blossom merely relates vaguely to the future change of faith. The fragmentary tradition about Bishop Eiríkr suggests an evangelist preaching first in Iceland, then in Greenland, and eventually seeking to do so in Vínland, and would be quite in keeping with someone whom medieval tradition had begun to regard as a potential saint, but (perhaps due to the failure of the Vínland colony) was later forgotten and became written out of the stories, in favour of two strong women and a greater emphasis on the division of loyalty between a woman's husband and her kin.

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Figure 1. Possible relationships between tree dreams in Old Norse texts



NOTES

¹ Material from this article was presented as a seminar at University College London in December 2003. I am grateful for the comments and suggestions made during the discussion. The *q* character is represented as *ö* throughout.

² For secondary literature relating to saga dreams see Wilhelm Henzen, *Über die Träume in der altnordischen Sagalitteratur* (Leipzig: Gustav Fock, 1890); Margarete Haeckel, *Die Darstellung und Funktion des Traumes in der isländischen Familiensaga* (Hamburg: H. Proctor, 1934); Georgia Dunham Kelchner, *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and their Affinities in Folklore* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1935); Gabriel Turville-Petre, 'Dream Symbols in Old Icelandic Literature', in *Festschrift Walter Baetke dargebracht zu seinem 80. Geburtstag am 28. März 1964*, ed. by Kurt Rudolf, Rolf Heller and Ernst Walter (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1966), pp. 343-54; 'The Icelandic Version of the *Somniale Danielis*', in *Nordica et Anglica: Studies in Honor of Stefán Einarsson*, ed. by Allan H. Orrick (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1968), pp. 19-36; 'Dreams in Icelandic Tradition', in *Nine Norse Studies* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1972), pp. 30-51, reprinted from *Folklore*, 69 (1958), 93-111; Richard Perkins, 'The Dreams of *Flóamanna saga*', *Saga-Book*, 19 (1974-77), 191-238; Lars Lönnroth, 'Dreams in the Sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, 75 (2002), 455-463; J. Cochrane, 'Saying Goodbye to the Old Religion: Dreaming of the Rejected Object of Worship', in *Scandinavian and Christian Europe in the Middle Ages: Papers of the 12th International Saga Conference: Bonn/Germany, 28th July – 2nd August 2003*, ed. by Rudolf Simek and Judith Meurer (Bonn: Hausdruckerei der Universität Bonn, 2003), pp. 107-115; and J. Cochrane, *Bright Dreams and Bitter Experiences: Dreams in Six Sagas of Icelanders* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 2004).

³ *Harðar saga*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Íslenzk fornrit* 13 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1991), p. 15; also see *Harðar saga*, ed. by Sture Hast, *Editiones Arnarnænar A6* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1960), pp. 126-27. Throughout this article the *Íslenzk fornrit* text has been quoted, though Hast's diplomatic edition has also been consulted. The translations are my own, but a translation by Robert Kellogg is available in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, ed. by Viðar Hreinsson et al., 5 vols (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson, 1997), II, pp. 193-236.

⁴ *Harðar saga*, EA A6, pp. 126-127; *Harðar saga*, ÍF 13, p. 15.

⁵ *Harðar saga*, EA A6, p. 129; *Harðar saga*, ÍF 13, pp. 18-19.

⁶ Sture Hast estimates 4 or 5 illegible characters at this point: *Harðar saga*, EA A6, p. 129, note.

⁷ *Harðar saga*, EA A6, p. 129; *Harðar saga*, ÍF 13, pp. 18-19.

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⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Dating the Icelandic Sagas* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1958) pp. 106-07; *Harðar saga*, ÍF 13, p. xiii; Anthony Faulkes, 'Harðar saga', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (New York and London: Garland, 1993), p. 269.

⁹ John McKinnell, 'The Reconstruction of Pseudo-Vatnsþyrna', in *Opuscula*, 4, *Bibliotheca Arnarnagnæana* 30 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1970), pp. 304-38 (p. 334).

¹⁰ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 3 vols (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads forlag, 1923), II, p. 422.

¹¹ Vera Lachmann, *Das Alter der Harðarsaga* (Leipzig: Mayer & Müller, 1932), pp. 7-16; Joost de Lange, *The Relation and Development of English and Icelandic Outlaw-Traditions* (Haalem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon N.V., 1935), pp. 95-96 (de Lange agrees with Lachmann's conclusion that AM 556a and AM564a preserve separate versions, but disagrees with the suggestion that the AM564a version has been shortened); *Harðar saga*, ÍF 13, pp. xiii-xvi.

¹² Jón Jóhannesson, *Gerðir Landnámabókar* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941), pp. 88-89; *Íslendinga sögur*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, 13 vols (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnauðgáfan, 1953), XII, p. xii; *Harðar saga*, ÍF 13, pp. xliv-xlviii.

¹³ *Harðar saga*, ÍF 13, p. 97.

¹⁴ Diana Whaley, *Heimskringla: An Introduction* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1991), pp. 67-68.

¹⁵ On Styrmir's life see Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, II, pp. 661-65; see also references to him and Snorri Sturluson in *Sturlunga saga—Sturlunga saga efter membranen Króksfjarðarbók udfyldt efter Reykjarfjarðarbók*, ed. by Kr. Kálund, 2 vols (Copenhagen and Oslo (Christiania): Gyndendalske Boghandel, 1906 and 1911), I, pp. 397 and 540. On his links to Hörðr and possible authorship of *Harðar saga*, see the introduction in *Harðar saga*, ÍF 13, pp. xliv-xlviii.

¹⁶ *Landnámabók*, ed. by Jakob Benediktsson, in *Íslendingabók, Landnámabók, Íslensk fornrit* 1, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1968), I, p. 57.

¹⁷ *Annálar og nafnaskrá*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnauðgáfan, 1948), p. 13, and pp. 82-83 see also the appendix to *Grænlandinga þáttur* in *Flateyjarbók—Flateyjarbók: en Samling af norsk Konge-sagaer med indskudte mindre fortællinger om begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt annaler*, ed. by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger, 3 vols (Oslo [Christiania]: P. T. Mallings Forlagsboghandel, 1960-1968), III, p. 454.

¹⁸ *Landnámabók*, ÍF 1, I, p. 72.

¹⁹ *Landnámabók*, ÍF 1, I, p. 75.

²⁰ *Landnámabók*, ÍF 1, I, p. 76.

²¹ *Flóamanna saga*, ÍF 13, pp. 294-95.

²² Richard Cleasby, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, revised, enlarged and completed by Gudbrand Vigfusson [Guðbrandur Vigfússon], second edition with supplement by William A. Craigie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 266.

²³ Perkins, 'The Dreams of *Flóamanna saga*', pp. 227-32.

²⁴ Perkins, 'The Dreams of *Flóamanna saga*', p. 223 (note), tentatively suggests that the left knee may have represented Þorleifr's mother Guðrún. Such an interpretation is pleasing, but raises problems if one bears in mind that Þorgils in fact marries three times (though the author could scarcely portray him in the dream as having three legs).

²⁵ Perkins, 'The Dreams of *Flóamanna saga*', p. 226; Alexander Argüelles, *Viking Dreams: Mythological and Religious Dream Symbolism in the Old Norse Sagas* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Chicago, 1994), p. 318, note.

²⁶ *Bárðar saga*, ÍF 13, p. 104.

²⁷ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslenzk fornrit 26-28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941-51), I, p. 90.

²⁸ *Heimskringla*, ÍF 26, I, p. 148.

²⁹ The same pun also operates in Óláfr's dream in *Rauðúlfs þátr*—see *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga: Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, ed. by Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason, 2 vols. (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1941), II, pp. 672-80; *Flateyjarbók*, II, pp. 298-301. The floral design on the belly of the figure in Óláfr's dream represents a great flowering or prosperity (*blómi*) during the reign of Óláfr kyrri; see Anthony Faulkes, *Rauðúlfs þátr: A Study*, *Studia Islandica* 25 (Reykjavík: Bókautgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1966), p. 24. A further example of this same pun is found in a vision in *Jómsvíkinga saga*; see *Jómsvíkinga saga*, ed. by Ólafur Halldórsson (Reykjavík: Prentsmiðja Jóns Helgasonar, 1969), pp. 68-69.

³⁰ *Heimskringla*, I, ÍF 26, pp. 90-91; compare *Fagrskinna – Ágrip af Noregskonunga sögum*, *Fagrskinna – Noregs konunga tal*, ed. by Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1985), pp. 57-58, and *Flateyjarbók* (*Flateyjarbók*, I, p. 563).

³¹ Joan Turville-Petre, 'A Tree Dream in Old Icelandic', *Scripta Islandica*, 39 (1988), 12-20; see previous note for relevant passages.

³² *Flateyjarbók*, I, p. 563.

³³ *Laxdæla saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1934), p. 215.

³⁴ See Jamie Cochrane, 'Some Examples of Set-Phrase Dreams in Sagas of Icelanders', in *Perkensian Rambles: A Collection of Essays in Honour of Richard Perkins*, ed. by Daisy L. Neijmann (London: University College London, 2005), pp. 43-50 (pp. 44-45).

³⁵ Ármann Jakobsson, 'Konungasagan Laxdæla', *Skírnir*, 172 (1998), 357-83. For a similar view see Theodore M. Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180-1280)* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 133-37.

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³⁶ It should be noted that another possible explanation for Þorkell's misinterpretation is that it represents an alternative tradition of dream interpretation stemming from European dream-books (Sofus Larsen, 'Antik og nordisk drømmetro', *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie*, 3.7 (1917), 37-85 (p. 84); Turville-Petre, 'The Icelandic Version of the *Somniale Danielis*', p. 28; Argüelles, *Viking Dreams*, pp. 333-34). I think, however, that the explanation given above is preferable, primarily for its aptness in the saga context (that is, as further evidence of Þorkell's unfounded pride and ambition), to the dream-book explanation, which may have been known to the saga author, but could not have been familiar to Þorkell. Of course, it is possible that the dream-book tradition relating beards to strength and to power owes its ultimate origins to tree/beard-dreams in Greek literature (see below) and therefore may also be a very distant relative of the motif found in *Harðar saga*.

³⁷ *Morkinskinna*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 53 (Copenhagen: J. Jørgensen, 1932), p. 395.

³⁸ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, III, ÍF 28, pp. 264-65.

³⁹ *Sverris saga: efter Cod. AM 327 4º*, ed. by Gustav Indrebø (Oslo [Christiania]: Jacob Dybwad, 1920), p. 3.

⁴⁰ *Guta saga: The History of the Gotlanders*, ed. by Christine Peel, Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series 12 (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1999), p. 2; *Mírmanns saga*, ed. by Desmond Slay, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ A17 (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1997), p. 2.

⁴¹ *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, ed. by Gustav Neckel, 3rd edn rev. by Hans Kuhn (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1962), p. 230.

⁴² *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, ed. by Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, in *Vestfirðinga sögur*, Íslenzk fornrit 6 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1943), p. 58. The hooked o (ö) character in the second half-line is accented.

⁴³ See Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1988), pp. 17-18, and *Völuspá*, stanza 19, in *Edda*, ed. by Neckel, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, p. 13, and *Völuspá*, stanza 17, in *Edda*, ed. by Neckel, p. 4.

⁴⁵ See Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden: Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik* (Bonn and Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder, 1921), pp. 266-72. Kelchner, *Dreams in Old Norse Literature*, p. 60, to my mind inexplicably, cites the use of trees in kennings as evidence pointing towards a foreign origin for the genealogical tree.

⁴⁶ See Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden*, p. 410.

⁴⁷ Larsen, 'Antik og nordisk drømmetro' p. 56. See Herodotus, *Histories*, trans. by Aubrey de Sélincourt, rev. with intro. and notes by John Marincola (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 50.

⁴⁸ Robert Wace, *The Roman de Rou*, ed. by Anthony J. Holden, trans. by Glyn S. Burgess (Jersey: Soci t  Jersiaise, 2002), pp. 166-67.

⁴⁹ Turville-Petre, 'A Tree Dream in Old Icelandic', p. 16. See Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. by Robert Graves, intro. by Michael Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 284.

⁵⁰ Kelchner, *Dreams in Old Norse Literature*, pp. 59-60. H. R. Ellis Davidson, 'Dreams in Old Norse and Old Irish Literature', in *Northern Lights: Following Folklore in North-Western Europe: Aist  in adhn  do Bho Almqvist—Essays in Honour of Bo Almqvist*, ed. by S amas   Cath in (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2001), pp. 34-46 (pp. 36-37). See, for example, T. W. Rolleston, *The High Deeds of Finn and Other Bardic Romances of Ancient Ireland*, intro. by Stopford A. Brooke (London: George G. Harrap, 1910), p. 173; and J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Hounslow: Wildwood House, 1890), II, pp. 153-54.

⁵¹ Paul Schach, 'Some Parallels to the Tree Dream in *Ruodlieb*', *Monatshefte*, 46 (1954), 353-64; and 'Symbolic Dreams of Future Renown in Old Icelandic Literature', *Mosaic*, 4 (1971), 51-73.

⁵² *The Ruodlieb*, ed. and trans. by C. W. Grocock (Warminster, Wiltshire and Chicago: Bolchazy-Carducci and Aris and Phillips, 1985), pp. 186-87.

⁵³ Schach, 'Some Parallels to the Tree Dream in *Ruodlieb*', pp. 356-57. See Wolferius, *Vita Godehardi episcopi Hildenesheimensis*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica 13: Scriptorum Tomus 11* (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Avlici Hahniani, 1854), pp. 178-80.

⁵⁴ *Isaiah 11:1-3*, biblical citations come from *The New English Bible*, 2nd edn (London, etc.: The Bible Societies, Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1972).

⁵⁵ Arthur Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse* (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 44.

⁵⁶ Marita Lingren-Fridell, 'Jesse rot och stam', *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* 7, 20 vols (plus Supplement and Register) (Viborg: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1956-78; 2nd edn, 1980-82), pp. 575-78.

⁵⁷ Turville-Petre, 'A Tree Dream in Old Icelandic', p. 20.

⁵⁸ Whaley, *Heimskringla*, p. 71.

⁵⁹ See *G sla saga*,  F 6, pp. 103-04 and pp. 107-09.

⁶⁰ For example, *Sturlunga saga*, I, pp. 421 and 540.

⁶¹ *Har ar saga*,  F 13, pp. xlv-xlvi.

⁶² Whaley, *Heimskringla*, pp. 67-68.

⁶³ *Landn mab k*, I,  F 1, p. 57.