Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss: A Translation

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the
Department of English

by

Lynn Olive Ewing
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

C 1987. L.O. Ewing
The author has agreed that the Library, University of Saskatchewan, may make this thesis freely available for inspection. Moreover, the author has agreed that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised the thesis work recorded herein or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which the thesis work was done. It is understood that due recognition will be given to the author of this thesis. Copying or publication or any other use of the thesis for financial gain without approval by the University of Saskatchewan and the author's written permission is prohibited.

Requests for permission to copy or to make any other use of the material in this thesis in whole or in part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of English

University of Saskatchewan

SASKATOON, Canada.
Acknowledgements

I thank my supervisors, Dr. Christopher Dean and Dr. David Parkinson, for the care with which they read and edited this thesis. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Richard Harris who supervised the thesis in its initial stages and whose comments on the translation were invaluable. I wish to acknowledge the financial support given me by the College of Graduate Studies and their indulgence in granting an extension so this thesis could be completed.

For their encouragement I am deeply indebted to my friends, Martha Gould, Bob Derksen, and Sheila Steele, my parents, Mary and Earl Ewing, and especially to my husband, Bill Feldbruegge, to whom I dedicate this work.
ABSTRACT

*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* is, on the surface, an account of the lives of Bárðr Snæfellsáss and his son, Gestr, two pagan supermen who occupy themselves with the performance of good deeds in medieval Iceland and Norway. In his story, however, which contains much blending of styles and borrowing, the author attempts a description of the passing of an era: the transition from paganism to Christianity. At the same time, the author's depiction of these noble pagans allows him to evangelize while using the very trappings of the pagan world order itself. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a translation which is as entertaining, in its way, as the original was for medieval readers.

In an introduction I discuss the literary aspects of the saga. This introduction is divided into eight sections. In "Manuscripts and Editions" I summarize the scholarly work that has preceded this translation. In so doing, I consider a recent edition that has appeared but was not available to me during the preparation of my translation; it contains the first published English translation of this saga. The contribution of this work is evaluated. I provide a synopsis of the plot towards a demonstration of single authorship in the section, "Unity of the Work". In "Background" I place the saga in an historical and generic context. "Authorship" details sources available to the anonymous writer of this saga, allowing certain general speculations.
on his identity to emerge. In the section, "Style" I consider writing devices typical in Old Icelandic literature that this writer uses to create a cohesive piece of fiction. In "The Writer's Purpose" I speculate on the reasons for the various blendings, both stylistic and thematic, that occur in the work. In "Problems of Translation" I consider some of the difficulties that confront all translators, especially those who translate medieval, Scandinavian languages like Old Icelandic into English. I close the introduction with a description of the verses in the text which includes a discussion of dróttkvætt, the prevailing type of poetic stanza in the work. I attempt to show how the writer's use and adaptation of this verse form mirrors his blending of sub-genres and themes within the prose to suit his literary purpose.

To aid the reader's understanding of the translation I provide explanatory footnotes that expand the meaning of difficult terms or concepts contained in the text. A genealogy of main characters and maps of Norway and Iceland appear in the appendices as further aids to understanding.
# Table of Contents

Introduction ................................................. 1

Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss ................................. 39

Notes .......................................................... 107

Bibliography ................................................. 125

Appendices .................................................. 130
Introduction

Manuscripts and Editions

The first printed edition of this minor saga sets the stage for the later controversy over the unity of the work. In 1756 an edition in two parts appeared in Nøkker Marg-Frooder Sagupætter islendinga, a work commissioned by Bjørn Marcusson. The first part was titled "Sagann af Baarde Dumbssyne, er kalladur var Snæfells-as" which translates as "The Story of Bárðr Dumbsson, who was known as Snæfellsáss". The second part was titled "Sagann af Gesti syne Baardar Snæfells-ass" or "The Story of Gestr, the son of Bárðr Snæfellsáss".

An edition stressing the unity of the tale appeared in 1860 in Copenhagen, edited by Guðbrandr Vigfússon. Without division it appeared along with other minor works as Bárðr saga Snæfellsáss, Viglundarasaga, Pórdarsaga, Draumvitranir, Völsapáttir.

Two modern editions arose from Vigfússon’s scholarly edition. The first of these was edited by Valdimar Asmundarson and appeared in volume thirty-seven in Islendinga sögu in 1902, published in Reykjavík. A second edition, upon which my translation is based, was Guðni Jónsson’s 1946-47 edition, volume three of Islendinga sögu, also published in Reykjavík. No commentary appears in this volume, other than a prose rendering of the verse. Jónsson’s editorial
practices, which include normalization of spelling, paragraphing, and
the arrangement of material into titled chapters, are all quite
standard. Punctuation is typical of that followed by Germanic
languages, so slightly more commas appear than would seem
necessary to the reader of modern English.

An edition which includes the first English translation of the
work has recently appeared. The authors, Jón Skaptason and Phillip
Pulsiano, have constructed their edition from a close examination of
five membrane fragments and twenty-two paper manuscripts which are
a part of the Arnamagnaean Collection in Copenhagen. They use three
main manuscripts and include in their notes some of the more
interesting variants.

Despite their labours, however, they arrive at a text which
does not differ significantly from Jónsson's edition. The major
differences are mainly of an editorial nature; they arrive at different
divisions into paragraphs, different divisions into chapters, some
differences in punctuation, and some consistent differences in the
spellings of certain common words. They do not title the chapters.
Their work is extremely valuable insofar as they collect all of the
existing material surrounding the different manuscripts of this work
and comment on the relative importance of different manuscripts.
They volunteer various theories which prove or disprove the
authenticity of different manuscripts; they make an attempt to explain
the reasons for differences among these fragments, and construct a
case for their selection of manuscripts from which they create a text.
Their translation is fairly accurate, but difficult to read because its
format does not take into account modern concepts of the paragraph,
and, in places, punctuation. Their notes provide little in the way of
cultural or historical commentary, although they successfully identify
the sources for many passages and discuss many interesting
grammatical points.

Unity of the Work

Considerable scholarly attention has been paid to the
controversy surrounding the authorship of this work. Beginning with
Joseph Gotzen, whose German summary in 1903 considers pertinent
details, much of the criticism has assumed dual authorship on the
basis of stylistic differences between chapters one to eleven and
chapters twelve to twenty-two. Particularly concerned with this
problem is John G. Allee Jr. in his essay, "A Study of the Place Names
in Bárðar Saga Snæfellsáss." He bases his theory of dual authorship
on what he supposes is solid structural evidence. His argument is
three-pronged. Because the first half of the work is full of place
names and the second half is not, he concludes that "different minds
were at work." Dialogue is prevalent in the second half of the saga
but is "almost nonexistent" in the first half which he titles Bárðar Saga.
Finally, he contends that the verses indicate division within the work,
for they are irregularly distributed; all of the verses except one are found in the first half. As well, the verses in the first half are included as expansions of the text while the verse at the end of the saga is superfluous; it "contains the irrelevant information about the sons of porbjörn and sons of Hjálti." ³ Here Allee clearly shows himself to be the master of a detailed yet superficial reading. He pinpoints stylistic discontinuities while ignoring thematic continuities.

Single authorship of the text is supported by the tight structure of the saga; all of the events described pertain either to Bárðr, his family, or the friends who emigrate to Iceland with him. The events of the first half place the family of Bárðr in an historical and geographical context as the final members of a great race of pagan superhumans. The story follows the decline of a family while showing the increasing power of a communal and political Christian society that seeks to inhibit the freedom of the individual, represented in its most extreme form by the members of Bárðr's clan. With Geitr's death the old pagan order gives way to a world of men and politics, as suggested in the brief but relevant epilogue which points the way to the future Christian community. If such a future seems to pale before the wonders that precede it, the ambivalence is probably deliberate; great deeds are performed by individuals, not groups of good men.

The saga's main divisions follow the pattern of increasing isolation and decline within the family of Bárðr Snæfellssás; all of the
events propel his son, Gestr, towards a confrontation that compels him to change his faith even though he is troubled by the foreboding that this conversion will bring about his death. The first five chapters follow Bárðr's birth; his fostering in the cave of Dofri; the vengeance he takes when his father, King Dumbr, is murdered; his two marriages and the nine daughters who are born; his migration to Iceland; and his subsequent efforts at settlement. The central tragedy of Bárðr's life takes place in chapter five: his eldest daughter, Helga, disappears on an ice floe. He brutally murders his half-brother's sons (whom he holds responsible for her disappearance), and cripples their father, Þorkell Rauðfeldson, henceforward known as Bound-Foot.

As a result of the tragic shifts in his life, Bárðr Dumbsson assumes an otherworldly identity by taking refuge in a cave, this preference hearkening back to his Giant ancestry. By adopting this secret, isolated manner of living, he resembles the outlaw, a famous figure in Icelandic literature; his withdrawal from normal society seems to exempt him from both natural and man-made regulations. Accompanying this change of character is the identity change that titles the work: his past life recedes with the adoption of the name Snæfellssáss. Snæfell refers to the Snæfell peninsula where he has established his domain; áss, from Æsir, identifies him as a vâg-god or someone with godly attributes whom people worshipped (ref. to p. 115). He turns his back on all his former possessions, and, in his
cowled cloak, resembles the monk who renounces the world. Rather than becoming a misanthrope as those in fiction who renounce the world so often do, he seems, in his pagan way, to seek to atone for his misdeeds by becoming "the greatest helping spirit". The writer creates a saintly pagan, if such an apparent contradiction might be allowed.

The chapters that follow play out the lives of his children and the aid he extends to his friends. His daughter, Helga, who did not perish on the ice floe, takes up a solitary, wandering existence in chapter seven, not unlike her father's. The events that follow all lead naturally to Gestr's birth in chapter eleven. Chapter twelve is one of revelations in which Helga Bárðardóttir reveals the true identity of Gestr's father by stating that she and Gestr are siblings: Bárðr Snaefellsáss is their father. This comes as some surprise to Gestr's mother, Pórdís, who had been taken in by Bárðr's alias, Gestr, when he seduced her. Bárðr is finally reconciled with Pórdís as well. Chapter thirteen describes a Yule banquet that Bárðr and Gestr attend together during which the enmity of Kolbjörn Giant is earned. The following three chapters work out this thread in the story, for Gestr, who seems to follow in his father's footsteps, appears in time to save the lives of his half-brothers, Póðr and Pórvaldr, at the wedding Kolbjörn has contrived to entrap Póðr. With Gestr's aid the brothers
kill Kolbjörn and his friends and relatives and rescue the beautiful Sólrún who has been held captive by Kolbjörn. In return they agree to take Gestr with them to Norway to visit King Óláfr; chapter seventeen recounts this. Once under the power of King Óláfr, however, the brothers and Sólrún are persuaded to become Christians, and they submit to baptism. Gestr, when he is finally persuaded to visit the king, explains that he has a premonition that baptism will cost him his life. The king admires his doughty spirit and rewards Gestr, even though it has been his vow that everyone in his realm should follow the Christian religion. Chapters eighteen to twenty describe the visit that the 'undead' King Ragnarr pays the court of King Óláfr and the subsequent mission to Ragnarr's burial mound which Gestr, favoured champion of King Óláfr, makes. The defeat of the evil Ragnarr marks a sudden turning point in Gestr's life: though Gestr calls to his father, Bárðr, for help and Bárðr appears, his powers prove insufficient to help Gestr. Gestr, now at the brink of destruction, calls upon the Christian God for help. With the aid of King Óláfr, evidently God's representative on earth, Gestr is able to overcome Ragnarr. The price, however, is baptism. Chapter twenty-one which follows describes Gestr's acceptance of Christianity and his dream in which Bárðr pulls out his eyes. Gestr's death follows and, with that, the story ends. The epilogue returns Gestr's half-brothers to Iceland,
where they, along with their cousins, also named pórðr and porvaldr, dominate local politics and engender a great line of Icelanders.

**Background**

The word saga, cognate with the Anglo-Saxon word for "saw" is, in its broadest sense, something narrated. It is a "tale, a story, a narrative in prose" which varies in length from "short stories of a page or so to that of a full length novel." 4 Scholars are divided over the details of saga origins. They do agree, however, that a rich oral tradition preceded the written works that form the body of saga literature in existence today. As is clearly the case with Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss, earlier written works provided a wealth of inspiration for the saga writer who freely adapted themes and incidents to his purpose, in places copying entire passages verbatim from another work.

Excluding historical works such as the lives of Norwegian kings and Landnámabók, scholars divide the extant saga literature into four main subgenres: the Classical sagas, the Fornaldar sögur, the Riddara sögur and the Lýsi sögur. These divisions do not outline the totality of Icelandic saga literature; many late sagas are hybrids, interesting blends born of a writer's frustration while working within the confines of a single tradition.

Classical sagas, also known as the Family sagas because they
follow the rise and fall of a family’s fortunes, form the largest group. They originated soon after Iceland’s first written works, and it is thought that they may have been written from 1200 to 1220 at or near the monastery of Pingeyrar.5 These early attempts at saga writing, stories about court poets, were inspired by earlier historical works which detailed the lives of certain Norwegian kings; it was at the courts of these kings that these poets recited their skaldic verse. Chief among the stories of court poets is Hallfríðr varðráðaskáld in which King Óláfr Tryggvason converts a stubbornly pagan, but excellent, poet to Christianity. Included also in this group of sagas are the works of Snorri Sturluson whose writings during the thirteenth century mark him as Iceland’s most distinguished early writer. Of all sagas, the best known include those written during the last quarter of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries; these Family sagas are exemplified in works such as Egils saga, Gísla saga, and Laxdæla saga.

The historical accuracy of these works, believed for many years to have been inviolate, has recently been challenged. Scholars who wished to place these works within an historical tradition of writing were surprised to discover that the writers of late works had developed a convincing historical tone through careful selection of place-names and frequent genealogical extracts; entirely fictitious
works such as Hrafnkels saga have an irresistible ring of accuracy. Latest of the Icelandic Family sagas is Grettis saga (c.1320) which displays its author's education by borrowing considerably from Sturlubók, the same edition of Landnámabók favoured by the author of Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss.

The Fornaldar sögur, or sagas of antiquity, are considered the oldest sagas because they are based on oral narratives concerned with old myths and heroic legends. Their written forms, however, date approximately from the period 1250 to 1350. Hrómundar saga Gripssonar is the first known example. These sagas are tales of adventure, set in faraway places. Full of folklore motifs, they are replete with stories of ghosts, trolls and fairies. Entirely typical is a northern setting and a happy ending.

Riddara sögur or knightly sagas reflect the interest taken by the Icelanders in the French metrical romances, prose translations of which appeared as early as 1226. The first of these works to be translated was Thomas' Anglo-Norman Tristan. Many translations of other works followed, including the Breton Lais by Marie de France and three works by Chretien de Troyes: Eric, Ivain, and Perceval. Those chansons de geste devoted to the life of Charlemagne were translated and combined into a work titled karlamagnúss saga during the second half of the thirteenth century. These prose translations not only added to the body of Icelandic written material available for the
next generation to enjoy, but influenced the style of saga-writing itself. The first "original" Icelandic romances of chivalry, riðdara sögur, appeared about 1300 with Konráðs saga keisarasonar and Mógus saga Jóris. This type of saga continued to be written until the beginning of the sixteenth century, but these works, strangely enough, never acquired the "miraculous and other-worldly matter of the Arthurian romances."

The final sub-genre, the Lýgi sögur or Lying Sagas, is really an hybrid which combines elements from the native Old Icelandic fornaldar sögur and the translations of imported metrical romances, the Ríðara sögur. Its most common plot is a reflection of the French romances: an ill-equipped hero rescues a damsel from evils that range from giants and trolls to heathen princes. Other typical plots include the robbing of treasure mounds guarded by dragons, or, even more commonly, the robbing of the burial mound of an old Viking whose "unquiet" spirit may have been giving the locals trouble. Spectacular battles take place, and the hero is usually victorious. No doubt a legacy of the sagas of antiquity, supernatural elements and magic fill these works. The ranks of the forces of evil are swelled by ghosts, trolls, giants, and terrifying "shape-shifters" whose powers seem invincible.

Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss was probably written during the fourteenth century. Its principal source, reliably established as the
Sturlubók version of Landnámabók, was written between 1275 to 1280. Basing their assumptions on the presence of chivalrous themes and borrowings from fornaldrar sögur, both Stefán Einarsson and Theodore M. Andersson place Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss within a large group of sagas, hybrid in nature, which were composed as early as 1300, as late as 1500. For convenience both refer to these sagas as “post-classical” sagas, and Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss is included with such diverse works as Finnboga saga ramma and Víglandar saga. In the introduction to their edition, Skaptason and Pulsiano discuss the work as it “pertains to the genre of the Islendingasögar”, classifying it as a “Landvættasaga” because it concerns itself with a landvættir, a helpful spirit which protects the inhabitants of the land. As far as it goes that is merely a good description of Bárðr Snæfellsáss himself and not really a discussion of genre.

Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss is closest to the lygi sögur. What is more interesting, however, is the blending of sub-genres that takes place in the work, its seeming “formlessness” or generic impurity leading some scholars to suppose it an amalgamation of two different sagas, despite the coherence of the work as a complete story. This charge of formlessness must be taken seriously. I can imagine a perspective from which this saga would appear rightly accused, but I prefer to imagine it in terms of a parallel I detect between the saga’s structure and that of the symphonic poem.
In the symphonic poem, strict musical structure is relaxed to allow for an evocative presentation of an extra-musical idea (literary or visual) in musical terms. What seems chaotic or formless to the mind expecting something consistent with the dictates of classical form is actually formally controlled by the strength of its alliance with a different code and a different set of expectations. The symphonic poem operates in the space between two art forms. The net result is two-dimensional; there is an increase in the resonance of the work as it merges the merely audible with the visual or verbal, but this gain is possible only at the expense of music's 'purity'.

I detect in Bárðar saga a similar structural ambivalence. The author's theme is the transition between two cultural orders, pagan and Christian, and he treats that theme scrupulously. He represents not only two distinct realities, but also the fog of mutual incomprehension that defines their meeting and their contention. Further, the writer of this hybrid saga draws what he needs from different sub-genres in order to express these more complex concepts; he conveys a sense of the transition from a pagan, heroic past to a Christian, highly political present. He tries to arrive at a 'truthful' representation of a volatile age, an age in which customs blend, losing their purity in the process. To the modern eye this blending may at times appear incongruous or confused, as confused perhaps as the representation of the visual in sound. The alternative,
however, is a misrepresentative and impotent evangelism. To represent the pagans who were gradually converting to Christianity as either spiritually impoverished or evil would be an unfair and unfaithful depiction of the heroic, ingenious spirit that colonized Iceland and explored most of the world, known and unknown. How could the aspiring evangelist avail himself of the wealth of entertaining folk material if he were to denigrate the pagans and their legacy of traditions?

In its broadest outlines Bárðr saga Snæfellsáss follows a plan typical for a family saga: a genealogy establishes the identity of the main character, at the same time foreshadowing his character traits; settlement in Iceland takes place; and his family’s fortunes rise and fall. However, the archetypal pattern is altered considerably; Bárðr Snæfellsáss, whose death should end the story, fades out of the main focus and his son, Gestr, provides the requisite tragic death. A tone of historical veracity, so much a feature of Family sagas, is present in good measure, despite a general appearance of fantasy; generous borrowing from Sturlubók grounds the work in an ‘actual’ history and geography. The location of Raknarr’s mound poses an interesting challenge to the author, habitually obsessed with topographical precision. An unexplored region serves his purpose well, for it is both specific and vague at the same time:
Some men say that the mound could have been seen north of Helluland. But wherever it was, there have been no settlements nearby (p. 99).

The site is appropriately chosen; Helluland has an indeterminate, mythic location. It is mentioned in Grænlendinga saga, an account of Eiríkr the Red's settlement of Greenland and Leifr the Lucky's subsequent voyages further west; it has been assumed that this was the Icelander's name for Baffin Island. Unlike Greenland, Baffin Island was never settled.

The unknown, northern setting is appropriate to the Fornaldar sörgur, many of which are located in mysterious northern places. Bárðr's origins, too, are given a mythic quality, for his father ruled "the gulf that goes north around Helluland". The story is further unified by setting the opening and ending in the same northern wasteland. Furthermore, Bárðr's parents are superhumans who give their names to a vast sea and the "whitest possible snow". Bárðr is fostered by an extraordinary giant, whose reputation and stature are such that he goes on to foster the first in a line of Norwegian kings. The story is full of characters whose origins could be traced back to a time long past "when men knew nothing of the true God"; there are trolls and giants, as well as incognito appearances by two pagan gods, Þórr and Óðinn.
Strongest within the work is the sense of the *ljógi sögur*. One of the important strands of the saga, Pórár’s meeting with Kolbeinn and the subsequent adventures at the cave in Brattahlíð, follow an archetypal plot for a *ljógi sögur*: an ill-equipped hero achieves an unexpected victory and rescues a lovely maiden from evil trolls. Gestr’s mission to King Rakharr’s mound and the battle for the treasures are also standard forms within this genre.

Scholars have been troubled by these diverse elements that satisfy the requirements of one saga sub-genre while disappointing the requisites of others. Inconsistency within a generic framework might point towards several authors whose works were combined, but the striking unity of Bárðar saga Snaefellsáss suggests otherwise. This saga combines mythic and supernatural elements and the setting of the *fornaldar sögur* with chivalrous adventure stories, and so resides within the domain of the *Ljógi sögur*. However, emphasis within the work upon ‘actual’ history is considerable; great care was taken to insert fabrication into a ‘real’ context. A good example is found in Tongu-Oddr’s marriage to Pórdís Bárðardóttir. Tongu-Oddr, the son of Ónund Broad-Beard, is an historical figure according to an account given in *Sturlubók*, and the details of his second marriage are copied verbatim from the source. The story of his first marriage, however, to Bárðr’s daughter, “who despite her size was still human”, is pure fiction. Mingling fictitious elements with historical details is a consistent pattern within the work.

A tragic ending is entirely typical of the family saga,
particularly one in which fate seems to crush the individual; important characters are seldom given easy choices. In this respect Gestr’s final choice and the fulfillment of his premonition, however unrealistic, satisfy the genre. A certain psychological realism prevails.

**Authorship**

We do not know who wrote *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*. It is evident from the style, however, that he was well read. He was almost certainly a Christian cleric who used this saga to explain the transition within Icelandic society from paganism to Christianity. Various manuscripts, *Sturlubók* in particular, must have been available to him, for entire passages drawn from this work appear in his saga. The purpose of *Landnámabók*, or *Book of the Settlements*, the original version of *Sturlubók*, was to detail the “Age of the Settlement” of Iceland, which took place from 874 to 930. In its very comprehensiveness, *Landnámabók* provides a surprisingly accurate record of the names of the settlers and the acquisition of lands and properties. Icelandic historians were able to construct accurate accounts of the settlement of Iceland because Iceland was settled over a short period of time during the years mentioned above when the land, except for a few Irish anchorites, was completely uninhabited.

The author’s wide reading is further demonstrated when the saga is more closely examined. The writer’s knowledge of Greenland’s settlement and geography exceed the material included in *Sturlubók*. He obviously read and enjoyed *Grænlendinga saga*. His knowledge of
the kings of Norway was no doubt absorbed from Snorri's masterpiece, *Heimskringla*, which was a compilation of biographies of Norwegian kings.

This interest in historical matters, however, indicates a deeper fascination with historical origins. As in *Heimskringla*, the genealogy of kings is given a mythic background; its source is traced to dreams. Like Snorri, the author of *Bárðar saga* is interested in the succession of Norwegian kings that begin with Halvdan the Black, and he includes the missionary kings, Óláfr Tryggvason and St. Óláfr. It is clear that the author of *Bárðar saga* was familiar with the life of Halvdan the Black in some detail, for the antecedents to Bárðr's dream in Dofri's cave are found in *Heimskringla*. Snorri writes:

Queen Ragnhild dreamed mighty dreams, and she was very wise. In one of her dreams she seemed to be standing in her garden and to take a thorn from her gown, and as she held it, it grew so much that it became a big tree. One end went down into the earth and straightway became deeply rooted, and the other end of the tree quickly grew high aloft; thereupon the tree seemed to her so big that she could only see over it with difficulty; it was very thick. The nethermost part of the tree was red like blood, up the trunk it was light green, and out in the branches it was snow-white; there were great twigs on the tree, some longer above, others
longer below. The branches of the tree were so big that they seemed to her to spread themselves over all Norway and even farther.¹⁰

Snorri offers no interpretation for this dream, but later in his work a second dream is interpreted in the following way: "a great race would descend from him [Halvdan the Black]/ "and from this race one man would come, who would be greater and more glorious than the others ....King St. Olav".¹¹ An interpretation almost identical to this appears in Bárðar saga to explain Bárðr’s dream.

Skaptason and Pulsiano identify the details that suggest that the author of Bárðar saga was familiar with Grettis saga. Moreover, Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss greatly resembles Grettis saga in tone, themes, and in its method; both borrow extensively from Sturlubók, and both document the passage of an era of pagan heroes.

**Style**

The writer of this work uses certain devices consistently throughout the saga. He is extremely fond of the "name-sake" device, which often ties his fiction to an historical source. Bárðr Dumbsson emigrates to Iceland with a Bárðr Heyangars Bjarnarson. Both of their wives are named Herprúðr. Both of Bárðr’s kinsmen who emigrate with him are named Þorkell. The marriage of Tongu-Óðdr to Þórdís Bárðardóttir is soon followed by the seduction of Þórdís Skeggjadóttir. A battle between two men named Einarr is described in detail and, in a
sense, both Bárðr and Gestr are themselves namesakes. The sons of Þorbjörn and Hjalti are both named Þórðr and Þórvallr.

He is fond of creating echoes in his prose; these reiterations or chimings, like the repetition of a motif within a musical work, serve to reinforce meaning and give unity to the work. The saga begins and ends in Norway; Bárðr Snæfellsáss is born and leaves the country while his son returns and dies there. Dreams accompany these two chapters. Bárðr dreams uneasily ahead to the birth of a king who will eventually Christianize much of Scandinavia, as well as Iceland itself. It is this king's father who is responsible for his son's change of faith. Gestr's painful dream, in which he receives punishment for his sin of conversion, ultimately results in his death. The fostering Bárðr receives in Dofri's cave and his marriage to Dofri's daughter, Flaumgerðr, anticipate his own fostering of Tongu-Uddr whose marriage to Þordis follows quite naturally. Both wives die and these deaths "seemed the greatest loss" to their husbands. Bárðr and Helga lead a similar kind of life, their preference for cave-dwelling emphasized. In a comic vein this motif is taken up when Gróa leaves her husband and hews out a cave for herself. The writer enjoys bringing together certain characters under conditions of poor visibility. Tongu-Uddr, who is suddenly separated from Þorkell Skin-Wrapped, comes upon Bárðr Snæfellsáss in the most terrible of blizzards. In the midst of a dense fog pórðr chances upon Sólrún, who disappears just as suddenly as she had appeared. He hears the approach of Kolbeinn just as Tongu-Uddr heard Bárðr's shaft ringing on
the ice. The wedding feast of Tongu-Oddr is echoed by Pórrór's. The fight at Pórrór's wedding feast is strongly reminiscent of the fight at Hit's Yule feast. Many important events take place shortly before Yule or Christmas, as the context determines. Dumbr's reign over Helluland anticipates Rahnarr's reign over the same region. Such echoes reverberating throughout the work suggest a single creative force.

The author uses a device known as the "triad", a trio of parallel incidents that work to establish the writer's true purpose in the second half; the celebration of Christianity's power over paganism. Bárðr's strength is demonstrated in three main episodes in the first half of the saga: the defeat of Lón-Einarr; Ingjaldr's rescue from Hetta the Troll Woman; and the fight at Hit's Yule feast. Without Bárðr's demonstration of strength in the first half of the saga would his weakness in the mound of Rahnarr be quite as dramatically shown? The priest, Jósteinn, performs three miracles for Gestr before Gestr enters the mound: he banishes Rauðigrani (Oðinn in disguise); he subdues a terrible bull; and he guards the mound so that it remains open the next day. Gestr is saved on three occasions by Christianity's power: he is saved from the bull; from certain death inside the mound; and from the storm that kills his dog, Snati. Clearly, the power of Christianity outweighs that of these pagan heroes, however remarkable they may have appeared in the first half.

It is difficult to see how any of the events that take place in the second half could have been foreshadowed more effectively than they are. The machinations of the plot, beginning with Helga's exile brought
about by her half-cousin, continuing with her disappointment in love and Bárðr's subsequent revenge as the mysterious Gestr, seem to move the plot relentlessly forward. The resolutions that take place are all consistent with their origins in the first half.

**The writer's purpose**

Much of this saga concerns itself with isolation of the individual from society. In the northern medieval world, out of which this saga arises, such a state of affairs was cause for deep concern for that individual. It was, however, a state preferred by the exceptional beings of Bárðr's family. From Dumbr's defeat in a small boat alone, and Bárðr's solitary residence in his cave, to Helga's solitary travels around Iceland, and, finally, Gestr's solitary end, the writer maintains this theme consistently. This particular concern suggests a similarity with the outlaw sagas, especially Grettis saga. This saga details the life of a man who was considered one of Iceland's great outlaws. Ultimately, his outlawry results less from his crimes than from his inability to work effectively within a social context; though many of his deeds, like Bárðr's, are good ones, he fails to make the alliances that assure survival within society. When problems arise he lacks the necessary backing that is essential in the emerging political world. Like these fictional, only partly human characters that inhabit Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss, his time has passed. The ultimate irony is that both are defeated by the paganism they follow. Grettir's death results indirectly from sorcery, Gestr's from a strong belief that he cannot escape his pagan heritage. Neither could make the transition to
Christianity and socialization that Grettir's brother and Gestr's half-brothers successfully achieve. Neither leaves behind any children.

The two worlds, the supernatural and the Christian, collide within the person of Gestr when he agrees to baptism. Such a state, a mingling of these two worlds, is intolerable. Gestr is, in pagan terms, the apostate son who renounces his father's faith, and his fate accounts for the general decline of these pagan supermen. They are caught in an inescapable bind; it is increasingly difficult to live in the world as a non-Christian, but conversion to Christianity results in death. This does not make the work less Christian in its outlook. Such ambivalence that characterizes the descriptions of the transition from paganism to Christianity, coming from a Christian, is typical. As Tolkien writes in his analysis of the monsters in Beowulf:

The author of Beowulf is still concerned primarily with man on earth, rehandling in a new perspective an ancient theme: that man, each man and all men, and all their works shall die. A theme no Christian need despise. Yet this theme would not be so treated but for the nearness of a pagan time. The shadow of its despair, if only as a mood, an intense emotion of regret, is still there. The worth of defeated valour in this world is deeply felt.¹³

*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, therefore, minor work though it may
be, reveals a great deal about the adaptation of different sources and the mixing of genres in saga literature to achieve a definite purpose: the depiction, historically, fictionally, and mythically of Iceland's transition from a heroic paganism to the political and communal Christian world that followed. Its strength lies in its flexible form, which combines much that is commonplace in the sub-genres of saga literature. The imaginative mind behind the creation succeeds in its ultimate purpose: he entertains while he instructs.

Problems of Translation

Inevitably, every translator encounters what Susan Bassnett-McGuire calls "untranslatability". Following J.C. Catford she distinguishes its two types: the linguistic and the cultural. The former involves such things as the differences between German and English syntax or the absence in English of the Old Icelandic instrumental dative. The latter involves culturally mediated associative differences; the irreducible semantic distinctions between, for example, 'noodles' and 'pasta' or the slightly more intricate distinction between classical Greek and contemporary American uses of the term 'democracy'. In all its guises, "untranslatability" leads the translator into that curious world between cultures; it is a world populated by felt discrepancies that operate with disruptive effect in and beyond one's available repertoire of semantic equivalents.

It is precisely here, however, that translation enters the
mainstream of literary criticism. In the absence of a method capable of effecting perfect inter-temporal, inter-cultural congruence or a telepathic medium across the gap of untranslatability, translators, like critics everywhere, are bound by the ideal of the good approximation. In practise, this good approximation is a parallel, not an 'ideal' text. Edgar Allen Poe writes this on the subject:

We should so render the original that the version should impress the people for whom it is intended just as the original impresses the people for whom it [the original] is intended.15

This is all I have attempted to do. I have based my work on the contention that the translator's art is founded in an act of interpretation. He uses any available resource that enables him to divine the essence of the original and any available literary means to articulate that essence. An insight into Scandinavian law or religion can, for example, provide a perspective on an ostensibly simple syntactic problem that enhances the rendering of the line, in the same way that an identical insight in a piece of scholarly prose can provide a point of departure for a new treatment of a supposedly well-understood saga. In both arenas the same phenomena occur: descriptive phrases are known as allusions; simple episodes reveal allegorical dimensions; and common nouns are recovered as metaphors.

The differences between translation and commentary are, of
course, obvious. In commentary, the exposition exists in another text, a separate document set up as a mirror of the original. In translation, the commentary is embedded in the text, superimposed on and invisible within the legible line of the prose. But the two are still, equally, modes of interpretation: the one is distinct and autonomous; while the other is covert, concealed and dependent upon the outer rhythms of the original.

The problems encountered when translating a Scandinavian language into English are many. Deceptively similar grammatically to Scandinavian, English has added many words of Latin, French and Greek origin to its basic vocabulary. The search, therefore, for simple words, preferably monosyllabic and of Anglo-Saxon origin, is bound to result in a translation that is seriously limited in its power to express, if not absurdly stilted to the modern ear.

These difficulties are compounded by the fact that all languages possess specialized vocabulary, an expression of what is peculiar to their society, their geography, or even their weather. Old Icelandic, for example, was obsessed with identifying in the most precise terms its wealth of geographical variety, delighting, for example, in specifying a precise location in a valley or on a promontory according to its relative elevation. To an inhabitant of one of the most massive plains in the world, these distinctions are difficult to imagine, let alone communicate.

Old Icelandic, like Inuktitut, has many words for snow, mjöll and esköngr to name only several that occur in this particular text.
Mjöll is snow which is the whitest possible and falls in periods of calm. Eski is snow that is ashen-like in consistency and is driven by a gale. While it is possible to understand the difference, western Canadian English has not yet evolved sufficiently to express such terms succinctly.

Further complicating matters is the gulf that stretches between the medieval and the modern world. Specific words with which one describes medieval marriage, weapons, ships, clothing, houses, and agriculture do not find common usage in modern English. A fine example is that of the word brúðkaup, literally "bride's price", which refers to the medieval Teutonic notion that a marriage was a bargain struck between families. The groom provided a mundr or a sum of money, agreed upon, that became the legal property of the wife. In return, the bride's father provided a dowry or heimamótliga. These expressions, of great importance to a medieval audience or reader, are not easily rendered into modern English. "Bride's price", the literal translation of the mundr, suggests that the woman was purchased by her husband; in practice this was not the case. It would be more accurate to say that this indicates a certain transfer of funds between families, both sides contributing an appropriate sum, which would be discussed as carefully as a merger between two companies. This is a good example of how misleading a literal, though 'correct' translation can be.

Old Icelandic employs a great many sudden tense shifts, especially in passages containing dialogue; this is thought to provide
emphasis. I have not followed this practice, because it makes the narrative unnecessarily difficult to follow. The modern reader will never appreciate this arbitrary device, so it is pointless to reproduce it. The reader's attention is distracted by the awkwardness of the passage. A typical example of such a problem is found in chapter six where it is written:

"Pess er getit, at Bárðr kom einn dag at máli við Sigmund, félagu sinn, ok mælti svá: Ek sé þat," segir hann..."

The translation would read literally:

It is mentioned, that Bárðr came one day to speak with Sigmundr, his comrade, and spoke thus: I see that, says he....

As the preceding passage demonstrates, Icelandic is more ponderous than modern English in certain respects. The passage is improved vastly by deleting "and spoke thus", and by changing "says" to "said".

As is fairly standard practice I have left proper names in Old Icelandic in the nominative case, which means a change of form if the word appears in another case. When a nickname follows, I have translated it, for nicknames are a useful way of distinguishing the many characters whose names are often very similar, if not exactly the same. For example, there are two important characters named Þorkell in the story: Þorkell Bound-Foot and Þorkell Skin-Wrapped.
Place names cannot always be translated but where they can be, I have provided the translation as well as the original in the text. The translation allows the reader more fully to appreciate a narrative that concludes in a place name. The original form permits the reader to find it on a map, for most of the place names given in the saga existed at one time if not up to the present. Footnotes link an old name to a modern one where the connexion is not obvious, and they flesh out cultural and historical details not necessarily present in the mind of the modern reader.

The verses

All six verses in this saga are skaldic. Skaldic poetry is distinguished from Eddic poetry by means of its intricate language and metrical rigidity. Except for the first poem which catalogues the places Helga Bárðardóttir would like to see, all of the verses employ a skaldic stanza known as *dróttkvætt*. The last poem in the saga represents the most classical form of *dróttkvætt*, while the rest, although they employ the standard eight-line stanza and feature a semblance of the alliterative pattern, seem rather to be examples of *dróttkvætt* in transition to other forms. This is easily explained. The last poem is not the work of this author. He borrowed it verbatim, along with the surrounding prose passage, from *Sturlubók* (c.1275-1280), an earlier work. The remaining poems, which presumably were written along with the prose text they enhance, were
composed later, possibly as late as 1400. They display the influence of imported verse by means of such additional devices as consistent end-rhyme and a refrain.

The final poem embodies dróttkvætt stanza and the requirements of this poetic form can be easily demonstrated in it. In the original the poem reads:

1. Mann gi hugði manna
2. morðk anna ðra annat,
3. ísarns meiðr, en Æsir
4. almærir par færri,
5. þás á þorskaðjardar
6. ping meô ennittingum
7. holtvaltiris Hjalta
8. harðfengs synir gengu.

In the above reproduction I have indicated the alliterating letters in bold-face type, while inrime is shown in italics.

The poem employs an even number of six-syllable, three-stress lines with a trochee at each line's end. There are variations from rigid dróttkvætt here, as well. The alliterative pattern, usually marked by definitely separated couplets distinguished by the introduction at the beginning of every odd-numbered line of a new strong, consonantal 'theme', is slightly more complicated here. The strong 'm' sound which knits together the first couplet extends into the third line and the alliterative pattern in the second couplet works
with weak vocalic rather than consonantal alliteration. The rest is standard: the penultimate couplet, for example, perfectly illuminates the regular pattern, with its strong, inaugurating 'p' sound doubled in the second line. It also displays conventional secondary rhyme patterns such as consonantal assonance and inrime. As Einarsson notes: "The odd verses should have assonance (sköthending, eg. fold: field), the even lines inrime (adalhending, eg. old: sold)." In this couplet, the first line plays with an assonant pattern based on 's' and 'r' in the elegant sequence: pás, pors, fjør and bör. The second line carries the sequence from jord to med and then to the weak, concluding glum, but adds to this weakening consonantal sequence a stronger inrime play between ping and ting.

Framed by these regular couplets, the deviation in the second couplet comes into sharper relief. The reader will note that the third line deviates in simple statistical as well as metrical terms. Its seven syllables duplicate on the rhythmic level the breakdown or suspension of scheme on the level of rhyme. The couplet as a whole is eccentric. There is no definite primary alliterative sequence, but the secondary structure of assonances is allowed an intriguing elaboration. Specifically, the 'r' sound, repeated six times, holds the couplet together in this phonemic sequence: ar, eiðr, ir, rið, pør, ri. The effect of this, in conjunction with the couplet's rhythmic instability, is an accelerated pronunciation of the line. Each 'r' sound whirs into the next and blurs the whole with a rush of indistinct sound, phonemically doubling the sense of the couplet, which describes the strange
ambiguous appearance of men who seem like avatars of ancient gods.

In the other poems the formal complexity of dróttkvætt is relaxed to suit the literary purposes of the writer. There is, in consequence, a loss of the deeply serious, ceremonial tone that infuses skaldic verse. The writer, however, profits from this loss; his verses are more adaptable to the dramatic situations with which he is concerned.

The poem translated in the text as "A fate was cast", for example, uses as its main formal constituent a refrain which is repeated every other line. Its speaker is the troll-woman, Hetta, who recites the verse much as a sorcerer would intone an incantation. The refrain binds the spell. The effect of the alliteration is secondary.

In "Through a strange and hostile sea" the dominant poetic feature is a succession of end-rhymed couplets. Again spoken by Hetta, a similar incantatory effect is achieved, as she lays a curse on the unsuspecting Ingjaldr. End-rhymed couplets imply, in general, a resistance to poetic flow. The device is best suited to the epigrammatic utterance, the glistening pearl of poetic wisdom. As such, it is best used by any real or aspiring authority whose purpose is to overwhelm life with maxim. In this poem this purpose is Hetta's purpose. Her word aspires to be Ingjaldr's bond. Again, alliteration is subordinate to an additional device.

The poem translated "I tell of Torfar-Kolla, a troll" is, in the original, very close to classical dróttkvætt. Though competently crafted with respect to alliteration and inrime, it lacks mystery.
Specifically, it does not employ the complex figure known as the kenning that is the mainstay of true dröttkvætt diction and the bane of the translator's existence. In content it is a simple bragging verse.

In this saga the poetry serves to emphasize the dramatic quality of a given situation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the passage containing Helga's lament, "Away is my want". It is special among the poetry in this saga, because it seeks to evoke an inner state, her sense of alienation from the world. It is lyrical rather than declamatory. Its similarity to the Anglo-Saxon elegy, "The Wife's Lament", is obvious and has been duly noted by Pulsiano and Skaptason. More interesting, however, is its adaptation of the rigid meter of dröttkvætt to the emotional volatility of its content. In fact, the poetic form is an antagonist in the drama that culminates in the cessation of motion within her. Her sorrow is expressed more poignantly by the rigid form by which it is constrained.

To summarize, the verses in Bárðar saga Snæfellsás, although presented in a venerable form, bear witness to the great cultural changes about which this saga is concerned. The form is recognizeably dröttkvætt, but a tamed dröttkvætt without the old assurance and intensity noted by Frank:

Whatever was suppressed in the controlled, impersonal prose of the sagas -- words of defiance, triumph, hope, obscenity, or despair -- might surface in dröttkvætt. The poet's central task was to catch and keep those fleeting moments
of triumphant joy, of heightened consciousness, in which man seemed illumined by a divine force and his whole person enveloped in a new confidence. 16

In Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss, the verses obviously work in a similar fashion; they do express a heightened consciousness and do arrest the fleeting moment. Hetta's incantations emanate from an extraordinary and magical mind. Helga's laments catch and hold a complex mood. But Helga's mood is the despair that results from thwarted desire and Hetta's charms do not work. They speak drottkvætt but their confidence is not increased or justified by the effort. No divine force illuminates them. No divine power moves through their words.

One cannot, therefore, take this verse seriously as skaldic verse, for although the form remains, its power, the legendary power of encomium and satire whose recitation conferred crowns and raised blisters is simply nowhere evident. Something is wrong here. These courtly meters were not devised to convey the failed curses of trolls or the laments of thwarted brides. We could explain this in historical terms, following Frank:

Like all literary genres, drottkvætt verse has a specific historical context. Its emergence coincides with the strengthening of royal power in late ninth-century Norway, a period that witnessed the foundation of a state, missionary activity, and the burgeoning of towns; in the fourteenth century, it fades into the popular
ballads and rhymed romances of an urbane Europe.¹⁹

We could interpret Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss as a saga which captures that fading, records the beginning of the end of both this poetry and the society which gave it place. The presence of refrains and end-rhymed couplets and the scarcity of kennings might be aspects of a dróttkvætt in transition; episodes in the evolution of a verse form becoming something else -- ballad, ottava rima, or rimur. But these suggestions leave one dissatisfied, for Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss does not deal in inevitabilities or evolutionary necessities. It deals in tensions and co-presences and struggles.

Near the end of the saga, a poem is recited that celebrates the almost epiphanic appearance of Hjalti’s sons. Here the qualities to which Frank alludes are present. Here is a moment of heightened reality. Here is divine illumination. Here is strength and power. We should note carefully the placement of this poem. It appears in the saga at a point where the Christian future seems a fait accompli, and there, against all odds, effectively asserts the force of the old forms. This defines symbolically the attitude of our sagaman. He describes historical events. He stands at the end of an old order and narrates the tale of the things that had to die so that the new order could live and thrive. But things do not just die in this saga. A moribund dróttkvætt can still return with all its ancient force; the old kings can be reborn; and Bárðr can still reach out through the Christian dream to blind and kill the supposedly saved.
Footnotes


2. Allee, p. 16.

3. Allee, p. 17.


5. Einarsson, p. 136.


17. Einarsson, p. 50.


19. Frank, p. 23.
Báðar saga Snaefellsáss
1. About the Family and Rearing of Bárðr

There was a king named Dumbr. He ruled over that gulf which goes north around Helluland and which is now called Dumbr's Sea after him. He descended from giants on his father's side, and those are handsome people, bigger than other men, while his mother came from a family of trolls: Dumbr took after both families. He was strong and handsome and clever in his dealings; he mixed easily with humans. He was like his mother's kin in that he was both strong and hardworking, but capricious and evil-dispositioned if something displeased him. He was the sole ruler of those who dwelled in the north, and they called him king, because he seemed to them a great protection against giants, trolls, and monsters. He was also the greatest support to all of them who called upon him. At the age of twelve he became king. He carried off Mjöll, the daughter of Snæs the Old, from Kyvænland and married her. She was the most beautiful woman and, of all women, nearly the tallest.

And when they had been together one winter, Mjöll gave birth to a baby boy. This boy was sprinkled with water and given a name. He was called Bárðr, because this is what Dumbr's father, Bárðr the giant, had been called. The boy was both big and handsome to look upon, so much so that men felt they had never seen a more handsome male-child. He was wonderfully like his mother in that she was so fair and white of complexion that snow took its name from her, that snow.
which is whitest and falls in dead calm, and is called "mjöll" or powder snow.4

A little later, a disagreement arose between the giants and King Dumbr. King Dumbr would not risk having his son, Bárðr, there in that place of war with them, and had him removed south to Norway to the mountains which are called the Dofra Mountains. A rock-dwelling giant named Dofri ruled there. He welcomed Dumbr. Between them was the greatest friendship. Dumbr sought to have his son fostered there, and Dofri accepted him.5 Bárðr was then ten years old. Dofri taught him about all of his family's accomplishments, as well as a knowledge of genealogies and skill in arms, and since this instruction did not exclude the magic songs and old lore in which Dofri was skilled, he became both foreseeing and widely-learned. Together, all of these were called arts in the time of these men who were greater and of more noble birth, because men then knew nothing of the true God here in this northern region.6

Dofri had a daughter who was called Flaumgerðr, of all women the biggest and most bold-looking to see, although not very pretty. Nevertheless, on her mother's side she was human. Since her mother was dead, they were three together in the cave. Bárðr and Flaumgerðr suited each other well, and Dofri did not prohibit their friendship. And when Bárðr was thirteen Dofri gave him his daughter, Flaumgerðr, in marriage, and they remained there with Dofri until Bárðr was eighteen.
One night when Bárðr lay in his bed he dreamed that he saw a great tree which came up in the fireplace of his foster father, Dofri. It was branched in many places up to the limbs. It grew so quickly that it coiled back up to the cavern’s precipice and then outside against the cavern’s window. It became so big that it seemed to take hold over all of Norway, and on one branch, among all the branches blossoming, was a most beautiful flower. One branch was the colour of gold. Bárðr interpreted this dream to mean that a man of royal birth would come into Dofri’s cave who would be brought up there, and this same man would become king over all Norway. And that fair branch signified that king who would descend from this kinsman who had grown up there. This king would establish another faith from that then most current. That dream was not very agreeable to him. Today men know that the bright flower meant King Óláfr Haraldsson.7

And after this dream Bárðr and Flauggerðr left Dofri. A little later Haraldr Hálfðánarson8 came to that place and was brought up with Dofri the Giant. Dofri raised him afterwards to become king of Norway as it is told in the saga of King Haraldr, fosterling of Dofri.
2. Bárðr Avenged his Father

Bárðr went north to Hálogaland and dwelled there. He had three daughters with Flaumgerðr, his wife. The eldest was named Helga, the second, Pórdís, the third, Guðrún. And when Bárðr had been a winter at Hálogaland, then Flaumgerðr, his wife, died, and it seemed to him the greatest loss. Afterwards Bárðr asked in marriage Herprúðr, the daughter of Chieftain Hrólf the Rich. With her he had six daughters. One was named Ragnhildr, the others: Flaumgerðr, Pára, Pórhildr, Geirríðr, and Mjöll.

Now it happened that strife arose between the giants and King Dumbr. He seemed exceedingly fierce to them, so they banded together and held counsel among themselves about him. Their leader's name was Harðverkr. It so happened that they met King Dumbr one day out in a barge. Altogether they were eighteen in number, and they attacked Dumbr, fighting him with iron bars. He defended himself with the oars, but it ended that King Dumbr fell after killing twelve of them. Only Harðverkr and five others remained alive. Then Harðverkr became king over the northern people.

Mjöll afterwards married Rauðfeldr the Strong, the son of Svaði Giant from north of the Dofra Mountains. They had a son whom they
called porkell. He was big and strong and he was dark in hair and skin. And as he grew older he became a most unreasonable man.

A little later Mjöll, his mother, died and Porkell married Eygerðar Ulfsdóttir from Hålogaland. Eygerðar's mother was Póra, the daughter of Mjöll who was the daughter of Án, the Archer. Porkell moved to farm in Hålogaland then, and he was a close neighbour to Bárðr, his half-brother. They dwelled in the Skjálftafljóðr in the north of Hålogaland.

A while later the brothers, went north over Dumbr's Sea, and burned alive Harðverkr the Strong as well as thirty giants with him. Afterwards Bárðr dared not settle there. They went back home to Skjálfti and stayed there until King Haraldr seized the kingdom by force. And when he was fulfilled in this work he became so powerful and imperious that no other man stood between Raumelfar in the south to Finnabú in the north who had any power and who did not pay him tribute. It was collected equally from everyone, from salt-burners to woodcutters. And when Bárðr got wind of this he knew that he would no sooner undergo this law than any others. He preferred to leave his kinsmen and native country than live under a yoke of bondage to which he had heard the common folk had submitted. It then came uppermost in his mind to search for other lands.
A man highborn in family was named Bárðr Heyangrs-Bjarnarson. The namesakes entered into an agreement, and it happened that they agreed to seek out Iceland, because there the choice of land was said to be good, and indeed Bárðr said he had himself dreamed that he might pass his days in Iceland. Each of them steered his ship with thirty men each.

And on the ship with Bárðr was Herbrúðr, his wife, and all of his daughters. Porkell Rauðfeldsson, the half-brother of Bárðr Dumbsson, was the greatest man of distinction there other than Bárðr. On the ship was a tall farmer named Skjöldr, who was highly born in family, and his wife, who was named Gróa. They were very ill-matched in disposition. Also on board ship was that man named Svalr and púfa, his wife. They were both greatly enchanted, violent and good for nothing. There were two slavewomen, one called Kneif, and one Skinnbrók, -- and a young boy who was named Porkell and was known as "Skin-Wrapped". He was a second cousin to Bárðr on his sister's side, and he had been reared north of Dumbr's Sea. Cloth had been scarce there, and so the boy had been wrapped in sealskins for protection, those skins serving as swaddling clothes. Ever after he became known as porkell Skin-Wrapped. He was then in his prime.
when this was told. He was a tall man, slim and long-legged, long-armed and ugly of joint and had long, slim fingers. He was thin and long-faced with high cheekbones and prominent, ugly teeth. Goggle-eyed he was and wide-mouthed, long-necked and big-headed, narrow-shouldered and stout in the waist. He had long, slender feet. Light-footed was he and agile, fearless and diligent, and loyal to any one of them he served. There was also a sailor with Bárðr named Pórir, a man stately and strong. He was the son of Knörr, the son of Jökull, the son of Björn the Hebridean. Also with Bárðr was Ingjaldr the son of Alfarinn, the son of Váli, Hölmkell’s brother, the father of Ketilríðar, for whom Víglundr composed poetry. Many other men were on the ship with Bárðr, although they are not named here.

And when the namesakes were prepared to leave they put out to sea. Their voyage was hard and they were at sea fifty days. They sighted land from the south and held westerly. They then saw a great mountain all covered over with glaciers. They called it Snæfell or Snow Mountain and the promontory they called Snæfellnes. There towards the promontory they parted company. Bárðr Heyangrs-Bjarnarson steered west towards the land and then north, and he was out at sea fifty days again, arriving finally at Skjólfandafljótós. He settled the Bárðr Valley, Bárðardalr, all the way up from the Villikálfsborgar River to Eyjardalr, and then he stayed at Lundarbrekka for a while.
Then it occurred to him that a landwind was better than a seawind, so he thought the lands south of the moor would be better. He sent his son south during Göi, and they found horsetails then and other growth. While one went back, the other remained behind. Bárór then made a jaw-bone sledge for each living creature able to walk and he had each drag its fodder and harness. He travelled to Vánarskarð, a pass on Hope Mountain. It is now called Bárór's Road or Bárðargata. He took possession after that of Fljótshverfi or Fleet's Farms, and remained at Gnúpr, Peak, and that spot was called thenceforward Gnúpa-Bárór.  

He had many children. His son was Sigmundr, the father of Porstein who married Æsa, the daughter of Hrólfs Redbeard. Their daughter was Pórunn who married Porkell Leftover and their son was Porgeirr, chieftain of Ljósvetning. Another son of Bárór and Herprúðr was Porsteinn, the father of Pórir, who, while he was in Fitjar with King Hakon, cut a hole in a cattle hide and had it for protection. Thereafter he was called Leather Neck. He married Fjörleifr, Eyvind's daughter. Their sons were Hávarðr from Fellsmúla; and Hrólf from Myvatn; and Ketill from Húsavík; Vémundr Quilt, who married Halldóra, the daughter of Porkell the Black; and Askell; and Háls, who lived at Helgastaðr.
4. Bárðr Takes Land and his Fellow Companions

Bárðr Dumbsson anchored his ship in a lagoon which went from the south into the headland and they called it Djúpalón or Deep Lagoon. Bárðr went onto land there with his men, and when they came to a huge cave in the rift they then worshipped in order to renew themselves. It is now called Tröllarkirkja or Troll’s Church.

Afterwards they anchored their ship up in an inlet. There in the lagoon they had gone away to scatter excrement to ward off elves and the same excrements washed up in this inlet.¹ Therefore that spot is called Dritvík or Bird Dropping Inlet.

Afterwards they went off in order to explore the land, and when Bárðr came to an inlet’s headland, Kneif, the slavewoman, then asked that Bárðr give her the promontory, and he did so. Now it is called Kneifarnes or Kneif’s Promontory.

Then Bárðr found a huge cave, and there they delayed a time. It seemed to answer everyone when they spoke, because echoes sounded clearly in the cave. They called it Songhelli, the Song Cave, and all meetings took place inside, especially while Bárðr lived.

Afterwards Bárðr journeyed until he came to a tarn. There he took off all of his clothing and threw himself into the shallow water, and now men call it Bárðarlaug or Bárðr’s Bathing Spring. Nearby he
built a large farm and named it Laugarbrekka, the Long Slope, and he lived there a while.

A man named Sigmundr², a farmer, came out with Bárðr. He was the son of Ketill Pistil who settled Pistilsfjörður. His wife was named Hildigunnr. They stayed with Bárðr at Laugarbrekka.

Porkell Rauðfeldsson took the land which is called Arnarstapi or Eagle Rock. Skjöldr lived at Tróð. But Gróa, his wife, was not content to live with him on account of his disposition, and, because she thought herself better than he was, she went to a certain cave and cleared it with a rock-hewer,³ so that a large cavern emerged. She dwelled there with her provisions and had no other home while Skjöldr lived, and it was called Gróuhellir, Groa's Cave. And after Skjöldr died, Porkell Skin-Wrapped asked for Gróa's hand in marriage, and with the help of Bárðr, his kinsman, he married her, and they dwelled afterwards at Dögurðaró or Breakfast Spot.

Pórir Knarrarson kept Bárðr's farm at Öxnakelda or the Oxen Spring.

Skinnbrók, the slave of Bárðr, lived at the farm which is named Skinnbrókarlækur or Skinnbrok's Brook.

Ingjaldr journeyed away towards the promontory and, on Bárðr's advice, found herself land at that spot which is named Ingjaldshváli, Ingjaldr's Hill.
Svalr and púfa disappeared from the ship the first night and nobody heard of them for some time, but in fact they were in the mountain living as trolls there, both of them. And as time passed they did many evil deeds, but men could not avail against the power of trolls.

Once a whale drifted ashore onto Bárðr's beach, and Svalr stirred himself during the night to go and butcher the whale. And when he had been butchering the whale a while, Bárðr came along. They began to wrestle strongly with each other. Svalr summoned his troll's strength then, so that Bárðr was overpowered, but it came to pass at last that Bárðr broke Svalr's back and buried him there in the gravel. Since then that spot has been called Svalsmöl or Svalr's Gravel. The night after he found púfa at the whale, and he killed her in the same way.⁴ This seemed the greatest step towards ridding the land of miscreants.

5. About the Disappearance of Helga and the Vengeance of Bárðr

Porkell Rauðfeldsson and his wife had two sons. One was named Sölvi and the other Rauðfeldr, after his grandfather. They grew up in Arnarstapi and were promising men. Meanwhile, Bárðr's daughters, both tall and pretty, were growing up at Laugarbrekka. Helga was the
eldest.

Porkell's sons and Bárðr's daughters played together in the winter on the ice on that river named Barnaár or Children's River. They had lengthy public sports and went at them with the greatest zeal. Porkell's sons wanted to have more control because they were stronger, but Bárðr's daughters would not permit their part to be lesser if they could help it.

One day when they were at their games, Rauðfeldr and Helga still competed eagerly. Pack-ice lay offshore, and there was a great fog that day. They were then playing close down by the sea. Rauðfeldr pushed Helga out along to sea on an ice floe while the wind blew strongly from land. The ice floe then drifted out to the pack ice, and Helga stepped up onto the pack-ice. That same night the ice drifted away from the land and out to sea. She stayed with the ice, and it drifted so fast that seven days later she arrived in Greenland on the ice. Eiríkr the Red, the son of Þorvaldr, son of Ásvaldr, the son of Óxna-póirir, lived at that time in Brattahlíð or Steep Mountain Side. Eiríkr married pjóðhildr, the daughter of Jörundr Atlason and Djorbjörg Ship-Breast, the stepdaughter of Þorðbjörn of Hawk Valley. Their son was Leifr the Lucky. Eiríkr had settled Greenland one winter before. Helga took winter lodgings with Eiríkr.

That man who was named Skeggi, the son of Bear-Skin, son of
Cutter-Skeggi, stayed with Eiríkr then. He was Icelandic and was called Midfjörd-Skeggi because he stayed at Reykr in Midfjörd, but was a long time in trading voyages.

Helga was the fairest of women. She seemed to have come there in a fantastic manner, and because of that some men called her a troll. Also, she was as good as a man in whatever she undertook. She told the complete truth about her trip. Eiríkr recognized her family, because he knew Bárðr, although Eiríkr would have been young when Bárðr arrived in Iceland. 4

One day Helga stood outside and, while looking about, spoke this verse:

Joyful I'd be,
If I might see
Búrfell and Bala,
Bóth Lóndranga,
Aðalpegnshóla
And Óndvertnes,
Heiðarkollu
And Hreggnasa,
Drítvík and Mól
Before the fosterer's door.
All of these local names are in Snæfellnes.

Skeggi was attracted to Helga, and they became lovers. During the winter a troll and other monsters came down to Eiríksfjörður and did the greatest damage; they smashed a ship and broke men’s bones. They were three altogether, a man and a woman and their son. Skeggi wanted to subdue them, but he might have lost his life trying had Helga not helped him.

During the following summer Skeggi went to Norway with Helga, and he stayed there another winter. The following summer he travelled to Iceland and returned home to his farm at Reykr. Helga also travelled home with him. They had no children then as far as can be guessed.

Now we must take up the story at the point where Helga’s sisters went home to Laugarbrekka to tell their father what had happened between Rauðfeldr and Helga, his daughter. Bárðr became very angry on hearing that, and he sprang up and went off to Arnarstapi. Dark-looking he was in appearance. Dorkell was not at home, for he had gone out to sea.

The youths, Rauðfeldr and Sölvi, were outside. One of them was eleven and the other, twelve. Bárðr took them both, one in each hand, and took them to the mountains. They made no effort to struggle, because Bárðr was so strong he could have held them, even if they had been fully mature men.
And when he came up to the mountain he threw Rauðfeldr into a great chasm so deep that Rauðfeldr was dead when he landed. That place is now called Rauðfeldr's Chasm or Rauðfeldsgjá. He walked with Sölvi somewhat further until he came to a high precipice. There he threw Sölvi over. When he landed, his skull broke and he died instantly. That place has been called Sölvi's Precipice or Sölovahamarr ever since. Afterwards he went to Arnarstapi and reported the death of the brothers and went on on his way afterwards.

Then Porkell came home and learned what had been the cause of the death of his sons. He headed in the direction of his kinsman, and when he found him, immediately attacked without speaking a word, for there was nothing left to discuss. It happened at last that Porkell fell, because Bárðr was the stronger. Porkell lay a while after his fall in battle, and Bárðr went home. Porkell's thighbone had been broken in the fury of their wrestling. He then stood up and withdrew home. Afterwards his leg was bound up and he was greatly comforted. He was afterwards called Porkell Bound-Foot.

As soon as he was healed he travelled away from Snæfellsnes with everything of his and went east to Hængr Porkellsson. His mother was Hrafnhildr, the daughter of Ketill Salmon from Hrafnistu. He had settled all of Rangárvöllr and lived at Neðra-Hof or Lower-Temple.

On Hængr's advice Porkell settled land around Prínhtrning and
lived there on the south side of the mountain. This placed him in country associated with first generation settlers. He was a great sorcerer. Then he and his wife had these children: Börk Blue-Tooth Beard, the father of Starkaðr of príhyrningr; and próny, who was married by Ormr Stórólfsson; and Dagrún, mother of Bess.

6. The Disappearance of Bárðr and Concerning Those with Lón-Einarr

Bárðr was so altered by everything, including the dealings with the brothers and the disappearance of his daughter, that he became both habitually silent and ill to deal with, and men had no use for him afterwards.

It is mentioned that Bárðr went one day to talk with his comrade, Sigmundr. "I see that," said he, "on account of my family and great griefs, I bear myself unnaturally with people in general, and therefore I will seek for myself another course in life. For long and faithful service to me I will give you the land here at Laugarbrekka with those farms that go with it.

Sigmundr thanked him for the gift. He gave Pórr Knararsson the land at Öxnakelda, and Dögurðará he gave to Pórkell Skin-Wrapped. There was the greatest friendship and kinship between them, and it
lasted for a long time.

After this Bárðr went away with all of his household chattels and men thought he must have disappeared into the glaciers and fixed his abode there in a large cave, for it was more his nature to be in a large cave than in a house, because he had been fostered with Dofri in the Dofra Mountains. Since he was more like a troll than a human in strength and size, his name was lengthened, and he became known as Bárðr Snæfellsáss, because they believed in him around the promontory there, deeming him a vow-god.¹ For many he also became the greatest helping spirit.

After Bárðr left, Sigmundr and Hildigunnar lived at Laugarbrekka until their deaths, and Sigmundr is buried there. He had three sons. One was Einarr who dwelled at Laugarbrekka. He married Unnr, the daughter of Pórir, brother to Áslák in Langadál or Long Valley. Hallveig was their daughter, and she married Þorbjörn Vífilsson. Another was named Breiðr. He married Gunnhildr, the daughter of Áslák in Langadál. Their son was Þormóðr who married Helga Ónundardóttir, the sister of Skáld-Hrafn. Their daughter was Gunnhildr whom porgill married. Their daughter was Valgerðr, the mother of Finnbogi the Learned at Geirshlíð. Porkell was the name of the third. He married Jóreiðr, the daughter of Tindr Hallkelsson.
After the death of Sigmundr, Hildigunnar and her son, Einarr, lived there at Laugarbrekka. It was said that Hildigunnar was skilled in sorcery. She was accused by the man named Einarr, known as Lagoon-Einarr, who, with seven other men, went to Laugarbrekka and summoned Hildigunnar for sorcery. Her son, Einarr, was not at home then. He returned after Lagoon-Einarr had departed. She told him this news and put into his hands a newly-made tunic.

Einarr took his shield and sword and cart-horse and rode after them. He rode the horse to death on the rocks where Bárðr Snæfellsáss killed púfa, Svalr's wife, and which are called púfabjörg, púfa's Rocks. Einarr arrived at a steep slope and there they fought. Seven of Lagoon-Einarr's men fell, and his two slaves ran away from him. The namesakes fought a long time.

Men say that Einarr Sigmundarson called upon Bárðr to help gain the victory. Suddenly then Lagoon-Einarr's waist-belt broke, and when he reached down for it, Einarr hewed him a death blow.

Einarr Sigmundarson's slave, Hreiðr, ran after the rest of them and, as he looked down from púfabjörg, spotted Lagoon-Einarr's slaves escaping. He ran after them and killed them both in an inlet. That spot is now called Þráslavík or Slave Inlet. In return for that Einarr gave him freedom and as much land as he could work in three days. This
land became known as Hreiðarsgerði or Hreiðr's Field, and he dwelled there afterwards.

Einarr lived at Laugarbrekka until his death, and he was buried a short distance from the cairn of Sigmundr, his father. The cairn of Einarr is always grown over with turf, winter and summer.

7. About Helga Báraðardóttir

Next the story returns to Helga Báraðardóttir who was still with Midfjörd-Skeggi. When Báðr heard about that, he visited her during the harvest season and had her come home with him, because Skeggi was married. She took comfort in nothing after separating from Skeggi. She peaked and pined away ever afterwards.

One day she spoke this verse:

Away is my want -- with searching speed
to ease this ache of loss and pass
from eyes that wonder why I waste
with pining mid their treasures and their pride,
each prudent gaze a goad. I would be spent,
diminished, lost. I would the wasteland's frost
were at my flesh; in waning warmth to find
my yearning's end; my healing love released
from custom's clasp. For here, buried in a living,
I can only live against the life;
an endless stranger vaulted in her grief
thus twice apart,
both heartless and alone,
who sits and watches sorrow branch through stone.

Helga was not content to live with her father, and she disappeared, becoming attached neither to man nor beast nor dwelling. Most often she was in caves or hollows then. Helga's Cave in Drangahraun is named after her, and very widely around Iceland places are named after her.

At Hjalli in Ölfuss it was she and not Guðrún Gjúkadóttir as certain men claimed, who accepted winter quarters from Póroddr and Skafti, his son. Helga was there secretly, and that winter she lay in the hall's outermost bed with a curtain in front. She played the harp nearly every night, because she was was not often very sleepy then.

An Easterner named Hrafn stayed with Póroddr and Skafti then. Though it was often discussed, no one seemed to know who the woman behind the curtain was. One night, Hrafn, one of the most suspicious, was drawn to the spot and he looked behind the curtain. He saw Helga sitting up, wearing a shirt. To him she seemed a very beautiful
woman. He tried to get up into bed under the bedclothes near her, but she would have none of that. They grasped hold of each other, and when they parted, Hrafn's right arm and left leg were broken.

A little later Helga went away and travelled all around Iceland, but she felt happy nowhere. She was also everywhere secretly, removed from people. She stayed a while with her father as well.

8. About Hetta and Ingjaldar

There was once a troll woman named Hetta who had a place in Ennisfjall. She was a very powerful witch and an evil foe of man and beast.

On one occasion she killed many sheep belonging to Ingjaldr at Hváll. When he became aware of this, he went to meet her. She tried to get away, and he chased her all the way up into the mountain.

Great at this time were the fishing expeditions in the Snæfellsnes, but it was allowed, though, that no one was more skilled than Ingjaldr. He was the greatest sea-champion.

And when Hetta escaped she said: "Now I will repay you for the livestock I have taken by showing you that fishing bank from which fish will always stream. You need not deviate from your usual habit to be alone on board."
She spoke this verse:

Through a strange and hostile sea
northwards to a cliff-locked firth
you shall row
in brutal strife
with glinting waves
that garb your grimmest foe.

I know -- for near is þórr
to Friggr's eye -- that hence at anchor
craft will lie
beneath a looming
hammer's force
at Nesit in Hrakhvamr lost. ¹

With that they parted. This took place during harvest time.

The next day Ingjaldr rowed out to sea alone in his boat, and he went all the way to a spot beyond the mountain and the promontory. To him it seemed rather further away than he had expected. However, the weather was good that morning, and when he arrived at the fishing bank there were fish in abundance.

A little later dense black clouds gathered over Ennisfjall and
passed speedily over. Next there was wind and a drifting snow-storm
with frost. Then Ingjaldr saw in the boat a man with brawny hands who
was pulling out fish. He was red-bearded. Ingjaldr asked him his
name and he said that he was called Grímr. Ingjaldr asked whether he
would not want to steer back to land.

Grímr said he was not ready, “and you can just wait until I have
loaded up the boat.”

A gale sprang up suddenly and became so strong and dark that
no one could see as far as the prow of the boat. Ingjaldr had lost all of
his fish hooks and fishing gear, and the oars were very worn. He
thought that Hetta’s sorcery would prevent him from ever reaching land
again, for he realized that all of this must have been her plan. Then
he called on the assistance of Bárðr Snæfellsáss. Ingjaldr was soon
freezing, because the ship was quickly filling and each wave that
dashed over the ship froze as it came in. He was accustomed to
wearing a big skin cloak, and it was there in the ship near him. He
reached for the cloak then and pulled it over himself for protection.
Death then seemed to him more certain than life.

It so happened that, at home in Ingjaldshváll around midday,
someone came up to a window frame in the sitting room during the meal
and said this with a deep voice:

A fate was cast beyond your ken

on Ingjaldr
in cloak of skin,

alone in watered wood assailed
Ingjaldr
in cloak of skin,

lost eighteen hooks and twoscore lines
great Ingjaldr
in cloak of skin,

perhaps in verse he'll fish again
vain Ingjaldr
in cloak of skin.

This startled everyone, and it was generally accepted that Hetta the Troll-woman had said this, because she expected that her wishes had been fulfilled and Ingjaldr would never again return as planned.

But when Ingjaldr was just on the point of death, he saw a man rowing alone in a boat. He was in a grey cowled cloak and had a rope of walrus hide around himself. Ingjaldr thought he recognized Bárðr, his friend.

He rowed quickly to Ingjaldr's ship and said, "You are doing poorly my friend, and it would be a great wonder if you, a very worthy
man, allowed an evil being like Hetta to fool you. Come in my boat with me now if you want and prove that you are able to steer, and I will row."

Ingjaldr did so. Grímr had vanished from the boat when Bárrr arrived. It seemed to people as if he must have been pórr. Bárrr began to row then very strongly all the way back to shore. Bárrr carried home Ingjaldr, who was exhausted but soon returned to complete health, and Bárrr travelled back to his homestead.

9. About Bárrr and his Wrestling.

There was once an evil spirit called Torfár-Kolla, or sometimes Skinnhúfa, who lived at Hnauss. She did many an evil thing, both in stealing and manslaying.

Pórir at Öxnakelda found her at his sheep during the night. They attacked each other at once and wrestled. Pórir soon found that she was a very powerful troll. Their onslaught was both hard and long, but it ended that he broke her backbone and she went to her death. And when he stood up he uttered this verse:

I tell of Torfár-Kolla, the troll,
who, ranging hence from Hnauss,
took the path that pleased her,
bent along easterly Botna.

I comforted the dull creature
while we wrestled that day.
The troll proved powerless,
Glory gone, when her back bowed.

Many men said that Bárðr must have helped pórir in doing this, because all of his friends called to him if they were in need.

Often Bárðr wandered all over the land, travelling far and wide. He was most often dressed in a grey cowl with a rope of walrus hide around himself, and he held a two-pronged stick with a long, feather-shaped spear blade which he used when he went over the glaciers.

It was said that the brothers, Bárðr and Porkell, met with each other and established a truce. They had many dealings with each other and lived together for a long time in Brynjudalr, Brynja's Valley, in that cave known afterwards as Bárðarhellið. They also competed in games held at Eirákr's place in Skjaldbreiðr.

Lágálf r Litíllardrósarson from Siglunes in the north was also visiting there, and they all wrestled. Lágálf r and Eirákr proved to be equal in strength after Eirákr overpowered Porkell Bound Foot. Then Bárðr and Eirákr wrestled, and Eirákr's leg was broken.

Lágálf r had walked to the games and went home that evening. He
wrestled a while with Skeljungr, the shepherd of Hjallbjörn from Sílfrastaðr. He was a berserkr. During their wrestling Skeljungr fell and broke his leg, and Lágálfr carried him to a farm. Afterwards he went on his way, and as he walked along Blönduhlíð, he arrived at Frostustaðr on the south side of the house. He walked up to the windows and looked into the house. Inside a farmer was lecturing the housewife who had taken meal from a bag which hung over them, and he gave her a blow on the ear. She wept. Lágálfr reached inside with an axe through the window and hacked at the bag. It landed on the head of the farmer, and he fell unconscious. Lágálfr turned away and walked to the home of Siglundr that night and with that is out of this story. The farmer recovered his senses and thought that the bag had tumbled down by itself.

There were men who claimed that Ormr Stórólfsson was at the games in Skjaldbreiðr and that he wrestled with Bergpórr of Blue-Wood. Ormr was said to have won. Also there was Ormr Wood Neb the Young. He wrestled with Pórir from Pórisdalr. That valley is in Geitlandsjökull, the Goat Country Glacier. Pórir was the better of them. Also present was Pórálf Skólmsson who wrestled with Hallmundr from Balljökull, the Deadly Glacier. It was close between them, but Bárðr was thought the strongest of them. The games broke up and there is nothing more to relate.
10. Concerning Bárðr and Tungu-Oddr

There was a man named Önundr, also known as Broadbeard. He was the son of Úlfar, the son of Úlfr from Fitjar, the son of Pórrir Clanger. He lived in the upper part of the Reykjardalr, the Steam Valley, on that farm which is named Breiðabólstaðr. He married Geirlaug, the daughter of Pórmóðr from Akranes and the sister of Bess. Their daughter was named Pórodda. She was won in marriage by Torfi,¹ the son of Valbrandr, the son of Valþófr, the son of Örlygr from Esjuberg. Half of the estate of Breiðabólstaðr made up her dowry,² so the farms were divided in two. This same Torfi killed twelve men from Kroppr, and he was a ringleader in the killing of the men of Hólmr. The leader was War-Hóðr, Torfi’s nephew, and Geirr, for whom the small island, Geirshólmur, is named.

Torfi was also at Hellisfitjar with Illugi the Black and chieftain Sturla when eighteen Hellismenn³ were killed, and when Auðan Smiðkelsson was burned inside at Þórvarðsstæðr. Torfi’s son was known as Pórkell of Skáney.

The son of Önund was named Oddr, and he was a man both tall and promising. It seemed that no one was more likely to become leader in that part of the district than Oddr.
When he was twelve years old he journeyed abroad from Snæfellness to buy cod, and when he returned home he rode around Drangahraun. All of his men got ahead of him because Oddr spared his horse, travelling not at all quickly. A dark fog arose.

And as he was driving the horse ahead of himself along the road he saw a man walking out of a lava field down towards himself. Oddr saw that he was in a grey cowl and had a two-pronged stick in hand. He recognized Oddr and greeted him by name. Oddr acknowledged his greeting and asked him his name in return.

He said that he was called Bárðr and had a home there on the promontory. "I have business with you. First I want us to become friends, and so I hereby invite you to a Yule banquet. I would rather you agreed to the journey."

Odr answered: "I shall then, since you value it."

"Then you will be doing well", said Barðr, "but I want you to tell no one about this."

Odr consented, -- "but I want to know where I shall attend this banquet."

"You shall," said Barðr, "travel to Dögurðará and allow Dorkell Skin-Wrapped to show you the right way to my home."

Afterwards they parted, and Oddr returned home alone. He said nothing about this.

That winter, seven days before Yule, Oddr rode away from
home out to the promontory alone and did not let up until he came to Dögurörá. It was late in the evening, and only two days remained until Yule. His horse was completely worn out, because it had had a rough journey and the weather had been bad.

Oddr knocked on the door, and it was a long while before someone walked to the door, though at last it was unbolted in mid-knock.

Then a rather hideous head poked itself outside and strained forward eagerly to see, peering outside past the doorway. It squinted its eyes, determined to see what might have arrived outside. Very narrow and ugly in appearance it was. When it saw the man, it tried to slam the door shut, but Oddr drove the axeshift in between so it could not close. Then Oddr fell against the door so powerfully that it shattered.

He then walked into the farmhouse and, following someone, continued all the way to the sitting room where it was bright and hot. Porkell sat on the bench. He was very merry and offered Oddr night-lodgings. Oddr stayed there that night, enjoying fine hospitality.

But in the morning Oddr was up early, and they prepared themselves to travel. The weather was cold with tremendous frost, a bright sky overhead and fine snowflakes sitting down from the mountains. Porkell went on foot, and Oddr rode. As they travelled in
the direction of the mountain, Porkell led the way. When they reached the mountain a snowfall arose in the darkness, and it began to snow and drift so furiously that soon a great blizzard was raging. They travelled a long while, and finally Oddr began to walk while Porkell led the horse.

And when Oddr least expected it, Porkell disappeared from sight into the storm, and Oddr never knew what became of him. By then it was both bitter and cold, the ground hard and slippery to tread. He wandered around for a long time and knew not where he was going.

And somewhat later Oddr became aware of a man walking in the darkness in a grey cloak with a big two-pronged shaft which rang on the ice. And when they met Oddr recognized him as Bárðr Snæfellsáss. They exchanged greetings and asked each other the common news. Bárðr asked Oddr to accompany him. They did not walk a long while before they came to a large cave which led into another cave where it was bright within. There sat women rather large in build, but still human. Then Oddr disrobed and was offered the best hospitality. He was there during Yule and enjoyed everything. Only Bárðr's household was present. Oddr thought þórdís the finest of Bárðr's daughters, and spoke mostly with her. Bárðr discovered that quickly, but drew no attention to it.

Bárðr asked Oddr to stay there during the winter, and he
accepted. Afterwards Bárðr gave a loving fosterage to Oddr and taught him jurisprudence over the winter. He was afterwards considered a man more learned in law than other men.

And when Bárðr discovered that Pórdís and Oddr loved each other, he asked Oddr whether he would have Pórdís for a wife.

Oddr said: "I will not conceal that I have taken a greater liking to Pórdís than to any other woman. It is very true that if you will give her in matrimony to me, I shall not avoid it.

It was therefore arranged that Bárðr would give Oddr his daughter in matrimony and he would supply her with rare, valuable treasures from home. Bárðr was to attend the bridal feast at Oddr's, bringing along the bride. Afterwards they parted with friendship.

Oddr travelled home and busied himself preparing for the banquet, and at the appointed time Bárðr arrived at Tunga with the bride and others, making a group of twelve together. Porkell Bound-Foot accompanied Bárðr, as did Ormr the Strong, his kinsman. Porkell Skin-Wrapped was also there with Bárðr, and Oddr received them very well. Also present was Ingjaldr from Hváll and Pórir Knarrarson, a friend of Bárðr's, Einarr Sigmundarson from Laugarbrekka and seven other men not recognized. There were many guests present: Torfi Valbrandsson, a kinsman of Oddr; Illugi Black; Geirr the Rich from Geirshlið; and Chieftain Arngrimr from
Norðtunga. Galti Kjöllvararson, a kinsman of Oddr's, was also there, as well as many other men. Nothing worth mentioning happened at the banquet. Afterwards each one journeyed home to his own family. Great was the love between Oddr and Pórdís. They were together three years and then Pórdís died, but they had no children. That seemed to Oddr a great blow.

Afterwards Oddr married Jórunn Helgadóttir. Their son was Porvaldr, who commanded the burning of Blund-Ketill, and Poróddr, who married Jófríðr Gunnarsdóttir.

The daughters of Tunga-Oddr were: Púriðr, whom Svarthöfði married; Húngerðr, whom Svertingr Hafr-Bjarnarson married; and Hallgerðr, whom Hallbjörn, the son of Oddr from Kiðjaberg, married. Oddr had an aunt named Kjölvör who was the mother of Porleifr, the mother of Púriðar, who was the mother of the following: Gunnhildr whom Kolli married; and Glúmr, the father of Pórarinn, father of Glúmr at Vatnsleysa.

II. The Rearing of Gestr Bárðarson

Now it is told that Midfjörd-Skeggi lived at Reykr in Midfjörðr. He was married to a woman who was named Hallbera, the daughter of Grímr. Their son was Eiðr who later married Hafdóra, the daughter of
Porbjörg Cornmeal and Oláf High Ship-Shield, the sister of Porgeirr Gold. They had another son who was named Kollr, the father of Halldór, who was the father of Pórdís and Porkatli, for whom Skáld-Helgi longed.

Skeggi had three daughters. One was named Hröðný, whom Pórðr Gellir married. Another was named Porbjörg, whom Ásbjörn Harðarson the Rich married. Their daughter was Ingibjörg who married Ilugi Black. Their sons were Gunnlaugr Snake-Tongue, Hermundr, and Ketill. The third daughter of Skeggi was named Pórdís. She grew up in Reykr. She was a most beautiful woman and distinguished herself in most things.

Pórðr Gellir, a great chieftain, lived at Hvammr in Hvammsveita.

Porbjörn Oxen-Might lived at Póroddstaðr in Hrútafjörður. He was the son of Arnór High-Nose, the son of Póroddr, who settled land there. Porbjörn was the boldest man. He killed Atli Ásmundarson, but Grettir avenged his brother and killed Porbjörn. The brother of Porbjörn was Póroddr Killing-Stump.

Grenjuðr, the son of Bent Hermundr, lived at Meðr in Hrútafjörður. He had a daughter who was named Porgerðr. Grenjuðr and Porbjörg had one son who was named Porbjörn, a most
accomplished man.

During the fall in Reykr, when Eiðr was sixteen, he heard a knock at the door one evening. He walked to the door. At the door stood a man large in stature, who wore a grey cowl and leaned himself on a two-pronged stick which he had in hand. The man greeted the farmer's son by name, and Eiðr asked who he was. He said he called himself Gestr. He inquired whether Eiðr had any authority there. Eiðr said he conducted himself as he wished.

"Will you then," said Gestr, "grant me quarters here this winter?"

"I'm not sure," said Eiðr.

"You do little for yourself, growing up among men," said Gestr, "if you will not undertake to give a man shelter for a few nights. If that is the case I shall travel away and carry your disgrace wherever I go.

Eiðr spoke: "Why don't you stay here for the winter rather than travel away in the dark of night?"

Gestr then went inside with the farmer's son. The farmer asked where this man was from, and Eiðr told him everything of their conversation. Skeggi was little pleased, but nevertheless allowed Eiðr to decide in the matter.

Gestr remained there during the winter, but proved to be Bárðr Snæfellsáss. Law and history he taught Eiðr who became so learned in law that he was known as Law-Eiðr afterwards.
pórdís, Skeggi's daughter, was fifteen then. Some men claimed that Gestr intended to seduce her over the winter. Towards summer Gestr travelled away after thanking Eiðr for the lodging. And as the summer passed, pórdís grew stout in the waist, and during harvest time, in a shed,² she was delivered of a child. It was a boy, handsome and large. She sprinkled the child with water, and said that he should be named after his father, so he was called Gestr.

The next day a woman came into the shed and asked to take the boy away and foster him. pórdís agreed to it. A little later the woman disappeared with the boy. She proved to be Helga Bárðardóttir. For a time Gestr was raised by her.

Skeggi felt little affection for pórdís after this happened.

Five years later Þorbjörn Grenjuðarson asked for the hand of pórdís Skeggjadóttir and she was given to him in marriage. Then Þorbjörn established a household with her in Tunga beyond Melr or Bent Grass. They were not together a long time before they had two sons. The elder was named pórar, and the younger, Þorvaldr. They were both promising men, but pórar was by far the better of the two. Þorbjörn became a man rich in livestock, for he kept five hundred sheep.
12. About the Upbringing of Gestr

A man lived at Lækkamótí in Víðidalr, the Willow Valley, named Porgils, sometimes known as Screaming Porgils, sometimes as Porgils the Wise. His son was Pórarinn the Wise, the fosterer of War-Bárðr.

At that time Auðunn Cart-Pole lived at Auðunarstaðr and was by then an old man. He had been the tallest man and a brave warrior.

Farmer Porphjörn at Tunga had many sources of money. From his shed in Hrútafjarðardalr he kept milk cattle and had them graze there in the early part of summer. Pórdís Housewife was always at the shed. Pórðr was six then and Pórvaldr five.

One evening Pórdís was near a brook and washed her hair. Then Helga Bárðardóttir came by with Gestr who was twelve.

She said: "This is your son, Pórdís, and it certainly couldn't be that he would have grown more if he had been with you."

Then Pórdís inquired who she might be.

She said that she was called Helga and was the daughter of Bárðr Snæfellsáss, "and widely have we travelled, Gestr and I, because my home is not in one place. I will also tell you that Gestr and I are siblings, as Bárðr is father of us both."
Pórdís said: "That is unlikely."

Helga didn't hesitate, but left at once, and Gestr remained behind with his mother. He was both big and handsome, for he was as fully-grown as men twenty years of age.

Gestr stayed at Tunga the next winter, and then his father, Bárðr, sought him and brought him home himself to Snæfellsjökull, the Snæfell Glacier. For Pórdís Bárðr brought fine clothing. Gestr grew up with his father, who taught him all of the arts that he knew. He became so strong that no one living then was his equal.

13. About the Yule Banquet of Hit

At that time there was a troll-woman named Hit alive and living in Hundahellir, the Dog Cave, in the valley which later was named for her, Hítaðalr.

Hit prepared a big Yule banquet. First she invited Bárðr Snæfellsáss and Gestr, his son, and Pórkell Skin-Wrapped travelled with them. Also asked were Guðrún Knappekkju and her son, Kálfur. As well, Surtr from Hellisfitjar and Jóra from Jörukleifr were invited. The giant named Kolbjörn was also invited. He lived in that cave which stands in Breiðdalsbotn, the Broad Valley, where it meets the Valley of Ram Fjörd, Hrútafjardárdalr, in that spot where the green valley goes
west under Sléttafjall, the Table Mountain. Gapi and Gljúfra-Geirr, who had a home at Hávagnúpr, the High Peak, in Gnúpsdalr, Glámr and Ámr from Mýðjarðarnesberg, Mid-Fjörd Rock, were present. There also was Guðlaugr from Guðlaugshöfði, the promontory named after him.

The seats were so arranged in Hundahellir that further inside on the middle bench sat Guðrún Knapekkja. On one side of her sat Jóra Egilsdóttir from her estate, Jórulkleif, and on the other side sat Helga Bárðardóttir, and there were no more. Hit waited on the guests. In the high seat sat Bárðr Snæfellsáss, and, further away, Guðlaugr from Guðlaugshöfði and further in, Gestr Bárðarson, then Kálfr and Porkell Skin-Wrapped. Surtr from Fitjar sat opposite Bárðr, and further in from him sat Kolbjörn from Breiðdalr, then Glámr and Ámr, and further away, Geirr and Gapi.

Then the tables were set up,¹ and food was served in rather grand style. Drinking was very disorderly there, so everyone soon became drunk.

And when mealtime was over, Hit and the giants inquired what Bárðr would have for entertainment saying he should advise the household. Bárðr then asked to go at skin-pulling.²

Bárðr and Surtr, Kolbjörn, Guðlaugr and Gljúfra-Geirr stood up and had a "horn-flayed" skin game. There was more than a little uproar then. They had a big bearskin cloak for the skin which they folded up and threw amongst the four of them. When one was "out" he
was not allowed to throw. It wasn't safe to be in the midst of their pushing, and most stood upon the benches except Gestr. He sat quietly in his place.

But when Kolbjørn was "out", he tried to get the skin away from Bárðr and suddenly attacked him. When Gestr saw that, he shoved his foot in front of Kolbjørn, so that the giant tripped and landed outside on the boulder so hard that his nose broke. His blood flowed all over him. The tumult and challenging after that became rather intense, for Kolbjørn wanted to revenge himself on Gestr.

Bárðr said that no one should behave unsuitably in the quarters of Hít, their friend, "since she has asked us to this place on friendly terms."

It turned out as Bárðr wanted, but Kolbjørn was ill-content because he didn't get his revenge. Then everyone went home. It still seemed, as so often before, that all of the giants were afraid of Bárðr. At parting, when Gestr left, Hít gave him her dog, Snati. He was grey in colour. With its strength and wisdom the dog was the greatest help, and she claimed that it was better in battle than four men. Afterwards Bárðr went home, and he and Gestr stayed there for a while.
14. About Þórr at Tunga and Kolbjörn

The shepherd of Þórr Farmer of Tunga was named Gustr. He herded sheep winter and summer. To the farmer he seemed the most faithful in all matters. Gustr was valiant and swift-footed, but not strong.

Ten years after Þórr left Tunga it so happened that all of the sheep that Farmer Þórr had left in the care of the shepherd, Gustr, disappeared. Gustr sought them continuously for three days, but he found no sheep, and when he came home in the evening he said that he would give up the search, -- "because I have these days searched everywhere, especially those places which seem likely where sheep might have gone."

The farmer gave him a stern reprimand and said that the sheep would lie nearby. Gustr said nevertheless that he would no longer search.

In the morning Þórr rode to Reykr in Midfjörðr to meet with Skeggi, his father-in-law. Skeggi received him warmly and asked about news.

Þórr said not to have news to tell "except that all my sheep have disappeared and the search, which has continued for three days continuously, has turned up nothing. I have therefore come here, because I would like to get some sound advice about what should be
done. I hoped that you could tell me what most likely has happened, because these sheep have vanished without a trace."

"I think I know," said Skeggi, "what must have become of your sheep. Some trolls will have taken them and concealed them. No one except your sons will succeed in getting them back, because this seems aimed at them. It could be that these trolls think they have something to avenge. Perhaps one of them was overcome by someone against whom they can take no revenge. It is my advice that the brothers search."

Pörbjörn rode back home to the farm and told his sons that they should search for the sheep.

Pórðr said: "Skeggi, my kinsman, will have ordained this, and though it seems to me we will end up in the hands of the trolls, it might be that Skeggi has also seen something that will add to our prowess. We shall certainly go."

And early in the morning the brothers prepared to journey forth on the heath. Near midday they had found nothing, but had nevertheless gone a long way.

Then Pórðr said: "Now we shall separate. You should go up under Snæfell and search all of Hvammsártunga and then up through the mountains back to Svínaskarð, Swine Pass and Haukadalsskarð, Hawk Valley Pass and, finally, home. I intend to search
Hrutafjarðardalr everywhere to the highest part of the valley. And if I don’t come home in the evening, then greet my father and mother and friends and kinsmen, because it is then likely not my lot to return.”

Afterwards the brothers parted. Porvaldr went everywhere on the branching road and arrived home during the evening, but found no trace of the sheep.

And about Pórðr there is to relate that, after the brothers parted, he walked up the valley, intending to search it to the end. And when he had gone a while, a dark fog arose so great that he saw nothing in front of him.

And when he least expected it, he became aware of a man near him in the fog. Pórðr went towards him and when he approached, he saw that it was a woman. To Pórðr she seemed beautiful and of a fine appearance, and of average size. But when he tried to approach her, she turned away from him so quickly that he lost sight of what became of her in the fog.

After that Pórðr walked along the upper part of the valley and, not long after, he heard in the darkness a great din of hoofs clattering, and suddenly he saw a man, if he could be called one. This man was huge and very large-boned. His spine was crooked and he was bowed in the knees. He had a more ugly, hideous appearance, than anything Pórðr had ever seen. His nose was broken in three places,
and big bumps covered it. Thrice bent, it seemed like the horn of an old ram. A big iron bar he held in his hand.

And when they met, this apparition called Pórðr by name. Pórðr acknowledged the greeting and inquired in return what his name might be. He said that he called himself Kolbjörn and ruled over the valley. Pórðr asked whether he had not seen his father's sheep.

Kolbjörn said: "I will not conceal it --- I hid your father's sheep. It has now turned out as I hoped it would, for you have taken up the search. But have you met any people since you left home other than myself?"

Pórðr said that he had surely seen a woman, but had not spoken to her, "because she turned away from me so quickly."

"That," said Kolbjörn, "would have been Sólrún, my daughter. It is now my offer that you choose which you want more: your father to suffer the loss of his livestock, because I do not like some of your kinsmen very well; or the alternative, that we two strike a bargain and I give to you in marriage Sólrún, my daughter. Then the sheep will be yielded up to you."

Pórðr said: "It will seem to my kinsmen a hasty bargain on my part, but from what I saw of this woman it would be fitting that she marry a brave man."

"I would not offer these conditions to everyone," said Kolbjörn,
"but I would not grudge my daughter a good match."

It happened that Kolbjörn betrothed Pórðr and Sólrún, his daughter, with the agreement that in a fortnight Pórðr would attend the wedding feast at Kolbjörn's. He said that his home was in a cave in Brattagil, Gully of the Steep Ravine. Pórðr was to have as many men with him as he wished, except Midfjörd-Skeggi and his son, Eiðr, Pórðr Gellir, Porgils the Wise, and Porbjörn Oxen-Might -- "and also Auðun Cart-Pole from Viðaldalr. I don't want you to invite giants or cave-dwellers and, least of all, Bárðr Snæfellsáss and his followers."

Pórðr consented, and with this decided, they parted. Kolbjörn turned back on the road with Pórðr, and soon they saw the sheep lying massed together in a little valley. Pórðr then drove them home himself to Tunga. All of the men welcome him heartily, and he related the events that had taken place on his journey. Farmer Porbjörn was greatly amazed by this, and said that Pórðr had likely been enchanted by trolls.

Pórðr said that he had been more successful than that, -- "and speak not to me in an ill temper about this agreement."

"It seems wise counsel to me, son," said Porbjörn, "that you do not attend this wedding feast. Tell no one about this and pretend as though nothing has happened."
pördr remained calm. Time passed as the appointed date approached.

15. The Wedding Feast at Kolbjörn's

pördr spoke with porvaldr, his brother: "Will you, brother, come with me to attend my wedding?"

"I expect fate to catch up with you when you want to travel into the hands of ogres. But even if I knew it beforehand that I might not return, I would rather follow you than be at home if you should die there. I shall certainly go if you are determined to visit Kolbjörn."

They made ready for the journey and walked up into Hrútafjarðardalr until they found a big cave. They stepped inside, and it was both foul and cold. But when they had been sitting a while, a big man came into the cave and in with him ran an amazingly large dog. They asked him his name. He said he was a guest. They said they believed it.1

"Are you pördr," said he, "come to attend your wedding?"

He said it was true.

"Do you wish," said Gestr, "that I were your guest, and that my dog and I were attending your wedding feast?"
"It seems to me that you," said Pórðr, "would be of assistance to me, whatever the need, and I will therefore agree."

"Stand up then," says Gestr, "You will want to see your bride-to-be and how beautiful she is to look upon."

They went further inside the cave until they came to a side cave. There Pórðr saw Sólrun seated, her hair bound to the bridal chair. Her hands were bound, with food so near that she could smell it, but she had no more than she could barely live on. She was so lean and weak that she seemed no more than skin and bone. Nevertheless, Pórðr could see that the woman was beautiful, and he untied her. Pórðr felt overcome by great love for her, and he kissed her lovingly.

She said: "Rouse yourself and leave before Kolbjörn comes home."

They asked where he was, and she said he had gone to invite ogres to the wedding feast. "He intends nothing other than to kill both of you brothers and keep me here in the torment I have been suffering."

Pórðr asked whether she was Kolbjörn's daughter. She declared that she was not his daughter, saying that he had carried her off from Sólarfjöll, the Sun Mountains, in Greenland, "away from my father, Bárðr, by means of wizardry, and he intends me for use as his concubine. But I have never given him my consent, so he has always
bound me, more cruelly since he promised me to you. To others he promised me; each he taunts as he does it.

Pórðr said he would give up his life to rescue her; but afterwards they went away from her, and she was left behind. And when they had been in the cavern a while, they heard a great clattering of hoofs and a great bawling. In came Kolbjörn with thirty giants and many other ogres. Pórðr and his comrades approached Kolbjörn and his companions and greeted them. Kolbjörn was in a bad mood and frowned, offering no friendship whatsoever to Gestr.

Afterwards the tables were set up and the seats arranged. Gestr, Pórðr and Porvaldr sat on one bench. The dog, Snati, lay at their feet. Opposite in the middle of the bench sat Gljúfra-Geirr. He was Kolbjörn's greatest friend and was most like him in everything evil. Further in sat Ámr and Gapi, then Glámr and afterwards each of the others, so that the main part of the cavern was full. However, the bride did not come to her seat, and Kolbjörn served the guests. Food was brought for Gljúfra-Geirr and his bench partners; it was both horseflesh and human flesh. They chose meat and, like eagles and bitches, tore the flesh from the bones. Then meat, suitable for any human, was brought in for Pórðr and his companions. There was intoxicating drink and little spared.

Kolbjörn's mother was named Skrukka. She was a most powerful
troll and then very old. Kolbjörn didn’t want her in the midst of their riot and noise, so she remained in a side-cave. However, by means of her black arts, there was little of which she was unaware.

Now Kolbjörn’s men began to drink with little moderation and soon they all became madly drunk. They stopped speaking in low voices, and the cavern rang with their uproar.

Kolbjörn went to Pórðr and said: “What will you have for games or amusements, my future son-in-law? From now on you shall mainly decide home affairs.”

Gestr said, because he happened to be quicker in answering: “Your men should have the game which is most agreeable to them. Have what you want: knuckle-bone throwing or wrestling. Afterwards Glámr took a big knuckle-bone and threw it powerfully, aiming at Pórðr’s stomach.

This Gestr saw and said: “Let me look after this game, because I am more accustomed to it than you are.” And so he did, catching aloft the knuckle-bone and throwing it back afterwards. It travelled so swiftly that it gouged out Glámr’s eye onto his cheek-bone. Glámr lost his head and howled like a wolfhound.

This blow Glámr’s fosterbrother, Ámr, saw, and he at once seized the knucklebone and let fly at Pорvaldr. Pórðr saw this, and he resisted by throwing it back. The knucklebone hit Ámr’s cheekbone so
that his jaw was broken in pieces. By now there was a great, violent singing sound in the cave.

Skrámr from Pambárdalr seized a huge legbone of mutton then and flung it strongly, aiming at Gestr, because he sat just opposite. Gestr caught it, and without much delay he cast it back mercilessly. The legbone hit the thigh and the hand of Skrámr with such great power that both broke. The giants now made a much more violent din than can be described, and their screams were more like those of the dead than of the living.

Kolbjörn then spoke: "Give up this game, because we will all suffer ill at Gestr’s hands. It was quite contrary to my will that he was invited here."

"Nevertheless you will have to put up with it," says Gestr.

Afterwards they began to drink again until everyone dropped down asleep, each in his seat, except Gljúfra-Geirr and Gapi.

Kolbjörn said that everyone should lie where he was —"except that you, Gapi and Geirr, may come into my sleeping chamber." And so they did.

Gestr suggested that his comrades find themselves a bed elsewhere. They lay down.

And while they were sleeping Gestr got up, seized his sword, walked into the cave, and hacked off the head of each giant who lay inside. And when he had finished this task he went off and searched for
the place where Kolbjörn and his comrades slept. He discovered a door in the cavernous rock, but it was so strongly locked that Gestr knew they would wake up if he tried to force it open.

Afterwards he went to Sólrun. He asked her to get up and go with him. She did so, but said she believed that it would be both her death and theirs, too. They hurried to the spot where the brothers rested, and Gestr asked them to get up very quickly and leave the cave before Kolbjörn awoke, if possible. "Sólrun is coming along."

The brothers got up, and they went on their way down the valley.

16. The Slaying of Kolbjörn and His Family

Now it is time to mention that Skrukka, Kolbjörn's mother, awoke a short while after the companions had left and realized at once by means of her witchcraft what they had done. She sprang up then as though young and healthy. At once she leapt at the door where Kolbjörn slept, doing so with such force that the door shattered. Kolbjörn awoke and asked who arrived with such tumult.

Skrukka identified herself and said: "It would be wise, kinsman Kolbjörn, to lie here no longer, because Pórðr has run off with his companions and Sólrun. Gestr has planned all of this. He has killed all of your guests except those present here. Nothing remains to be
done but follow them and kill them all.

Kolbjörn said: "I wonder that you are not more famous for your wisdom. I would often be worsted if I didn't have you along. You shall now, mother, go first, because you are ready, and overtake them. Go to the upper part of the ridge and take them by surprise, and we shall go on the lower part around the valley, and we will have them trapped."

Skrukka left while Kolbjörn and his comrades prepared themselves as quickly as possible. They followed until they saw their prey. Kolbjörn called as soon as he saw them, bidding them to run no longer.

Sólrún became dismayed at this and said: "I sensed that this would happen, for it is now decided that you are all slain. Kolbjörn is such a powerful troll, that no one withstands him."

Gestr said: "Fate will decide now. We will first divide the party. Dórar will meet Kolbjörn, his father-in-law. It is fitting that he should have the greatest trial, because he has brought us all into this struggle. Dóraldr shall fight Gapi, and I will contend with Gljúfra-Geirr. Many are going to die. Snati, you deal with the old woman, and Sólrún shall watch our play.

And as soon as Kolbjörn arrived, they all attacked each other and wrestled powerfully. Snati went up to the precipice, unnoticed, above the spot where Skrukka was, and he rolled large stones down upon her. She glared at him and threw the stones back. Thus it ended
that, while she was picking up a stone, Snati rolled down a huge boulder, and it hit the backbone of the old woman, breaking it, and she died.

Gestr and Gljúfra-Geirr engaged violently. Their combat ended when Gestr grabbed him by the hip and flung him aloft with such great force that his skull shattered when it struck the ground. In a short time he was dead.

Then Gestr arrived at the point where porvaldr was just about to fall, and Gestr hacked both legs from above the knees out from underneath Gapi. Gap then fell backwards.

Pórðr and Kolbjörn had a powerful and hard onslaught, and it concluded that Pórðr fell. Into that match came Gestr, and he suddenly grasped Kolbjörn by the crown of his head and set his knee into his back so hard that Kolbjörn’s neck immediately snapped. Gestr pushed him off Pórðr, who stood up then and was very stiff from Kolbjörn’s grappling. By then Porvaldr had killed Gapi.

Gestr said: “Now has it happened, Sólrún, that we have won a victory, and you are delivered from the hands of the trolls.”

“We are indebted to you,” says Pórðr, “and I want you to choose recompense for yourself.”

“I don’t want to have money from you brothers, but if you must make some recompense, then take me on ship’s passage to Norway,
because I am curious to see the king who reigns there and is so great, it is often said."

They said it would be done.

"But now I will no longer conceal from you two," said Gestr, "that I am brother to you both, born of the same mother. We will now part here for the present, and I shall come in spring to the ship."

Gestr then went on his way and the brothers travelled home with Sólrún home to Tunga, and everyone talked about the trip endured. It seemed to many who heard about it that péorr had had great luck.

17. Gestr Meets King Óláf

There was a captain named Kolbeinn who had a ship up in Borðeyri in Hrútafjörður. The brothers rode to that spot and took Gestr in passage on board ship the next summer. They put out to sea and at once had a fair wind. Gestr went abroad from Iceland to Norway with his dog, Snati, péorr, Sólrún, and porvaldr. They continued to have favourable winds and landed at prandheimr.1

At that time King Óláf Tryggvason ruled over Norway.2 The brothers, along with Sólrún, went to visit him. They greeted the King and asked of him a winter abode, and the King inquired whether they would be baptised. They yielded slowly to this. It finally took place
that they were baptised, Sólrún as well. They were in good standing with the King during the winter. Gestr stayed behind with the ship and slept in a tent. His dog remained with him, but no men.

One day the King was cheerful and inquired of Pórðr: "Where did you marry this beautiful woman?"

"Abroad in Iceland," says Pórðr.

"How old a man are you?"

Pórðr said: "Nineteen years am I."

The King said: "You are a brave man. Where do you think was the greatest test of your courage?"

"Abroad in Iceland," says Pórðr, "when I won this woman."

"Who helped you?"

"Someone named Gestr," said Pórðr.

"Did he journey here?" asked the King.

Pórðr said that he had, --"but in the meantime I will tell you what I would like. I want to become your retainer."

"Bring Gestr, then, to meet me if you want to become my retainer."

Afterwards Pórðr went to speak to Gestr. Gestr was unwilling to co-operate and said: "I am not eager to visit the King, because I have heard that he is so ambitious that he wants to rule everything, even a man's beliefs."
It so happened later that Gestr went with Pórdr and paid the King a visit. Gestr greeted the King and the King received him warmly.

Gestr inquired: "What business, sir, have you with me?"

The King said: "Such as with other men, that they believe in the true God."

Gestr said: "It is not in me to give up the faith of my ancestors. It is my foreboding that if I give up this faith, I will not live for long."

The King said: "Man's life is in God's hands, and in future no man in my kingdom shall follow the heathen faith."

Gestr said: "It seems likely to me, sir, that your faith might be better, but despite threat or force I will not renounce my faith."

"So shall it be" says the King, "because it seems to me that you would rather renounce the heathen faith by your own hand than on account of another man's severity. You will not be altogether unlucky, and you are welcome to stay with us during the winter."

Gestr thanked the King for his words and said he would accept. Gestr was with the King for a while, and it was not long before he was prime-signed. Time passed as Christmas approached.

18. Gestr's Mission to the Burial Mound of Raknarr

And on Christmas Eve the King sat in the high seat, each of the King's men in his place. The men were glad and merry, because the
King was very cheerful.

And when the men had drunk a while a man walked into the hall. He was large and hideous, dark-complexioned and restless of eye, black-bearded and long-nosed. This man had a helmet on his head, was in a coat of ring mail, and carried a sword. He had a gold collar around his neck and a thick gold ring on his hand. He went around inside the hall and up to the King's high seat. He spoke to no man; no one offered him a word.

And when he had stood a while before the King he said: "Here have I come, but nothing has been offered to me by these great folk. I shall be more generous, for I shall offer any of these valuables, which I now have here, to that man who has the courage to visit me. But that will be no one here."

Afterwards he went away, and a bad odour arose in the hall which frightened everyone. The King asked the men to sit calmly there until the smell passed away, and the men did as the King asked. But on later examination, many men lay unconscious as though half-dead until the King himself came and touched them. All of the watchdogs were dead except Vigi and Snati, Gestr's dog.

The King said: "Gestr, who do you suppose that man who came in here was?"

Gestr said: "I have not seen him before, but I have been told by my kinsmen that there was once a king named Raknarr,1 and from
their report it seems that I recognize him. He reigned over Helluland and many other countries. And when he had ruled the land a long time, he had himself buried alive with five hundred men at Rakinræsló, Rakinarr's Track. He murdered his father and mother and many other people. From what others relate, I expect that his burial mound will be northerly in the uninhabited part of Helluland.

The King said: "It seems likely to me that you are telling the truth. It is now my entreaty, Gestur," said the King, "that you seek out these valuables."

"That might be called a dangerous mission, sir," said Gestur, "but I will not decline the challenge if you prepare me for my journey, understanding that it will go hard for me."

The King says: "I shall take it to heart that your journey begins well."

Afterwards Gestur made ready. The King gave him forty iron shoes lined with down. He gave him two wizards according to Gestur's request. The man called himself Krókr, the woman, Krekja. Afterwards he gave him for assistance that priest who was named Jósteinn. He was a famous man and greatly esteemed by the King. Nothing was said, though, to Gestur about who he was.

The King said only: "He will be a great help when you are most oppressed."

"Why not let him come along then?" said Gestur. "You judge better
than most, but it seems to me that no one could tell by the looks of this man that he would do well in a great trial."

The King gave Gestr a short sword and said it would cut well if taken up in need. He gave him a cloth and told him to wrap himself in it before he entered the burial cairn.

The King gave Gestr a taper and said that it would light itself if held aloft, "for it will be dark in the mound of Raknarr. But stay no longer than the taper remains lit, and all will go well."

The King gave Gestr provisions for three seasons. Then he sailed north along the shore, straight toward Hálogaland and Finnmörk to Hafsbotnar.

And when they came north off Dumbshaf a man came over from the shore and entered service with them on the trip. He was named Rauðgrani. One-eyed was he. He had a blue-flecked, cowled cloak studded down to the middle of his legs. Jósteinn the priest wasn’t keen on him, for Rauðgrani spoke of heathendom and old lore with Gestr’s men, and said it best to worship by sacrifice for one’s good luck. And one day when Rauðgrani was urging them to heathenism, the priest, all wrathful, suddenly grasped a crucifix and placed it on the head of Rauðgrani. He plunged overboard, but never came up afterwards. They realized then that he had been Óinn. Gestr only regarded the priest coolly.

A little later they arrived at the uninhabited part of Greenland
when winter was coming on. They remained there over winter.

By some precipices they saw two poles of gold and, supported by them, a kettle full of gold. Gestr sent Krókr and Krekja to get the poles and the kettle. But when they arrived, intending to take them, the earth split under their feet, and it swallowed them so that the earth shut over their heads. In a short time everything returned as it had been before -- kettle, poles and everything.

Gestr stood watch each night in the hut's doorway during the winter. One night an awful bull came to the hut and bellowed loudly. It howled hideously. Gestr attacked the bull and hewed at it with an axe. The bull shook itself, and no impression was left on its hide. The axe broke. Then Gestr took the horns of the bull in both hands, and they struggled fiercely. To his sorrow Gestr found himself short of strength. The bull then tried to drag him to the hut's side wall and gore him up against it there. At that moment Jósteinn the priest arrived and struck the bull's backbone with the crucifix. With that blow the bull sank down into the earth, so that it never harmed anyone again afterwards. Nothing more worth relating happened.

19. Gestr and the Others Find the Mound

In spring they travelled away, and each one carried his own provisions. They went first over the land to the west and south-west.
Afterwards they turned and went across the country. They were first in glaciers, then a large burnt lava field, and so they took out the iron shoes that the King had given them. There were forty shoes, and there were twenty men, including Gestr. And when they had all donned shoes, except Jósteinn the priest, they walked across the lava field. But after they had walked a while, the priest was incapable of continuing. By then he walked with bloody feet in the lava.

Gestr then said: "Which of you boys will help this scratcher of skins,¹ so that he gets out of the mountain?"

No one answered, because everyone felt that they had enough to put up with.

"It would be wise to help him," said Gestr, "because the King strongly advised us not to deviate from his counsel. So, go now, priest, and sit up on my bag and carry with you your possessions."

The priest did so. Gestr managed to carry all that and walked the fastest besides. Thus they walked for three days. And when the lava field ended they arrived at the sea. There was a large islet just off the shore. Leading toward the islet lay a reef, narrow and long. It was dry at ebb-tide, and so it was when they arrived. They walked out to the islet, and there they saw a large mound.

Some men say that the mound could have been seen north of Helluland. But wherever it was, there have been no settlements nearby.
20. Gestr Vanquishes the Mound-Dweller

Gestr had the mound broken into during the day. By the evening, with the priest's assistance, they had forced an opening into the mound, but in the morning it was grown over as before. The day after they again broke in, but in the morning it was as before.

Then the priest wanted to watch over the break in the mound. He sat there all during the night and had at hand consecrated water and a crucifix.

And then later in the middle of the night he saw Raknarr who was brightly dressed. He asked the priest to go with him and said that he would profit from the journey -- "and here is a ring which I will give you, as well as a necklace."

The priest said nothing but sat calmly as before. Many monstrosities appeared to him, both trolls and supernatural beings, fiends and folk skilled in the black arts. Some coaxed him, but some threatened him, urging him to go away as before.

It seemed that he saw his kinsmen and friends there, as well as King Óláfr with his retainers, who asked him to travel with them. He also saw Gestr and his companions readying themselves, intending to go away; they called Jósteinn the priest to follow them and hasten away. The priest paid no attention to this or anything else he saw,
including how savagely these fiends screamed; they never came near
the priest, because he sprinkled holy water constantly.

Towards day all of these wonders vanished. Gestr, as well as
his men, then came to the mound. They saw that nothing about the
priest had changed.

They then lowered Gestr into the mound, and the priest and other
men held him firmly. It was fifty fathoms¹ deep to the floor of the
mound. Gestr had wound himself in the King's gift, the cloth, and gird
himself with the short sword. He had the taper in hand, and it kindled
as soon as he came down.

Gestr looked everywhere around the mound. He saw the ship,
Slóðan, and, in it, five hundred men. To have been seaworthy carrying
so many men the ship was therefore large, perhaps as large as Gnóð
which Ásmundr steered.² Gestr then boarded the ship. He saw that
they had all been ready to move before some of the candlelight fell
over them, but then they could not stir themselves. Their eyes rolled
and their nostrils flared. Gestr hacked at all of their heads with the
short sword, and it cut as if it slashed through water. He plundered
the ship of all ornaments and had them raised.

Afterwards he searched for Raknarr. He then found the descent
into the earth, and there he saw Raknarr sitting on a stool. Very
ill-looking was he to behold, and it was both foul and cold. A chest
stood at his feet, full of valuables. He had a brilliant necklace on his
throat and a thick, golden ring on his arm. In a coat of mail he was, and he had a helmet on his head and a sword in hand. Gestr went up to Raknarr and greeted him in a manner befitting a king; Raknarr bowed in return.

Gestr said: "You are famous, and, it seems to me, glorious to look upon. I have come a long way from home to visit you, so I'm sure you would have me well rewarded for my errand. Give me the finest valuables you have, and I shall then bear witness widely to your hospitality."

Raknarr offered the helmet on his head and Gestr took it, and next Gestr removed the coat of mail from him and Raknarr was the easiest about that. He had all the valuables from Raknarr except the sword, but when Gestr was about to take it, Raknarr sprang up and attacked Gestr. It was then seen that he was neither old nor stiff. Also, the king's gift, the taper, was by then all consumed. Raknarr flew into such a troll's rage then that Gestr was completely overpowered in the fight. It seemed to Gestr that he could see the way pointing to his death. As well, all of the men in the ship stood up. Thinking he could endure no more, Gestr called to Bárðr, his father, and a little later Bárðr arrived. He could do nothing, though, for the dead crew handled him so roughly he could come nowhere near Gestr.

Then Gestr promised the one who had shaped the sky and earth that he would take up the faith which King Óláfr preached, if he might
return alive from the mound.

Quickly, Gestr called to King Óláfr, exclaiming that the sight of him would help greatly. Soon Gestr saw King Óláfr who entered the mound with a great light. At that sight Raknarr was so startled that his strength disappeared, and, with King Óláfr's help, Gestr attacked so quickly that Raknarr fell backward. Then Gestr hacked off his head and laid it between Raknarr's thighs.³ Upon the arrival of King Óláfr all of the dead sat down in their places. When this business came to an end, King Óláfr disappeared from Gestr's sight.

21. Gestr's Baptism and His Death

It is now time to talk about those who were at the mound's surface while the wonders that we have described were going on underneath, for it happened that they all went mad except the priest. He never moved from the rope. And when Gestr tied himself to the rope, then the priest pulled him up with all of the valuables and welcomed him as one rescued from imminent death. They went to the spot where the men were fighting with each other, and the priest sprinkled water on them. Afterwards they returned to their senses.

They prepared to leave, but then it seemed to them that the earth nearby shook under their feet. The sea also flowed over the reef.
everywhere with a great dash of breakers, so that the water rose greatly over the entire islet.

Snati had never left the mound while Gestr was inside. Now no one seemed to know how to find the reef, so Gestr directed Snati out into the breakers, and the dog leapt furiously out at the waves where he expected to find the reef. The dog could not withstand King Raknarr’s power, though, and he drowned there in the billows. This seemed to Gestr the greatest loss.

Jósteinn the priest then walked forth in front with a crucifix in one hand and holy water, which he sprinkled, in the other. Then the waves parted so that they walked with dry feet on land.

They all proceeded back on the same road. Gestr presented all of the valuables to the King and told everything as it had happened. The King asked him then to accept baptism. Gestr said he himself had vowed thus in Raknarr’s mound. It was then done.

The next night after Gestr was baptised he dreamed that Bárðr, his father, came to him and said: “You have done ill when you gave up your faith, the faith of your ancestors, and allowed yourself to be cowed by paltry arguments into submission to a change of faith. And for that you shall suffer the loss of both of your eyes.”

Then Bárðr grasped roughly at Gestr’s eyes and disappeared afterwards. When Gestr woke up after this, he had such a strong pain in his eyes that they both sprang out the same day. Then Gestr
breathed his last in white baptismal garments.¹ This seemed to the King the greatest loss.

22. About Þorðarson’s Sons and Hjalti’s Son

During the following summer the brothers, Þórð and Þorvaldr, were bound for Iceland and arrived in their ship at Borðeyri in Hrútafjörður. They journeyed afterwards to their father and were thought the greatest men.

Þórð lived at Tunga after his father, and Þorvaldr married Herdís, the daughter of Óspak from Óspaksstaðr, and lived at Hella in Helludalr.

They were cousins, Þorbjörn, their father, and Hjalti Þórðarson who settled Hjaltadalr. The sons of Hjalti were Þórð and Þorvaldr, who held the largest funeral ever seen in Iceland for their father.¹ There were twelve hundred boothsmen² present. There Oddr Breiðfirðingr recited the verses he had composed about Hjalti. Earlier Glúmr Geirason had summoned Oddr in a dispute over eve’s milk to Þorskafjarðardalr. Then the brothers travelled from the north by ship to Steingrímssfjörður. There the brothers met with the sons of Þorbjörn from Hrútafjörður then, and all of them walked south together over the moor through a hollow spot called Hjaltdælalaut.
And when they arrived at the ping, they were so well endowed it seemed to men that the Aesir might have arrived. This was then said:

Not a single, strife-seasoned warrior there thought ought but Aesir arrived when staunch Hjalti’s sons strode, their serpent-scrolled headgear splendid. Glittering like gods they came to conquer in conference the throng at Porskafjörðr.

They defended the suit against Öddr with the support from the brothers from Hrútafjörðr. Afterwards they parted with the greatest friendship, each heading home; they parted kinsmen with the greatest love. A great family descended from the sons of Þórður and Hjalti.

It is not told whether Gestur Bárðarson might have had any children. And so here rests the saga of Bárður Snæfellsáss and his son, Gestr.
Notes

Chapter One

1. Dumbr's Sea is known today as Norður-íshaf in modern Icelandic or as the Norwegian Sea in English. It lies to the north of Iceland and extends east to the coast of Norway. The word dumba means "a mist" and is, hence, an appropriate adjective with which to describe this northern body of water. In his article, "A Study of the Place Names in Bárðar Saga Snæfellsáss" John G. Allee (p.24) mistakenly identifies this as the Arctic Ocean. He may have been misled by an earlier reference in the sentence to Helluland or 'Slab-Land' which has been named and described by the explorers Bjarni Herjolfsson, Leifr the Lucky, and Karlsfni as a "glaciated rock-bound country" and which can only be the south-east coast of Baffin Island or some northerly part of the coast of Labrador. It was never settled. See Graenertendinga saga.

2. In Pioneers of Freedom Sveinbjörn Johnson notes that "the Saga accounts point to individual instances of remarkable precocity, boys of twelve being almost fully developed." This renders the passage less fantastic than it might seem to the modern reader, for, as he continues, "many instances are mentioned of boys of twelve who were very strong, virtually grown, and capable of doing the work of much older men. The legal age was, at one time, twelve, a
corroborative circumstance, not especially curious, if the numerous stories of precocious youth be accepted as true." For his speculations on why this precocity occurred see page 283.

3. "Sprinkled with water" is a better translation for ausinn vatni than "baptised" which Skaptason and Pulsiano use in their translation. Ausinn, past participle of the verb, ausa, means literally "to sprinkle, to pour". The addition of vatni, "water" specifies the 'heathen' rite of naming a child after sprinkling it with water and not the Christian baptism as we understand it. For a discussion of the significance of this rite see S. Johnson, p. 276.

4. Mjöll refers to fresh, powdery snow, the whitest possible which falls in periods of calm. Old Icelandic has many specific words for snow and ice.

5. It was quite typical for children to be fostered by someone chosen by their parents regardless of whether the home was safe or not. Johnson gives a good account of this custom and the obligations it entailed. See pp. 284-285.

6. "In this northern region" is my translation of höfluna, from hálfa, which refers to a region of the world. Originally it was thought that the world was divided into three regions: the Northern region (Europe); the Eastern region (Asia); and the Southern region (Africa). After the discovery of America a fourth region was added. (Cleasby-Vigfússon, p. 242).
7. King Óláfr Haraldsson (b. 995-d. 1030), better known as St. Óláfr, was responsible for completing the conversion of Norway to Christianity, begun by an earlier king, Óláfr Tryggvason (b. 968-d. 1000). Elected king of Norway in 1015, St. Óláfr was utterly ruthless in his determination to convert his subjects. See G. Turville-Petre’s account of his reign in *The Heroic Age of Scandinavia*, pp. 140-164.

8. Haraldr Hálfdánarson, better known as King Haraldr Finehair, was king of Norway from 860 until his abdication in 930. He died in 933. It was with his appearance that detailed history of Norway begins, for, before his time, Norway had never been ruled by a single king. His paternal kingdom had been limited to a small district in eastern Norway until he, goaded by a girl who refused to consider the wooing of a man who was so limited in power, decided to make Norway his own. He vowed not to cut or comb his hair until he was master of Norway. The consolidation of his reign over Norway was fully achieved in 865. See Turville-Petre, pp. 109-119.

Chapter Two

1. Hálagaland refers to the most northern region of Norway. Its modern equivalent is Nordland.

2. “Barge” is my translation for *steinnökki*, which is, literally, a “stone-boat” or a flat-bottomed boat used for carrying stones. Only
context would suggest that it is a "small boat" which is the translation given by Skaptason and Pulsiano.

3. Burned alive is translated here from brenndu inni (from brenna, to burn") which meant to set fire to a house while the inhabitants were inside, besieged on the outside by a force. The practice was illegal and carried severe penalties, usually outlawry, which was the most severe punishment levied in Icelandic law. The most famous depiction of this practice in saga literature appears in Njál's Saga.

4. The "King Haraldr" of this passage is King Haraldr Halfdanarson who made himself sole ruler of Norway in 865 and used his power to extract heavy tribute from his subjects. Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla contains vivid descriptions of conditions during the reign of this king whose policies encouraged wholesale emigration to Iceland. In Norway and Iceland salt was obtained mainly by burning seaweed or by boiling seawater, hence the occupation, "salt-burner".

Chapter Three

1. This character is Helgi Heyjangrs-Bjarnarson who appears in Landnámabók, the record of settlement in Iceland.

2. "They were both greatly enchanted" is my translation of þau váru trylð mjök baði. This expression can be more literally translated as "trolled". "Troll" was a general term for any evil being including a sorcerer or sorceress as is the case here. Such beings
possessed magical powers. Along with jötna or giants, with which they are roughly synonymous, they are considered, in Northern mythology, to have originally been the souls of dead, evil people. A thorough discussion of trolls and other supernatural creatures can be found in Georgia Dunham Kelchner's book, *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and their Affinities in Folklore*, pp. 40-45.

3. "Slavewomen" is my translation for ambáttir (plural of ambátt), a word often translated as "bondwomen" or "handmaidens." Human beings were a highly valued, frequently traded commodity during the Viking Age. Slaves were so numerous that their presence created a distinct class with specific legal rights; their position in society was by no means fixed or inescapable. See P.G. Foote and O.M. Wilson's *The Viking Achievement*, pp. 65 - 78 for a complete discussion of slavery.

4. Old Icelandic tried to express kinship precisely. Hann var manni firnari en systeruð við Bárðr might be translated literally as "He was a man of an odd degree of male cousinship with Bárðr" or "He was more distantly related than first cousin on his mother's side to Bárðr". For a complete discussion of kinship see Kirsten Hastrup's book, *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland*, pp. 70-101.

5. Víglundr and Ketilrítár are principal characters in the romantic love story *Víglundar saga*, a late work.

6. Góti refers to a thirty-day month which extends from the
middle of February to the middle of March. For most practical purposes Icelanders used the concept of the seven-day week to reckon time; they divided their half-years, sumar and vetr, into twenty-six weeks, which, when named, played an important role in time reckoning. With several different calendar systems in use during the transition from pagan to Christian traditions, the concept of the month becomes ambiguous. There is some disagreement over the origins of the names of the twelve months, six per half year, and the extent to which the Icelanders relied on months to express time. See Hastrup, pp. 17-49 for a detailed treatment of temporal categories. Göi appears in many compounds, including göibeitta, translated later in the paragraph as "horsetails" (equisetum hyemale).

7. This journey is taken verbatim from Sturlubók.

8. "Chieftain" is my translation of göði; it often is translated as "priest" denoting the fact that these men were concerned with the spiritual as well as the secular lives of the people within their godord, or district. For more information see Turville-Petre’s Origins of Icelandic Literature, pp. 5-6.

9. King Hakon, ruler of Norway from 946-964, was killed in a battle that took place at Fitjar on the island of Stord (south of Bergen). Known popularly as Hakon the Good, he was killed by the sons of Eiríkr Blood-Axe.
Chapter Four

1. The expression *ganga álfreka* refers to the ritual of scattering excrement overboard ship as a means of driving away elves. *Drift* refers specifically to bird excrement.

2. Sigmundr is based on a character drawn from *Sturlubók*; this passage, as well as material that follows about his son, Einarr, is copied faithfully from the source. His farm, Laugarbrekka, was located on the tip of the Snæfell peninsula, east of present-day Arnarstapi.

3. "Rock hewer" is the closest translation possible in English for *bjarghögg*, a word which also refers to the process of removing stone in order to clear a spot for a road.

4. Bárðr is asserting his driftage rights in this passage. Rights to beached whales or driftwood were arranged legally and these rights were strictly observed. See Johnson's *Pioneers of Freedom* pp. 260-261 for details.

Chapter Five

1. For details on the various ball games played by Icelanders see Johnson in *Pioneers of Freedom*, pp. 270-271 and Foote and Wilson in *The Viking Achievement*, pp. 189-190.

2. *Sturlubók* supplies the general background for Eiríkr the Red's settlement of Greenland about 985. Greater detail on Eiríkr's discovery and subsequent colonization of Greenland is provided in *Grænlendinga saga* and *Eiríks saga*. 
3. *Sturlubók* supplies this genealogy in chapter 174. It does not mention Skeggi's stay with Eiríkr; Skeggi is described as a "great fighting man and sea-going trader".

4. It is impossible to reconcile the dates that accompany Bárðr's activities, if one assumes that Bárðr has a normal life span. The saga implies that he left for Iceland soon after King Haraldr's assumption of power in Norway which took place c. 865. Eiríkr the Red's colonization of Greenland did not take place before 985 or 986. It is conceivable that the writer wishes to make of Bárðr a superhuman, but Eiríkr could not "have been young when Bárðr arrived in Iceland".

5. Eiríksfjörður was a fjord on the south-west coast of Greenland. All trace of these early Icelandic settlements in Greenland have disappeared.

6. Sölvi is based on a character in *Sturlubók* who lived at the tip of Snæfellsnes at Sólvahamarr because he thought the farmland there better.

7. The slayer reduced the gravity of his offence if he reported the crime immediately; it was then classified as manslaughter or *víg* rather than murder or *mord*.

8. Porkell Bound-Foot is based on a character of the same name whose life is detailed in chapter 347 of *Sturlubók*.

9. "First generation settlers" is my translation for *landnámsmönnum*, the people who first settled Iceland during an
era known as "The Settlement". Taking place from approximately 890 to 910, it is depicted in Landnámabók.

Chapter Six

1. "Vow-god" is the literal translation of heitgúð. The word ð is added to Bárðr's name, is the singular form of Aesir. In Scandinavian mythology the Aesir were a group of related gods to whom members of another divine tribe, the Vánir were added. The addition of this suffix indicates that he was considered a god by the people of the region who prayed to him as to other pagan gods. Wilson and Foote provide more information on the Aesir in The Viking Achievement, pp. 387-391.

2. "Summoned" is my translation for stefna. A summons was an essential legal preliminary in an individual's prosecution. Made in the presence of witnesses at the home of the person to be prosecuted, it warned him to prepare a defense before the case was heard. From 1032 witchcraft was illegal. See Johnson, pp. 174-176.

Chapter Seven

1. The women's quarter was frequently separated from the men's with a screen or curtain in a typical Icelandic dwelling. See Foote and Wilson pp. 154-159.

Chapter Eight

1. In Scandinavian mythology Friggr was the wife of Óðinn. She was the goddess who insisted that every living thing promise under oath never to harm Baldr the good. Mistletoe was unfortunately overlooked
and it was a shaft from this plant that eventually killed Baldr. Þórr, traditionally known as the god of thunder, was also the hammer-wielding god. For more information on these gods see Foote and Wilson.

2. This mysterious fisherman is probably Þórr to whom Hetta referred in her prophetic verse. He has degenerated from the heroic god of thunder of earlier pagan mythology, becoming a consort of witches. The red beard is traditional. For more information see Margaret Schlauch, *Romance in Iceland* pp. 147-154.

Chapter Nine

1. A berserker was a special type of warrior who, when seized with hamrammr or berserk's rage, was possessed of enormous strength. During these fits of frenzy these berserks were often insensitive to pain, making them terrifying opponents. Further information is provided in Peter Foote's notes to *The Saga of Gísti*, pp. 64-65.

Chapter Ten

1. The origin of this character and the accompanying descriptive passage is found in *Sturlubók*, chapter 37.

2. "Dowry" is my translation for týlgdri heiman, literally, "something that follows from home". This customary payment in cash, land or goods was administered by the husband for his own profit, but was repaid in the event of a divorce. For a complete discussion of the
financial obligations within the institution of marriage see Foote and Wilson, p. 113.

3. Pálsson and Edwards on p. 30 of their translation of Sturlubók, titled The Book of Settlements: Landnámabók, speculate that these Hellismenn, literally "cave-men", were outlaws who had taken refuge in some caves.

4. "Lava field" is my translation for hraun. Originally a "rough place, a wilderness", in volcanic Iceland it came to mean a cold lava field (Cleasby-Vigfússon).


6. "Seven days" is my translation of sjau náttum, literally, "seven nights". In both Old and modern Icelandic time's passage is expressed in nights not days (Cleasby-Vigfússon).

7. "Fine snowflakes" is my translation of eskingr, literally "fine snow driven by a gale" (Cleasby-Vigfússon).

8. Size indicates giant origins.

9. Icelandic lawsuits were highly technical; Oddr's training would enable him to conduct a lawsuit which was, in effect, to reproduce
from memory an accurate statement of the many technical procedural rules from which no deviation in substance or phraseology was permitted. See Johnson, pp. 51-53.

10. "Seven" is the correct translation for sjau, but there may be a textual error here. Context would suggest that there should be four other men, to make up twelve in the party. Skaptason and Pulsiano's text reads fjórir menn aðrir, "four other men". See their edition p. 56.

11. This passage contains the description of the only marriage attributed to Oddr in Sturlubók, chapter 37.

Chapter Eleven

1. This information is given in Sturlubók. For a more detailed account see Grettis saga, the saga of Grettir Asmundarson, popularly known as 'Grettir the Strong'. The most famous outlaw in Iceland's history, he lived from 996 to 1031.

2. "Shed" is my translation for sel, sometimes translated as "shieling". Each farm had its shed which was a small house in a mountain pasture where many of the household lived over the summer months. The herdsmen tended the milk-cows; the women ran a dairy. See J. Simpson, *Everyday Life in the Viking Age*, p. 60.

Chapter Twelve

1. "Farmer" is my translation for bóni. This refers to a class of free farmers or "yeomen", of which the population of Iceland was primarily composed. Foote and Wilson discuss the term at length in
2. "From his shed in Hrútafjarðardalr he kept milk cattle" is my translation for: Hann hafði settör frá Hrútafjarðardali. Pulsiano and Skaptason translate the same sentence incorrectly as "He had a fishing outpost..." (p. 67).

Chapter Thirteen

1. These tables were probably no more than boards arranged on low trestles that were placed before guests when the meal was ready. The arrangement of seats established a hierarchy among the guests, the seats near the centre reserved for more highly-ranking guests. See J. Simpson's remarks in *Everyday Life in the Viking Age*, pp. 71-72.


Chapter Fifteen

1. There is a pun here; Gestr is both a proper name and the word, "guest". The brothers' response, translated "they believed it" (not given in Skaptason and Pulsiano's text) indicates that they have understood him to say that he is a guest. They obviously take him for one of Kolbjörn's cronies because of his colossal size. "Gestr" is also an alias for Óðinn, who, like Gestr was a wanderer.

2. "Knuckle-bone throwing" is my translation for *knútukast*, also
translated as "bone throwing contest".

Chapter Seventeen

1. Drandheimr is known today as Trondheim, and it is located in southern Norway. According to Snorri Sturluson it was built by King Óláfr Tryggvason, and at that time was called Nidaros or Kaupang.

2. King Óláfr Tryggvason (c.968-1000) ruled Norway from 995 to 1000. Although previous kings, in particular, Hakon the Good, had been Christians, Óláfr Tryggvason was the first to officially establish Christianity as the national religion of Norway. He is credited with the conversion of the peoples of Orkney, Greenland, Iceland (999 or1000), Shetland and Faeroe. An account of his reign is provided by G. Turville-Petre in The Heroic Age of Scandinavia, pp.130-139. Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla, among many other works covering the life of this popular king, would have provided the author of Bárðr saga Snaefellsáss with information concerning this missionary king.

3. "Retainer" is my translation for hírðmaðr, a special term borrowed from Anglo-Saxon, hired, that refers to the retinue of a king or earl. Foote and Wilson discuss this term at length, pp. 100-102.

4. Óláfr Tryggvason was not above using severity to convert his pagan subjects. In The Heroic Age of Scandinavia Turville-Petre remarks that "the few who spoke against his new religion, or declined to be baptized, were maimed or driven into exile" (p. 136).
5. "Prime-signed" is my translation of primsignadr. It refers to a minor form of baptism in which the sign of the cross was made over the heathen visitor in order to exorcise evil spirits. This made it possible for the heathen and Christian to co-exist without insult to either faith. Gwyn Jones discusses this rite in A History of the Vikings, p. 315.

6. "Christmas" is my translation of jólæ. I have changed the translation to suit the context, a Christian one, despite the fact that the word has not changed in Old Icelandic. In his work, The Golden Bough, J.G. Frazer discusses the transformation of heathen Yule into Christmas, pp. 472-476.

Chapter 18

1. Although King Ragnarr's name appears in various works such as Hálfdánar saga Ey:steinssonar no one has yet discovered the source for this evil man. J. Jónsson discusses the forms of the name in an early article titled, "Rakanlóði = Ragnarsslóði" Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi, 17 (1901).

2. Helluland is probably Baffin Island. See my first note to Chapter One on this mysterious location.

3. "Cloth" is an acceptable translation for dukr, but in this context it probably refers to a church tapestry, perhaps even an altar cloth, altaris-dukrid, which, being holy, would supply the required protection.

4. "Burial cairn" is my translation for hauðr which is also
translated as a “barrow”. Foote and Wilson discuss burial rites among
the Vikings with particular reference to those who accompanied the
dead, as well as the construction of burial mounds, and the practice of
ship burial in The Viking Achievement, pp. 406-414.

5. “Taper” is my translation for kerti which is, in fact, a special
candle used in a church service. It is also used in attending great men.
The king intends to protect Gestr from Ragnarr’s evil by giving him
ecclesiastical paraphernalia.

6. “Three seasons” is my rather literal translation of priggja

misseri. Three seasons would be equivalent to a year and half, a
misseri consisting of half a year. See Hastrup’s complete explanation
of this term in Culture and History in Medieval Iceland, pp. 25-29.

7. Finnmörk is the Old Icelandic name for Lappland.

8. Rauðgrani is definitely a manifestation of Óðinn who is
typically depicted as one-eyed. J. Simpson discusses Óðinn’s aspects in
detail in Everyday Life in the Viking Age, pp. 177-179.

9. “Worship by sacrifice” is my translation of blöta, which refers
to the practice of the heathen faith, characterized by blood sacrifice.
J. Simpson provides a vivid description of such sacrificial rites, pp.
181-187.

Chapter Nineteen

1. “Scratcher of skins” is my translation of skrátinni, which
Skaptason and Pulsiano give as “scroll-monger”. Although their
translation captures Gestr's scorn, it fails to communicate the sense conveyed in the Old Icelandic that this man who scratches words on skins (paper a rare commodity in a treeless land), scratches his own skin on the sharp volcanic rock encountered in the journey.

Chapter 20

1. The fathom, my translation for laðmr, was the standard unit of measure for depths or heights (Cleasby-Vigfússon).

2. Gnóð was a mythical ship, the Viking equivalent of Argo, Jason's magnificent ship with which he sought the Golden Fleece. It belonged to Asmundr. Skaptason and Pulsiano provide more detailed information in their textual note, p. 124.

3. Placing the severed head between the buttocks is a standard technique for quieting the undead. In Grettis saga Grettir quiets the roaming spirit of the mound-dweller, Kar, in exactly the same way.

Chapter Twenty-One

1. "White baptismal garments" is my translation of hvítavódir, literally, "white weeds". At the introduction of Christianity, neophytes in the week after their baptism used to dress themselves in white, their apparel symbolizing the cleansing power of baptism and the rebirth of the individual. The death of the freshly-converted individual is not an uncommon motif in the saga literature. Paul Schach identifies this motif in Hallfreðar saga in his article "The Theme of the Reluctant

Chapter Twenty-Two

1. The source for this passage, including the verse, is Landnámabók, chapter 207.

2. In the passage in Landnámabók which describes the same event there are 1440 rather than twelve hundred boothsmen. At these assemblies, held in the open air, men lived in huts which were called 'booths'. Their permanent walls were made of stone and turf, roofed for the occasion with cloth awnings.
Bibliography

Primary Sources:


Dictionaries and Grammars:


Secondary Sources:


Chadwick, H. M. *The Heroic Age.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1912.


Lefevere, Andre, ed. *Translation Literature: The German


