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FORNALDARSÖGUR AND FLATEYJARBÓK

SIX TEXTS found in the manuscript Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol) — *Fundinn Noregr*, *Helga þátr Þórissonar*, *Hversu Noregr byggðisk*, *Norna-Gests þátr*, *Sörla þátr*, and *Tóka þátr Tókasonar* — have been seen as having varying relationships with the genre of the *fornaldarsögur*.¹ Carl Christian Rafn included *Fundinn Noregr*, *Hversu Noregr byggðisk*, *Norna-Gests þátr*, and *Sörla þátr* in his canonical collection *Fornaldar sögur Nordrlanda* (1829–1830) not because he considered them actual *fornaldarsögur* but because he held them to be related to the *fornaldarsögur*. Bjarni Vilhjálmsson and Guðni Jónsson’s 1943–1944 edition of the corpus included those four texts, as well as *Helga þátr Þórissonar* and *Tóka þátr Tókasonar*, which Rafn had omitted. Bjarni and Guðni also dropped the distinction between “*fornaldarsögur*” and “related works” and treated the six Flateyjarbók texts as no different from the others. Since then, however, various studies of these works have found it more productive to consider them in terms of other genres. For example, Margaret Clunies Ross (1983) located *Fundinn Noregr* and *Hversu Noregr byggðisk* in the context of Snorri’s *Edda*, Andrew Hamer (1973) interpreted *Helga þátr Þórissonar* as a didactic work making use of Augustinian theology, and Joseph Harris (1980, 1986) identified *Sörla þátr*, *Norna-Gests þátr*, and *Tóka þátr* as what could be called “pagan-contact” þættir, a subgroup of the conversion þættir.² By 1993, Stephen Mitchell judged that of the six Flateyjarbók texts,

¹ For a recent introduction to the *fornaldarsögur*, see Torfi H. Tulinius (1993:167–246). The diplomatic edition of Flateyjarbók is the three-volume work of Guðbrandur Vigfússon and C. R. Unger (1860, 1862, 1868). *Fundinn Noregr* is in I:219–221, *Helga þátr Þórissonar* is in I:359–362, *Hversu Noregr byggðisk* is in I:21–24, *Norna-Gests þátr* is in I:346–359, *Sörla þátr* is in I:275–283, and *Tóka þátr Tókasonar* is in II:135–138.

² The other “pagan-contact” þátr that Harris analyzes is *Albani þátr ok Sunnifu*. The conversion þættir (*Rögnvalds þátr ok Rauðs*, *Eindriða þátr ilbreiðs*, *Völsa þátr*, *Sveins þátr ok Finns*, *Helga þátr ok Úlfs*, *Svaða þátr ok Arnórs kerlinganefs*, and *Þórhalls þátr knapps*) “comprise as their central narrative moment a conflict or opposition of Christianity and

only *Sörla þáttur* should still be numbered among the *fornaldarsögur*. *Fundinn Noregr* and *Hversu Noregr byggðisk* he excluded because they were non-narrative, *Helga þáttur Þórissonar* was rejected because of its structural and thematic similarity to saints' legends, and although *Norna-Gests þáttur* and *Tóka þáttur Tókasonar* were clearly related to the "heroic legends" subgroup of the *fornaldarsögur*, Mitchell was reluctant to admit them into that group because they were hardly "heroic legends" themselves. The present article will argue explicitly what Harris implies but does not insist on, namely that *Sörla þáttur*, too, should be excluded from the corpus of *fornaldarsögur* proper. Moreover, the reasons for doing so also support Mitchell's assessment of *Norna-Gests þáttur* and *Tóka þáttur*.

Norna-Gests þáttur provides a good example of one of the pitfalls in thinking about the relationship between the þættir found in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Óláfs saga helga* and the *fornaldarsögur*, which is the inclination to group a text with the *fornaldarsögur* because it contains a substantial amount of Scandinavian mythological or legendary material, as *Norna-Gests þáttur* does. Being surrounded by a framing narrative or being embedded in another text should not automatically change the generic affiliation of the text so enclosed, especially when, as in the case of *Norna-Gestr's* accounts of the heroes of Germanic legend, the relationship to the source material is relatively clear (e.g., a *Völsunga-saga*-style retelling of older material or an episode invented by the þáttur-author to insert *Norna-Gestr* into the world of legend). But few scholars insist on the distinction between the embedded elements and the textual matrix, which results in the misleading impression that *Norna-Gests þáttur* as a whole is a *fornaldarsaga* (e.g., Würth 1993:435b, Boyer 1998:71–72), even after Harris (1980:162–167) established on the basis of the narrative's theme, structure, and location within its own textual matrix of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* that its generic affinities lay with the pagan-contact þættir. These texts emphasize "the historical gulf between the Old and New Dispensations" (Harris 1980:166), as when *Norna-Gestr's* supernaturally lengthened life enables the Christian king Olaf Tryggvason to gain first-hand knowledge of the pagan past. Furthermore, because the þáttur as a whole seems to have been composed within the literary tradition of *Óláfs*

paganism" (Harris 1980:162). At the highest level, all eleven narratives have a tripartite structure in which an original (i.e., old, damned, pagan) state of affairs is changed by the intervention of a Christian agent and gives way to a new (i.e., redeemed, Christian) state (Harris 1980:165–167).

saga Tryggvasonar, the issue does not arise as to whether the extant version could be an adaptation of a lost *fornaldarsaga*.

If there is now little doubt that *Norna-Gests þáttur*, which contains retellings of authentically old heroic legends and the recitation of Eddic poetry, should be excluded from the corpus of the *fornaldarsögur*, then there ought to be no doubt at all that *Tóka þáttur Tókasonar* should be left out as well. While staying with King Olaf Haraldsson, Tóki relates his visits to the courts of the ancient Scandinavian kings Hrólfr kraki and Hálfr. Like Norna-Gestr, Tóki is not a figure from these legendary traditions himself, but unlike the stories told by Norna-Gestr, who mostly functions as an observer of the heroic scene, the focus of Tóki's anecdotes are his own dealings with these kings. These interactions are surely the invention of the þáttur-author, rather than being part of his received literary tradition, for they are there solely to elicit a particular response from the Christian king, namely, his judgment of his pagan predecessors. In short, although the framed narrative has the appearance of a *fornaldarsaga*, it is actually an imitation of one, created for the same didactic purposes that Harris describes for *Norna-Gests þáttur*. Indeed, the þáttur as a whole would seem to be an imitation of *Norna-Gests þáttur* (Harris and Hill 1989:111), designed to serve a similar function within *Óláfs saga helga* as *Norna-Gests þáttur* does within *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (Würth 1991:108, 131).

Now we come to *Sörla þáttur*. Harris groups this with *Norna-Gests þáttur* and *Tóka þáttur* among the pagan-contact þættir, because the supernaturally lengthened *Hjaðningavíg* fills the same role as the supernaturally lengthened life of the visiting stranger. (The spell laid on the battle causes any man who is killed to rise and fight again, with the result that the pagan warriors are discovered still engaged in combat one hundred and forty-seven years later by one of Olaf Tryggvason's retainers.) *Sörla þáttur* is interpolated between the two chapters of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* that recount how King Olaf first began his missionary efforts in Norway; it seems to serve as a thematic introduction to the account of that country's conversion. Like the embedded material of *Norna-Gests þáttur*, the embedded material of *Sörla þáttur* goes back to the traditions of Scandinavian myth and legend that are found in the *fornaldarsögur* proper. This material turns out to be a conflation of two originally separate traditions featuring a hero named Högni.³ One Högni is the

³ For a detailed discussion, see Rowe (2002), whose arguments are summarized here.

son of Hálfðan, whose beautiful dragon-ship is coveted by Sörli; this tradition is preserved in various forms in *Sörlastikki*, *Sörla saga sterka*, and *Hálfðanar saga Brönufóstra*. The other Högni (whose patronymic is never given) is the one involved in the *Hjaðningavíg*, which we know from *Ragnarsdrápa*, *Háttalykill*, the *Gesta Danorum*, *Skáldskaparmál*, and the Middle High German *Kudrun*. Whether the conflation was deliberate or simply the result of assuming that the two Högni's were the same, the result was fortuitous. Not only does the ship itself link the first two parts of the þátrr, providing Sörli's motivation for slaying Hálfðan and Heðinn's means of slaying Högni's queen and abducting his daughter, but the whole episode of its recovery from Sörli foreshadows the events leading up to the *Hjaðningavíg*. Sörli, having killed Högni's father, offers compensation, which Högni refuses in the same way that he will later refuse Heðinn's offer of compensation for having killed his wife. After each refusal, Högni joins battle with the one who had injured him, and in each case the injurer is himself injured but is later made whole. The dragon-ship episode and the prelude to the *Hjaðningavíg* differ in that the former is motivated by what we might call "natural greed", resulting in reconciliation and the brotherhood that Högni and Sörli maintain for life, whereas the latter is motivated by the pagan gods' unnatural magic, resulting in perpetually renewed strife between Högni and Heðinn. The contrast between the two episodes shows how society's mechanisms for adjusting for loss (compensation and sworn-brotherhood) function well under natural circumstances (where Högni gains a brother to replace his father) but break down when the gods intervene (as both sides may be said to lose in the *Hjaðningavíg*).

Comparison between the versions of the story of the *Hjaðningavíg* found in Saxo, Snorri, and *Sörla þátrr* shows that the þátrr-author has based his on that of *Skáldskaparmál* and has also borrowed from Snorri's *Ynglinga saga* to provide the description of the gods at the beginning of his tale. However, these borrowings include significant changes. The þátrr-author makes Óðinn into a king who is deceived by his mistress and who follows Loki's advice in everything; that mistress, Freyja, is portrayed practically as a giantess who ruthlessly pursues her evil ends and who thus assumes Hildr's original role as a valkyrie-like agent of Odinic malice; and Hildr herself is turned into a helpless onlooker. The account in *Sörla þátrr* thus retains Snorri's euhemerization of the gods while avoiding his characterization of them as benevolent protectors of mankind (as in the *Edda*) or as dignified dynastic founders (as in

Ynglinga saga). These changes would seem to be deliberate inversions of Scandinavian mythology rather than the folkloristic or popular degeneration of gods who are no longer worshipped.⁴ Drawing on comic exaggerations of Þórr's thick-headedness or Freyja's lust would be inappropriate for this particular narrative, as such a depiction of the gods would make the conversion to Christianity less of a happy necessity. No less importantly, it would also diminish the achievement of the retainer of Olaf's who ends the *Hjaðningavíg* by slaying all the contestants, and it would scarcely enhance the glory of Olaf himself, whose "luck" enables his retainer to prevail over the Æsir's magic and who thus replaces Óðinn as the controlling figure of the narrative. Like the embedded material of *Tóka þáttur*, the framed narrative in *Sörla þáttur* that looks so much like an example of the heroic-legend subtype of the *fornaldarsögur* is most likely a didactic artifice, in this case one intended to demonstrate the wretchedness of life and death under the malevolent dominion of the pagan gods. The differing treatments of the story of Sörli and the dragon-ship also support the conclusion that *Sörla þáttur* was not composed using the same generic conventions as the *fornaldarsögur*, for its grafting of the *Hjaðningavíg* onto the life of Högni Hálfðansson was rejected by *Sörla saga sterka*, a later adventure-tale *fornaldarsaga* that ends happily with the information that Sörli and Högni never sundered their friendship and that it is not mentioned whether either of them had any children.⁵

The discussion of these three þættir has brought together analyses from different perspectives that turn out to reinforce one another: on the basis of these narratives' theme and structure, their use of their sources, their manuscript context or textual matrix, and the apparent intent of their authors or editors, they should be considered as instances of the pagan-contact þættir, just as Harris argues, and not as instances of the *fornaldarsögur*.⁶ However, there are other þættir in Flateyjarbók that have also been seen as having some connection to the *fornaldarsögur*, and there the different kinds of analyses

⁴ Margaret Clunies Ross (1992:57) argues that the negative depiction of the Æsir in the *Gesta Danorum* is motivated by a similar agenda.

⁵ "... ok er eigi getit þar um, hvárt þeim hafi barna auðit orðit eða eigi eftir sik" (*Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda* [1950] III:410).

⁶ It is a coincidence that this conclusion transfers þættir from a saga genre to a þáttur genre. Although there are not many of them, þættir can belong to saga genres. For example, *Þorsteins þáttur stangarhöggs* is a miniature *Íslendingasaga*, and *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* is an example of the "adventure tale" subgroup of the *fornaldarsögur* (Mitchell 1993:206b).

have pointed to different generic affiliations for the text in question. What can we learn from these discrepancies?

One interesting result of grouping texts on the basis of their theme and structure is that this procedure separates texts that are thematically paired within their manuscript context or textual matrix. For example, *Sörla þátr* is a pagan-contact þátr and *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* is a short but full *fornaldarsaga*-like biography (Harris 1989:3a), yet these texts are also narratives of a father and a son, they fulfill closely related functions in a single textual matrix, the central episodes of each deal with issues of paganism and Christianity in very similar ways, and both have additional themes in common (e.g., the proper relationship between a king and his retainers).⁷ Or consider *Norna-Gests þátr*, one of the pagan-contact þættir, and *Helga þátr Þórissonar*, which Harris (1989:3a) identifies as a *fornaldarsaga*-like analogue of Celtic tales about a journey to the otherworld. These texts are found next to each other and are also linked by a forward reference in *Norna-Gests þátr*. As a negative exemplum, *Helga þátr* turns out to have an extraordinary number of parallels with *Norna-Gests þátr*, and even its Celtic tale type becomes morally significant, in that the fairy story supplies a narrative that can show the dark side of paganism and apostasy *without undercutting the positive view of the heroic virtues just provided by the Germanic legends* in *Norna-Gests þátr*. These examples suggest that when analyzing the theme of an embedded text (a prerequisite for establishing its genre), it is not enough to interpret the dependent narrative based on its relationship to the larger text in which it is found; it may also be necessary to consider its relationships to other texts interpolated into the same matrix, regardless of their genre.

Still other issues are brought out by a different set of examples. *Þorsteins þátr bæjarmagns* (not in *Flateyjarbók*) and *Helga þátr Þórissonar* are clearly related, not only on the basis of their theme and structure — according to Harris (1989:3a), *Þorsteins þátr* is also a *fornaldarsaga*-like analogue of Celtic tales about a journey to the otherworld — but additionally by their use of the same tradition about Guðmundr of Glasisvellir and a horn named Grímr (Simpson 1963:505, 510).⁸ However, from a matrix-text/manuscript-context

⁷ *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* is found in *Flateyjarbók* I:249–263 and *ÍF* XIII:339–370 (*Harðar saga*). The retainer of Olaf's who ends the *Hjaðningavíg* in *Sörla þátr* is the father of Þorsteinn uxafótr. For a fuller discussion of the thematic similarities between *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* and *Sörla þátr*, see Rowe (forthcoming).

⁸ *Þorsteins þátr bæjarmagns* is found in *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda* [1950] IV:319–344.

point of view they have to be considered as belonging to different genres. That is, we bring one interpretive framework to *Þorsteins þáttur* because it is copied as an independent text, and we bring a different interpretive framework to *Helga þáttur* because it is embedded in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and thematically paired with *Norna-Gests þáttur*. In this context, the journey to the other-world in *Helga þáttur* ceases to provide the text with its overall structure and instead is reduced to an introductory story whose function is to set up the conflict between Olaf and a powerful pagan figure; it is this conflict that is at the heart of the narrative as a whole. Similarly (to cite a Flateyjarbók text that is not related to the *fornaldarsögur*), *Helga þáttur ok Úlfs* is another work that on the basis of its theme and structure belongs to one group (the conversion þættir) but from a matrix-text/manuscript-context point of view has to be marked as different from the other members of that group.⁹ *Helga þáttur ok Úlfs* is indeed about conversion, but because it was added to the manuscript by a different scribe with (arguably) a different editorial program and is not embedded in a king's saga, it must be read against the conversion þættir of the Olaf-sagas and not with them (Rowe forthcoming).

Indeed, an analysis that uses structure as a marker of genre can end up identifying some texts as having a relationship to the *fornaldarsögur* that the traditional analyses using only subject matter and setting do not. Here I am thinking of Harris's theme-and-structure survey of the þættir, which comes to some conclusions that have not fully penetrated *fornaldarsaga* studies. An expansion of the corpus is suggested by his statement that *Orms þáttur Stórólfssonar* and *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts* are "comparable to *fornaldar sögur* such as *Örvar-Odds saga*" (Harris 1989:3a). A reduction of the corpus is implied by his noting that *Helga þáttur Þórissonar* and *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* "share the tone and many motifs of the *fornaldar sögur*" but are analogues of the journeys to the otherworld found in romances and, particularly, in Breton lays (Harris 1989:3a). Stephen Mitchell also acknowledges *Orms þáttur*'s many connections to the *fornaldarsögur* (Mitchell 1991:22) and *Helga þáttur*'s dissimilarities (Mitchell 1993:206b), but Harris's position regarding *Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts* and *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* are (to the best of my knowledge) unique.¹⁰

⁹ *Helga þáttur ok Úlfs* is found in *Flateyjarbók* III:445–460.

¹⁰ My own view regarding *Orms þáttur* is that, despite the *fornaldarsaga* elements in the beginning and its biographical serial-adventures structure, the text as we have it is deployed as a kind of *Íslendingaþáttur*, using an unusual Icelander's interactions with powerful men in Norway to make a particular point about a king and an Icelander. In this regard, it is not so different from *Audunar þáttur vestfirzka*.

A syncretic analysis of *Porsteins þátr uxafóts* could marshal the following evidence. Þorsteinn's dramatic encounters with the trolls are the narrative's chief *fornaldarsaga*-like plot elements; also suggestive of the *fornaldarsögur* is its biographical structure, which features serial adventures in the manner of a *fornaldarsaga* like *Örvar-Odds saga* rather than the feuds of a biographically organized *Íslendingasaga* such as *Egils saga*. Undermining the relationship with the *fornaldarsögur* are the nationality of the hero and the fact that the whole of the story takes place after the settlement of Iceland. A setting before the settlement is one of the standard markers of the genre, and perhaps it is for this reason that Mitchell (1993:206b) does not include *Porsteins þátr* among the *fornaldarsögur*. In terms of its sources and analogues, *Porsteins þátr* draws as much on *Íslendingasögur* and related texts such as *Landnámabók*, *Grettis saga*, *Prests saga Guðmundar góða*, and *Þorskfirðinga saga* (*Harðar saga*: clxix–clxxiv) as on texts related to the *konungasögur* (i.e., *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, *Sörla þátr*, and *Orms þátr*). It also has parallels with *Hallfredar saga* (Binns 1953:52–56), which is another example of a text that bridges the genres of the *Íslendingasögur* and the *konungasögur*. Because the protagonist of *Porsteins þátr* is an Iclander of extraordinary strength who kills trolls and visits with *jarðbúar*, his þátr is aligned to some extent with the narrative tradition exemplified by *Grettis saga*, but because the description of Þorsteinn's encounter with the *jarðbúar* is highly influenced by typology and the troll-killing is simply the mechanism for Þorsteinn's conversion to Christianity, the þátr as we have it now is far more comparable to pagan-contact þættir such as *Sörla þátr* than it is to the *fornaldarsögur*. In particular, its theme of finding fathers (biological and spiritual) and serving kings (terrestrial and heavenly) is the complete opposite of that of *Örvar-Odds saga*, which is about rejecting one's father and maintaining one's independence. *Porsteins þátr uxafóts* would thus appear to be a text whose overall structure is less significant generically than the local structure of some of its episodes. One might even consider it a secondary development of the conversion þættir, in that it expands what is essentially a conversion þátr to encompass the entire life of the protagonist.

The overall structure of *Porsteins þátr bæjarmagns*, however, cannot be dismissed so easily. This narrative has the pattern of a centripetal Arthurian romance like Chretien's *Yvain*, in which, after an introductory episode, a knight of Arthur's court undergoes a bipartite series of adventures, wins a wife and lands of his own, experiences a change of personality, and leaves

Arthur's court for good.¹¹ Some of the action that *Porsteins þáttir bæjarmagns* structures in this way has its parallel in folktale (Simpson 1966, Ciklamini 1968, Power 1985), and some can be traced back to various myths about Þórr that were mutated and conflated into the story about Thorkillus, Godmundus, and Geruthus found in Book VIII of the *Gesta Danorum*. This reflex of mythological material is what connects *Porsteins þáttir bæjarmagns* with the *fornaldarsögur* (*Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, for example, also makes use of it), although strictly speaking, the temporal setting of the entire narrative—during the reign of Olaf Tryggvason—should preclude this generic identification.¹² *Porsteins þáttir bæjarmagns* is also interesting because it has a number of features in common with the þættir found in the sagas about the two King Olafs, although it is not found embedded in any version of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* and it plays on the themes of Christianity and Olaf's luck for comic effect rather than for serious purposes. The royal retainer who takes advantage of his king's luck to outwit pagan opponents and earn fame, fortune, and a wife is also met with in *Hróa þáttir*; an evil supernatural being demands tribute from a supernatural being who is friendly to humans in *Porsteins þáttir uxafóts* and in *Orms þáttir*; and a Christian battles the opponents of these "good" creatures in *Porsteins þáttir uxafóts*, *Orms þáttir*, and *Sörla þáttir*. Given the apparent intent of the author to put together an entertaining tale of magical

¹¹ The introductory adventure (ch. 2) is that of Þorsteinn's theft of the ring and the tablecloth from the underworld. The central adventures begin with his receiving from a dwarf the magic implements that will enable his later successes (ch. 3). The first part of this (chs. 4–11) is his first visit to Risaland, where he helps Guðmundr's men against Jarl Agði and his retainers, kills Geirröðr, and takes Agði's daughter Guðrún back to Norway. The second part of the central adventures (chs. 12–13) are his visit to King Olaf, during which he marries Guðrún and receives permission to return to Risaland, and his second visit to Risaland, where he takes over his wife's patrimony, recovers the horns that Agði had stolen, and seals Agði in his grave-mound with the sign of the cross. Ch. 13 also contains the conclusion, in which Þorsteinn visits Olaf one last time to give him the horns and in which the narrator reports that the horns disappeared when Olaf did. Þorsteinn begins his adventures as an unpopular man (*Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda* [1950] IV:321: "ekki var hann mjök kenndr af hirðmönnum. Þótti þeim hann stríðlyndi ok óvæginn") but ends up winning the good-will of the royal retinue (*Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda* [1950] IV:342–343: "báðu allir vel fyrir honum, því at Þorsteinn var orðinn vinsæll"); that he is a changed man is also signalled by his new nickname (from *bæjarmagn* to *bæjarbarn*). Power (1985) argues for a Celtic source for the Norse stories of visits to the otherworld and mentions *Laoghaire Mac Crimthann* as a tale that has a number of parallels with Þorsteinn's central adventures.

¹² Mitchell (1993:206b) includes *Porsteins þáttir bæjarmagns* among the *fornaldarsögur* without commenting on this aspect of the narrative.

Scandinavian adventure, it is probably more accurate to say that *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* is a secondary development of the *fornaldarsögur*, in that it deploys the interaction between a Christian retainer and the pagan world developed in the didactic Olaf-þættir with a structure that entered Old Norse literature with the translated romances. Here it is the temporal setting that has lost its generic significance. Rather than associating the fantastic with a period of history (i.e., the story has to take place long ago because that was when strange beings and magical occurrences were commonplace), the fantastic is associated with a contemporary geographical location. This change — perhaps borrowed from romance itself — opens up the genre to the narrative possibilities offered by heroes who are Christian or Icelandic or both.

A text such as *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns*, which populates an Arthurian narrative structure with Scandinavian characters from the Christian era, shows the difficulty of applying the standard generic distinctions. Although I have argued in the past that some texts are deliberate hybrids of different genres (Rowe 1993), here we have an author who simply seems to have considered that a fairly wide range of structures, characters, and settings were potential material for an entertaining story. To say this is merely to echo scholars such as Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (1971) and Marianne Kalinke (1982) who have long urged that we consider a larger category of “legendary fiction” rather than trying to separate the *fornaldarsögur* from the *riddarasögur*. Similarly, if I suggest that *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* takes the didactic Olaf-þættir as one of its points of departure, and I mean that suggestion as a reminder that genres evolve (emerging, merging, diverging, and disappearing) over time, that, too, is old news.¹³ What I believe is a new insight is what the Flateyjarbók texts illustrate: the complex intertextual construction of the themes of dependent þættir. Theme and narrative structure are the two most important elements of the generic repertory, but in the case of the þættir in the Olaf-sagas, theme emerges not only from the relationship between the embedded text and its matrix text but also from the relationship between the embedded text and any other embedded texts to which the editor of the manuscript has linked it. Here editorial intention must take precedence over audience reception. It is certainly valid to analyze the compilation that results from a series of scribes copying and expanding the Olaf sagas, as most audiences will neither know nor care which redactor added which þáttur. However, when an individual þáttur, rather than the compilation as a whole, is being

¹³ See, for example, Kalinke (1985:345) and Weber (1986:432).

studied, our interpretation must take all relevant editorial activities into account, whether intratextual or intertextual. When we know that a particular redactor of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* added *Norna-Gests þáttir* and *Helga þáttir Þórissonar* to his copy, putting them right next to each other and linking them with a forward reference, we would be well advised to at least try reading them as a pair. We may also note they were the only þættir he added (Ólafur Halldórsson 1993:449b), and so they form a significant part of his editorial project. Jón Þórðarson added six þættir when he expanded *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, possibly making *Sörla þáttir* and *Þorsteins þáttir uxafóts* elements of a larger textual cycle (Rowe forthcoming), but in any event their parallel locations in the matrix saga and the genealogical relationship of their protagonists similarly suggest that they should not be read in isolation. What we learn from Flateyjarbók applies not just to the *fornaldarsögur* but to all genres: the generic affiliation of a text must be established case by case, if not manuscript by manuscript.

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EFNISÁGRIP

Fundinn Noregur, Helga þáttur Þórissonar, Hversu Noregur byggðist, Norna-Gests þáttur, Sörla þáttur og Tóka þáttur Tókasonar eru allt frásagnir í Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol) og voru lengi taldar með fornaldarsögum en síðastliðinn áratug hafa verið bornar bríður á þá flokkun nema hvað Sörla þátt varðar. Í greininni er því haldið fram að sá þáttur eigi ekki heldur heima innan bókmenntategundarinnar, hann sé, eins og Norna-Gests þáttur og Tóka þáttur, lærð stæling fremur en ósvikin fornaldarsaga. Þessi niðurstaða vekur upp spurningar um hvernig bókmenntategundir séu afmarkaðar og hvaða máli það skipti þegar kemur að því að skýra efnissamsetningu safnhandrita. Formgerð er eitt af því sem segir fyrir um bókmenntategund en ef einblínt er á hana getur mönnum sést yfir það þegar textar af ólíkum tegundum eru efnislega tengdir saman innan eins og sama handrits (t.d. Sörla þáttur og Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts og Norna-Gests þáttur og Helga þáttur Þórissonar). Þegar skoðað er hvernig tiltekinn texti er felldur inn í stærra verk er ekki nóg að athuga hvernig hann er sniðinn að samhenginu heldur einnig hvernig hann tengist öðrum textum sem eru á sama hátt felldir inn í hina stærri heild, óháð því hværrar tegundar þeir eru. Áhersla á formgerðina getur einnig gengið gegn þeim vísbendingum um tegund sem felast í efni og umgjörð textans, eins og þegar Þorsteins þætti uxafóts er líkt við fornaldarsögu og Þorsteins þætti bæjarmagns við riddarasögu. Þessi dæmi virðast fremur bera vott um bókmenntategundir sem eru í þróun: Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts er þannig nýtt afbrigði af þætti, þar sem frásögn af trúskiptum er þanin út svo hún rúmar alla ævi söguhetjunnar; Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns er hins vegar nýtt afbrigði af fornaldarsögu sem sameinar efni sem við könnumst við úr Ólafspáttum, annars vegar samskipti kristins hirðmanns við heiðið samfélag, og hins vegar formgerð þýddra riddarasagna.

Að öllu samanlögðu virðist sem við flokkun í bókmenntategundir verði að meta hvem texta fyrir sig, og jafnvel birtingarmynd hans í hverju handriti fyrir sig.

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