

THE EXTANT ICELANDIC MANIFESTATIONS
OF RAGNARS SAGA LOÐBRÓKAR¹

I

IN a stimulating contribution to *Einarsbók*, the *Festschrift* for Einar Ólafur Sveinsson published in 1969, Bjarni Guðnason discussed the interrelationship of the extant Icelandic manifestations of *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, and the relationship of *Ragnars saga* to *Völsunga saga*.² While his view of these two subjects may not be entirely acceptable in every respect, as I shall hope to show in this paper, it nevertheless provides a wholly satisfactory framework for discussion. In this paper I shall review Bjarni's arguments, criticizing some of them and developing others, and will tentatively present a view of the textual background to *Ragnars saga* differing somewhat from his, but also profiting from it in several ways. In this way I shall hope to provide the basis for a short discussion, in the second and final part of this paper, of Bjarni's approach to the interrelationship of the

¹ The first part of this paper (i.e. up to p. 64) is a somewhat revised version of a paper delivered in Reykjavík at the Second International Saga Conference on Monday, August 6, 1973, under the title 'The principal Icelandic versions of the story of Ragnarr loðbrók'. I am grateful to Mr. J. A. B. Townsend and Dr. R. M. Perkins, both of University College, London, for making a number of valuable suggestions while I was preparing this part of the paper; and to Professor Bjarni Guðnason of the University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Mr. Alfred P. Smyth, now of the University of Kent at Canterbury, and Dr. Marina Mundt of the University of Bergen, all of whom, in contributing to the discussion following the delivery of my paper at the Conference, also made valuable suggestions of which I have done my best to take account in this revised and enlarged version. With regard to the second part of this paper, which has been prepared since the Conference, I am grateful for advice and criticism to Professors Bo Almqvist and Alan J. Bliss, and to other members of the Interdisciplinary Seminar in Medieval Studies at University College, Dublin, with whom I was privileged to discuss a number of problems. What errors remain are, of course, entirely my own.

² Bjarni Guðnason, 'Gerðir og ritþróun Ragnars sögu loðbrókar' in *Einarsbók. Afmæliskeðja til Elnars Ól. Sveinssonar, 12. desember 1969* (1969), 28-37.

extant Icelandic manifestations of *Ragnars saga* in the light of some criticisms of this approach made recently by Lars Lönnroth in a review of *Einarsbók* published in *Medieval Scandinavia* (1971).³ In this discussion I shall attempt to show that, whatever the limitations of Bjarni's approach may be, it most certainly does not deserve the particular criticisms levelled against it by Lönnroth.

As Bjarni points out, *Ragnars saga* is preserved principally in two texts which differ from each other in various ways, and are contained in the parchment manuscripts Ny kgl. sml. 1824 b, 4to and AM 147, 4to.⁴ The differences between these two texts of the saga will be discussed in detail later in this paper. Narrative passages dealing with Ragnarr loðbrók and his sons are also to be found in Arngrímur Jónsson's sixteenth-century Latin work *Rerum Danicarum Fragmenta*, based on the lost *Skjöldunga saga*,⁵ and in the so-called *Ragnarssona þáttur*, which is contained in *Hauksbók*.⁶ According to Bjarni, both *Skjöldunga saga* and a version of *Ragnars saga* were among the *þáttur's* sources.⁷ In addition to *Ragnars saga*, Ny kgl. saml. 1824 b contains *Völsunga saga*, which immediately precedes *Ragnars saga* in the manuscript, and a number of stanzas from *Krákumál*, which immediately follow it.⁸ The story of *Ragnars saga* is linked to that of

³ See *Medieval Scandinavia*, 4 (1971), 175-81.

⁴ The two texts have been edited, together with the 1824 b text of *Völsunga saga*, in Magnus Olsen, ed., *Völsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, *STUAGNL* (1906-08). Both *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* have also survived in a number of paper manuscripts which, however, ultimately derive from 1824 b, as Olsen, VII-X, and Guðnason (1969), 29, point out.

⁵ See Jakob Benediktsson, ed., *Arngrimi Jónæ opera latine conscripta*, I, *Bibliotheca Arnarnagana*, IX (1950), 358-59, 464-66. On the extent of the indebtedness of this work to *Skjöldunga saga*, see Benediktsson, ed., *Arngrimi . . . opera . . .*, IV, *Bibliotheca Arnarnagana* XII (1957), 107-17; Bjarni Guðnason, *Um Skjöldunga sögu* (1963); and Jakob Benediktsson's review of the latter work in *Íslensk tunga*, 4 (1963), 136-51.

⁶ See Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Hauksbók* (1892-96), 458-67, and pp. XCI-III of his introduction.

⁷ See Guðnason (1969), 30.

⁸ Olsen did not include *Krákumál* in his edition of *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga*, except insofar as he printed those parts of it which he was able to read in the 147 text. For bibliographical information relating to *Krákumál*, see *Islandica* V (1912), 36-39, and *Islandica* XXVI (1937), 61-62.

Völsunga saga, and is made to form a reasonably logical sequel to it, through the person of Ragnarr's second wife, Áslaug, the daughter of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani and Brynhildr Buðladóttir. It is not clear from the state in which the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* has been preserved whether *Völsunga saga* preceded *Ragnars saga* in that manuscript as well as in 1824 b, but it does seem likely that the *Ragnars saga* which is reflected in 147 was preceded by a *Völsunga saga*, since reference is made in the course of the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* to the meeting of Sigurðr and Brynhildr and the birth of Áslaug, in a manner which seems to assume an awareness on the reader's part of the events in question.⁹ Bjarni sets out to answer the following questions: Did *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* exist independently of each other, before being joined together in the manner reflected in the two principal extant texts of *Ragnars saga*? Which is the older, *Völsunga saga* or *Ragnars saga*? In short, what is the precise nature of their relationship? Since *Völsunga saga* has been preserved only in connection with *Ragnars saga*, as is shown by the two principal extant manuscripts of the latter, and as the *Völsungsrímur* also indicate,¹⁰ there is no textual evidence to suggest that *Völsunga saga* ever existed independently of *Ragnars saga*. This leads Bjarni to a discussion of the question of whether *Ragnars saga* ever existed independently of *Völsunga saga*; and this is the starting-point for the central part of his paper, in which he seeks to establish the exact nature of the *rittengsl*, as he calls them, or literary relations,¹¹ between the various extant manifestations of the story of Ragnarr, his wife Áslaug (also called Kráka or Randalín) and his sons. Leaving aside for the moment Lönnroth's objection that 'the task would appear hopeless considering the fact that Ragnarr was one of the most popular legendary heroes in Old Norse tradition',¹² I shall now go on to examine in some detail, and hopefully to develop in some respects, the way in which Bjarni sets about his allegedly hopeless task.

His first move is to compare and contrast the *Ragnars saga* preser-

⁹ See Olsen, LXXXVI and 180.

¹⁰ See Guðnason (1969), 30, and the references given in his eighth and ninth footnotes.

¹¹ This term will be discussed later in this paper (see p. 66 below).

¹² See *M. Scan.* (1971), 178.

ved in 1824 b with *Ragnarssona þáttr*. This latter, after relating in a form much briefer than the corresponding part of 1824 b the story of Ragnarr's slaying of a serpent in Gautland, goes on to refer to a saga of Ragnarr in the following words:

... ok for þat sva sem segir i sogv Ragnars konvngs at hann feck síþan Þorv borgarþiort ok síþan lagþiz hann i hernað ok frelsti allt sitt ríki.¹³

Which *Ragnars saga* is the one so referred to? After a cursory reading, it might be thought that the compiler of *Ragnarssona þáttr*, who may well have been Haukur Erlendsson,¹⁴ had before him a version of *Ragnars saga* similar or identical to the one reflected in 1824 b, and simply made an abstract of it for the relevant parts of the *þáttr*. According to Bjarni, however, this cannot be the case, partly in view of certain differences between the story of Ragnarr's slaying of the serpent as it is told in the *þáttr*, and the same story as it is told in 1824 b, and partly also in view of other differences between the *þáttr* and 1824 b in later sections of the two works. Since the differences between those parts of the two texts which deal with the serpent-story¹⁵ are not listed by Bjarni, the most important of them may be noted here. In 1824 b, Herruðr is simply a powerful jarl in Gautland; in the *þáttr* he is said to be a jarl in the service of Ragnarr. In 1824 b his daughter, Þóra, receives the serpent as one of her father's daily presents to her; in the *þáttr* she receives it as a *morgingjöf*. In 1824 b the serpent is made to lie on gold, the amount of which increases underneath it as the serpent itself grows in size and ferocity; in the *þáttr*, on the other hand, while the serpent grows large and fierce much as in 1824 b, no mention is made of gold. An important difference, to which attention has recently been drawn by Marina Mundt's

¹³ See *Hauksbók*, 458.

¹⁴ See Guðnason (1969), 30.

¹⁵ See *Hauksbók*, 458, ll. 6-31 and Olsen, 116, l. 13-121, l. 29. It may be pointed out here that 1824 b differs from the *þáttr* in referring to the serpent at one point as a *lyngovmr*, a word which A. Edzardi, in the preface to his revised edition of von der Hagen's translation of *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga, Völsunga - und Ragnars - Saga* . . . , 2. Auflage (1880), XXXVIII-IX, listed together with other stylistic features as indicative of the influence of *Piðriks saga* on these two sagas.

article on the dragon-fight in *Ragnars saga*,¹⁶ is the fact that we have no account in the *þáttr*, as we do in 1824 b, of Ragnarr being identified as the slayer of the serpent through the discovery of his spear-point in the serpent's body. Mention is made of a spear in the *þáttr*, to be sure, but there is no story there, as there is in 1824 b, of the spear-point becoming disconnected from the spear-shaft in the course of Ragnarr's fight with the serpent, and being later identified as belonging to him. It may also be pointed out, for what it is worth, that the serpent rises up and breathes poison onto Ragnarr in the *þáttr*, but does not do either of these things in 1824 b.

The more important of the remaining differences between the two works have been listed by Bjarni, and are very briefly as follows: in the *þáttr* Eysteinn, king of the Swedes, is called Eysteinn beli and is a tributary king of Ragnarr's, whereas in 1824 b he has no nickname,¹⁷ is a friend of Ragnarr's, and rules independently. In the *þáttr* the two sons of Ragnarr by Þóra borgarhjörtr, Eirekr and Agnarr, the former of whom desires Eysteinn's daughter Borghildr, are defeated in battle by Eysteinn after unsuccessfully trying to make him tributary to themselves, rather than to Ragnarr. In 1824 b, on the other hand, they invade Sweden after the friendship between Eysteinn and Ragnarr has broken up as a result of Ragnarr's abandoning his idea of marrying Eysteinn's daughter, who is here called Ingibjörg. In the *þáttr*, Ívarr beinlausí, one of Ragnarr's sons by Áslaug, founds the city of York, and wins the loyalty of the English chieftains without apparently making them any material offer, whereas in 1824 b he founds London, and wins the support of the strongest men in England by giving them large amounts of gold and silver. From differences of this kind, and from the fact that, in his view, the 1824 b and 147 texts of *Ragnars saga* both seem to differ from *Ragnarssona þáttr* in showing the influence, in style and subject-matter, of *Völsunga saga*

¹⁶ Marina Mundt, 'Omkring dragekampen i Ragnars saga loðbrókar', in *Arv*, 27 (1971), 121-40. Mundt sees this feature as indicative of the influence of *Tristrams saga* on *Ragnars saga*.

¹⁷ In the 147 text of *Ragnars saga*, on the other hand, Eysteinn is given the nickname 'beli' in the verse which corresponds to verse 19 of the 1824 b text. See Olsen, 183, 9r, l. 26; p. 144 and p. 208.

and *Piðriks saga*,¹⁸ Bjarni concludes that the *Ragnars saga* which underlay the *þáttur* was considerably different from either of the versions of *Ragnars saga* reflected in 1824 b and 147.

Bjarni's next step is to compare and contrast with each other the texts of *Ragnars saga* preserved in these two manuscripts. It is at this point that his treatment of his subject becomes rather disappointingly unspecific, though the general outlines which he offers show the way to a specific conclusion. As Bjarni points out, the text of *Ragnars saga* in 147 has been exceedingly poorly preserved. Magnus Olsen, who edited it together with the 1824 b text of *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* in his edition of 1906–08, was able to read only scattered portions of the text. The printed portions, since he was able to read the text only fragmentarily, are seldom extensive and often do not even run to whole sentences. Much may nevertheless be learnt from a close study of the 147 text of *Ragnars saga*, as Olsen and Bjarni both realized. The 147 text of *Ragnars saga* seems to begin, as Olsen has shown, with what corresponds to chapter II in the 1824 b text of *Ragnars saga*—that is, with Ragnarr's slaying of the serpent and the winning of Þóra, rather than with the chapter dealing with Heimir and Áslaug.¹⁹ This latter seems to form the opening chapter of *Ragnars saga* according to 1824 b,²⁰ but was treated by early editors of *Völsunga saga* as the final chapter of *Völsunga saga*.²¹ According to Olsen at least, the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* comes to an end on the recto of the leaf numbered by Olsen for editorial pur-

¹⁸ See Guðnason (1969), 31. This is a somewhat simplified version of a view advanced by Edzardi, XXVI–XXXIX and XLIII–IV (footnote). Edzardi pointed out striking parallels in wording between *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga*, and also drew attention to parallels between these two sagas and *Piðriks saga*. Edzardi nevertheless admitted (XXX) that *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* differed markedly from each other in style; and his examples of parallels between *Piðriks saga* and *Ragnars saga* were by no means as plentiful or as striking as those he gave of parallels between *Piðriks saga* and *Völsunga saga*. In my opinion, the state of the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* does not permit us to speak in any way confidently of traces of the influence of *Piðriks saga* in that text.

¹⁹ See Olsen, LXXXVI.

²⁰ See Olsen, LXXIX.

²¹ See, for instance, the editions of Rafn (*Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*, I, 1829) and Bugge (*Norrøne Skrifter af sagnhistorisk Indhold*, II, 1865).

poses as 19.²² This page, 19 recto, which is evidently the one which Olsen found easiest to read, contains, among other things, a quotation from Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Knútsdrápa* about Ívarr having the blood-eagle cut on Ella's back,²³ a statement about Ívarr becoming king over part of England, a mention of his being reputedly responsible for the death of King Edmund, and finally, the following statement: 'loðbrokar synir foru víða með hernáði vinn England vestur ok suo víðanans stadar.' Olsen's view that this is the point at which the saga comes to an end is presumably based partly on a consideration of the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* in relation to the accounts of Ragnarr and his sons in the *þáttur*²⁴ and in Arngrímur's *Rerum Danicarum Fragmenta*,²⁵ and partly on the fact that the sentence just quoted brings the writing on 19 recto to an end very slightly higher up the leaf than is the case with the other leaves in this gathering.²⁶

A comparison of the 1824 b and 147 texts of *Ragnars saga*—taking into account, of course, the fragmentary state of the latter text—very soon reveals that they resemble each other closely; in parts, as Olsen pointed out, they are virtually word for word the same. It is grossly misleading, at least as far as these two texts are concerned, to speak of 'the glaring differences between the written sagas', as Lönnroth does in his review of *Einarsbók*.²⁷ Nevertheless, as Bjarni quite rightly points out, there are certain important differences between these two texts, and his list of these differences can, I think, be developed in several ways. In the first place, while it is quite true, as Bjarni suggests, that both these texts of *Ragnars saga* are linked to *Völsunga saga* through the person of Áslaug in the manner described earlier, there is no evidence that the *Ragnars saga* reflected in 147 was linked to *Völsunga saga* in precisely the same way as the one reflected in 1824 b, i.e. by means of a separate chapter dealing with Heimir and Áslaug. The only clear-cut evidence of a link with

²² See Olsen, LXXXVI, and 193–4.

²³ The surviving verses of *Knútsdrápa* have been edited by Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-íslandske Skjaldedigtning*, AI (1912), 248–51, and BI (1912), 232–34.

²⁴ See *Hauksbók*, 464, and the remarks made below, pp. 71–72, on the chaptering of *Ragnarssona þáttur*.

²⁵ See *Arngrími . . . opera . . .*, I, 359 and 466.

²⁶ See Olsen, 194, footnote to l. 23.

²⁷ See *M. Scan.* (1971), 178.

Völsunga saga that we have in 147 is a fragmentary passage seeming to correspond almost word for word to the one in 1824 b in which Áslaug refers to the meeting of Sigurðr and Brynhildr on Hindarfjall, and her resultant birth.²⁸ Another point made by Bjarni which requires some development is that the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* is, in comparison with the 1824 b text, 'kjarnyrtari og styttri',²⁹ that is, pithier, shorter, less wordy. Since Bjarni gives no examples in support of this view, a list of references to those corresponding passages in the two texts which illustrate the generally pithier nature of the 147 text may be given here. This list will serve the twofold purpose of confirming Bjarni's rather sweepingly made point that 147 is the more economically worded of the two texts, and of helping to show, by virtue of the close similarities to each other of the corresponding passages, how closely these two texts of *Ragnars saga* resemble each other. References are to the page and line numbers in Olsen's edition.

	1824 b	147
1	119, 8-13	176, Bl. 1r, 2-4
2	125, 26-27	178, Bl. 3r, 25-26
3	127, 21-22	179, Bl. 3v, 26
4	127, 22-24	179, Bl. 4r, 1-2
5	128, 28-30	179, Bl. 4v, 1-2
6	129, 9-10	179, Bl. 4v, 5-6
7	129, 25-26	180, Bl. 4v, 16-17
8	135, 3-11	180, Bl. 6v, 4-8
9	138, 8-10	182, Bl. 7v, 7-8
10	138, 17-18	182, Bl. 7v, 16-17
11	142, 5-8	182, Bl. 8v, 16-18
12	143, 22-144, 17	183, Bl. 9r, 23-24
13	149, 10-11	184, Bl. 11r, 3
14	149, 15-18	184, Bl. 11r, 6-7
15	151, 26	185, Bl. 12r, 5-6
16	151, 32-33	185, Bl. 12r, 10-11
17	152, 1-2	185, Bl. 12r, 11-12
18	152, 6-8	185, Bl. 12r, 14-15
19	152, 13-14	186, Bl. 12r, 20

²⁸ See Olsen, 180-81, and the footnote to 6v, ll. 1-9, indicating the corresponding passage in the 1824 b text.

²⁹ See Guðnason (1969), 31.

20	152, 16-22	186, Bl. 12r, 22-24
21	160, 1-25	190, Bl. 16r, 1
22	? 161, 13-14 (Reported speech)	? 190, Bl. 16r, 9-10 (Direct speech)
23	? 164, 4-5 (Reported speech)	? 191, Bl. 17v, 2-3 (Direct speech)
24	165, 5-8	192, Bl. 17v, 24
25	166, 19-20	192, Bl. 18v, 3-4
26	167, 8-9	192, Bl. 18v, 19-20

For the sake of completeness, a list may now be given of references to those relatively few corresponding passages in which the 1824 b text seems to be pithier and less wordy than the 147 text:

1	123, 8-9	178, Bl. 2v, 1-2
2	124, 18	178, Bl. 3r, 1
3	125, 30	179, Bl. 3v, 2
4	128, 30-129, 1	179, Bl. 4v, 2-3
5	144, 28-29	183, Bl. 9v, 2
6	149, 26-27	184, Bl. 11r, 12-13
7	151, 18-19	185, Bl. 12r, 1-2
8	151, 22	185, Bl. 12r, 3
9	161, 1-2	190, Bl. 16r, 1-2
10	161, 3-5	190, Bl. 16r, 3-4
11	161, 11	190, Bl. 16r, 8-9
12	164, 5-6	191, Bl. 17v, 3
13	166, 18-19	192, Bl. 18v, 2-3

Certain other important differences between these two texts—most of which have been pointed out by Olsen and Bjarni—may also be noted here. The chaptering of the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* differs considerably from that of the 1824 b text,³⁰ and there are fewer *lausavísur* in the 147 text than there are in the 1824 b text.³¹ It is altogether likely that the last three chapters of the 1824 b text, which contain, among other things, a somewhat awkward rounding off of the story of Ragnarr's sons, an exchange of verses between two warriors, and some verses spoken by a *trémaðr*, were not present in the version of the saga reflected in 147.³² On the other hand, certain

³⁰ See Olsen, XC-XCI.

³¹ See Olsen, XCIII, footnote 1.

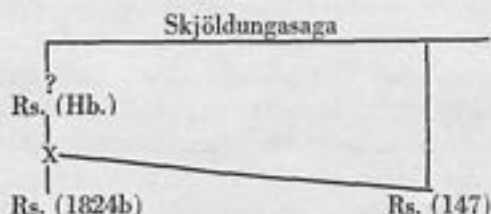
³² Altogether likely, that is, if it is accepted that the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* comes to an end at the bottom of 19 recto, as Olsen thought; see the references given in notes 22 and 26 above.

stanzas of *Krákumál*, part of which, as I pointed out earlier, immediately follows *Ragnars saga* in the 1824 b text, are made in the 147 text to form a part of the saga; they would seem to be placed there in the mouth of Ragnarr—not altogether inappropriately, though their subject-matter is for the most part extraneous to that of the saga—as he dies in the serpent-pit.³³ As regards the *lausavísur* of *Ragnars saga*, the 147 text often yields readings which seem closer to the verses in their original form than the readings of the 1824 b text, which latter, as far as the verses are concerned, is at times exceedingly corrupt.³⁴ Furthermore, the differences between the two texts become markedly greater towards the end of the saga, where the 147 text shows greater similarities, in Bjarni's opinion, to the account of Ragnarr and his sons in *Skjöldunga saga*—as this is reflected in *Ragnarssona þáttur* on the one hand, and Arngrímur's Latin version of the story on the other—than to the 1824 b text of *Ragnars saga*. It is certainly true that the verbal similarities at this stage of the narrative between the 147 text and the *þáttur*, the most important of which have been listed by Olsen in the preface to his edition,³⁵ become so striking at one point that the phrase 'the glaring differences between the written sagas' hardly seems to have very much validity even in the larger context of the three extant manifestations of *Ragnars saga* in 147, 1824 b, and *Ragnarssona þáttur*. Nevertheless, the fact that there are differences between these various extant manifestations, even if the differences in question are not exactly glaring ones, should, of course, at all times be remembered. Bjarni summarizes his view of the textual history of *Ragnars saga* in the following stemma:

³³ See Olsen, 187–89, and the footnotes indicating the strophe-numbers in *Krákumál*. The contents of *Krákumál* have been summarized and discussed by G. Storm in his *Kritiske Bidrag til Vikingetidens Historie* (1878), 196–200, and by P. Herrmann in his *Erläuterungen zu den ersten neun Büchern der dänischer Geschichte des Saxo Grammaticus, zweiter Teil . . .* (1922), 627, ff.

³⁴ This may be illustrated by reference to Olsen's explanatory notes on those verses which 1824 b and 147, and less often *Hauksbók*, have in common. See Olsen, 195 ff.

³⁵ See Olsen, XCI–III.



In this stemma, which Bjarni sees as conjectural, no mention is made, rather surprisingly, of Arngrímur's accounts of Ragnarr and his sons in *Rerum Danicarum Fragmenta*, which Bjarni must surely regard as an important extant manifestation of the part of *Skjöldunga saga* relevant to his stemma.³⁶ The chief reason for the question mark at the end of the line leading from *Skjöldunga saga* to the version of *Ragnars saga* lying behind *Ragnarssona þáttr* in *Hauksbók* seems to be that the nature of the relationship between *Skjöldunga saga* and the oldest *Ragnars saga*, as Bjarni calls this version, is in his view uncertain.³⁷ Since neither *Ragnarssona þáttr* nor the relevant part of Arngrímur's text reproduces *Skjöldunga saga* without alteration, however, as Jakob Benediktsson has shown,³⁸ and since it is chiefly in outlines rather than in details of the story that the *þáttr* and Arngrímur are in agreement,³⁹ it is doubtful how far *Skjöldunga saga* ought to be given a definite place in the stemma at all. Since Bjarni expresses in his remarks on the stemma the view that the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* contained narrative material descending from *Skjöldunga saga*, 'whether or not an intermediate link is in question' ('hvort sem um millilið er að ræða eða ekki'),⁴⁰ another purpose of his question mark, we may

³⁶ See Guðnason (1969), 31, footnote 14. Bjarni regards Arngrímur's accounts of Ragnarr as derived from *Skjöldunga saga* and from a version of *Ragnars saga* somewhat like the one reflected in 1824 b.

³⁷ Guðnason (1969), 32: 'Erfitt er að gera sér grein fyrir tengslum *Skjöldungas.* og *Rs.* elzta.'

³⁸ See *Arngrími . . . opera . . .*, IV, 113, 260–62.

³⁹ See Axel Olrik, 'Skjöldunga saga i Arngrim Jonssons udtog', in *Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, II, 9 (1894), 83–164, pp. 147–49.

⁴⁰ Guðnason (1969), 32.

assume, is to allow for the possibility of the material from *Skjöldunga saga* reaching the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* if not directly, or through an intermediate link on the direct line, then by way of *Ragnarssona þáttir* and X. Nevertheless, one feels that the right-hand downward line ought to be rather more tentatively drawn—not least in view of the close verbal similarities, pointed out by Olsen, between the *þáttir* and the 147 text of *Ragnars saga*.⁴¹

Bjarni's stated reason for introducing X into the stemma is that the versions of *Ragnars saga* reflected in 1824 b and 147 'can hardly have direct literary relations with each other' ('geta naumast haft bein rittengsl').⁴² By this Bjarni presumably means that, in view of the differences between the versions as they are reflected in the texts, and in spite of their similarities, neither one of them can have directly influenced the other, and that a common source, X, must therefore be assumed for them both. Now since, in Bjarni's expressed opinion, 147 had a 'more original' ('upprunalegri') text than 1824 b, in addition to the material inherited from *Skjöldunga saga*,⁴³ it would seem to be obvious that, unless he is using the adjective *upprunalegur* in a sense not exclusively textual, Bjarni regards X as more faithfully represented in 147—for all its fragmentary state—than in 1824 b. This impression is somewhat upset, however, by a sentence following on soon afterwards from the ones already quoted, in which Bjarni writes as follows: 'We assume that there was very little difference between X and the 1824 b text, as 147 testifies' ('Gert er ráð fyrir litlum muni á X og Rs. í 1824 b, eins og 147 ber vitni um').⁴⁴ The first half of this very unclear sentence momentarily gives the impression that in Bjarni's opinion the 1824b text and X were virtually identical; and if this were the case it would mean, of course, that the shorter, pithier text of 147 would have to be explained by the view that abridgement took place at some point on the line leading from X to 147. The second half of Bjarni's sentence, however, 'as 147 testifies' ('eins og 147 ber vitni um') suggests the meaning that the 1824 b text of *Ragnars saga*

⁴¹ See the reference given in note 35 above.

⁴² Guðnason (1969), 32.

⁴³ Guðnason (1969), 32.

⁴⁴ Guðnason (1969), 32.

was similar to X only to the extent of the features which it shares with the 147 text. Why, then, does Bjarni emphasize the likeness of 1824 b to X, rather than that of 147 to X? Is he now trying to say that he regards 1824 b and 147 as textually equidistant from X? In other words, is 1824 b supposed to differ as little in its own way from X as 147 does in its? It is only fair to say that this seems unlikely, partly in view of the remark referred to earlier about 147 having a 'more original' text than 1824 b, and partly in view of some remarks made by Bjarni later in his paper, where he describes the version of *Ragnars saga* reflected in 1824 b as the one which has 'undergone most development' ('tekið . . . út mestan þroska'), and fits *Ragnars saga* into a pattern represented by certain other *fornaldarsögur* which have survived in texts reflecting more than one version, and which show that, where two versions are in question, the older version tends to be shorter, less 'late' in style, and less bulky than the younger one.⁴⁵

It is unfortunate that Bjarni does not commit himself to a more clearly-defined conjecture as to the nature and form of X, since he gives it a particularly important place in the textual history of *Ragnars saga*. It was most probably in X, he claims, that the episode of Kráka was first introduced, and it was also in connection with X that *Völsunga saga* was composed. *Völsunga saga*, according to Bjarni, was composed as an introduction to X by the author or redactor of that version of *Ragnars saga*, who linked the two sagas together through the person of Áslaug, and made of them what is in effect one long saga of the Völsungar, culminating in the story of Áslaug, who is arguably more the heroine of what we now call *Ragnars saga* than Ragnarr is its hero.⁴⁶ It may be mentioned in passing that Bjarni hardly allows here, as de Vries does in his long article on the West Norse tradition of the Ragnarr-legend, for the possibility that the Kráka-episode may have existed in the version of *Ragnars saga* reflected in *Hauksbók*, though in a form less developed than what we find in 1824 b and 147.⁴⁷ It should at all events be made clear that

⁴⁵ Guðnason (1969), 37.

⁴⁶ Guðnason (1969), 32, ff.

⁴⁷ Jan de Vries, 'Die westnordische Tradition der Sage von Ragnar Lodbrok', in

Ragnarssona þáttur, while it does not mention the name Kráka, knows of Áslaug, 'er svmir kalla Randalin, dottor Sigvrðar Fafnis bana ok Brynilldar Bvdla dottor'.⁴⁸ This need not mean, of course—in spite of what A. Edzardi⁴⁹ and Mundt⁵⁰ seem to think—that the compiler of *Ragnarssona þáttur* knew of a linking of *Völsunga saga* with *Ragnars saga*; it only shows that he knew of the idea that Ragnarr became the son-in-law, through marrying Áslaug, of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, and since he refers to a *Ragnars saga* in the *þáttur*, as we have seen,⁵¹ it is possible that his source for this notion may have been that *Ragnars saga*. More immediately relevant to Bjarni's views on the relationship of *Ragnars saga* to *Völsunga saga*, however, is de Vries's doctoral thesis on the Faroese ballads, published in 1915. de Vries devotes a special section of his long chapter on the Faroese *Ragnars táttur*, or ballad of Ragnarr, to a discussion of the relationship between *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga*, and reaches conclusions quite different from those of Bjarni.⁵² His starting-point is the view expressed by Mogk in his literary history of 1904 that *Völsunga saga* was in all

Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, LIII (1928), 257–302; see pp. 293–94. See also p. 167 of Jan . . . de Vries, *Studiën over Færøische balladen* (1915).

⁴⁸ See *Hauksbók*, 459.

⁴⁹ See Edzardi, XLIII–IV.

⁵⁰ See Mundt, p. 123. de Vries (1928), 284–90, argues convincingly that the genealogical linking of the family of Ragnarr with that of Sigurðr could well have pre-dated the linking of *Völsunga saga* with *Ragnars saga*, and was assisted (a) by the fact that Ragnarr, like Sigurðr, was regarded as a serpent-slayer, and (b) by the name of Ragnarr's son by Áslaug, Sigurðr ormr-í-auga. The similarity of Ragnarr's death in the serpent-pit to that of Gunnarr in chapter 39 of *Völsunga saga*, and the presence of the motif of the jealous huntsman in Roger of Wendover's version of the Loðbrók-legend and in chapter I of *Völsunga saga*, are probably also to be explained in terms of early interaction between legends about Ragnarr loðbrók and legends about the Gjúkungar and Völsungar, rather than in terms of one written work influencing another. On the former point, see Jan de Vries, 'Die historischen Grundlagen der Ragnarssaga Loðbrókar', in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, XXXIX (1923), 244–74, p. 252; on the latter, see Grant Loomis, 'The Growth of the Saint Edmund Legend', in *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, XIV (1932), 83–113, pp. 92 ff, and Grant Loomis, 'Saint Edmund and the Loðbrok (Lothbroc) legend', *ibid.* XV (1933), 1–23, pp. 1–6.

⁵¹ See p. 46 above.

⁵² See de Vries (1915), 188–206.

probability written as an introduction to *Ragnars saga*.⁵³ Against this, de Vries argues principally that if *Völsunga saga* had been written as an introduction to *Ragnars saga*, the author of *Völsunga saga* would not have included in it, as he does, material which is quite unrelated to Ragnarr loðbrók, such as the stories about Helgi Hundingsbani and Jörmunrekr.⁵⁴ Even if Áslaug is regarded as the true protagonist of *Ragnars saga*, and the two sagas together are regarded as a single long *Völsunga saga*, as Bjarni would have it, it has to be admitted that, in its use of material not directly related to the dynastic theme, *Völsunga saga* differs somewhat from *Ynglinga saga* and *Skjöldunga saga*, both of which Bjarni sees as possible models for the long *Völsunga saga* he posits.⁵⁵

de Vries goes on to develop quite convincingly a view which takes as its starting-point a consideration with which Bjarni agrees, namely that *Ragnars saga* originally existed independently of *Völsunga saga*. If this is accepted, says de Vries, then it has to be admitted that Chapter II of the 1824 b text of *Ragnars saga* shows every indication of marking the original beginning of the saga. This chapter, which deals with Ragnarr's slaying of the serpent in Gautland, begins in true saga-fashion with the following sentences: 'Heruþr het iarll ríkr ok agetr a Gautlandi. Hann var kvongadr. Dottir hans het Þora,'⁵⁶ etc. Chapter I of this same text, on the other hand, begins in a manner which presupposes a knowledge on the reader's part of certain of the characters and events of *Völsunga saga*, and does not tie up logically with events dealt with in subsequent chapters of *Ragnars saga*. The content of this first chapter may be briefly summarized as follows: Heimir of Hlymdalir, the foster-father of Brynhildr Buðladóttir, receives the news that Sigurðr and Brynhildr are dead. Heimir, who is also the foster-father of Brynhildr's three-year old daughter by Sigurðr, Áslaug, now resolves to save the latter from all possible future harm. He hides her with some treasure in a skilfully made harp, sets out with her on a long journey, and eventually arrives in Norway,

⁵³ See Eugen Mogk, *Geschichte der norwegische-isländischen Literatur*, 2. Auflage (1904), 843.

⁵⁴ See de Vries (1915), 188-89.

⁵⁵ See Guðnason (1969), 35.

⁵⁶ See Olsen, 116.

where he lodges at the farm of Spangarheiðr, the home of Áki and his wife Gríma. These two kill Heimir for his riches, and finding the child Áslaug proceed to rear her in conditions of great poverty as their own daughter, giving her the name of Kráka. There is, of course, little direct connection between these events and those of the next three chapters, in which Ragnarr kills the serpent in Gautland, marries Þóra and has two sons by her, and resumes the life of a warrior after Þóra's death. In chapter V, however, where Ragnarr meets Kráka and where we should expect to find some explicit reference to the events of Chapter I, the narrative style suggests that the whole set-up at Spangarheiðr, including Kráka, is being introduced to the reader for the first time. This may be illustrated by such sentences as the following: 'Hann kemr skipum sinum . . . i haufn eina litla, enn þar var bęr skamt þadan, er het a Spangarheide . . .'; '. . . þa hitta þeir einn mann at male, ok er þat kerling . . .'; '. . . ok a ek mer dottur þa, er . . . heitir Kraka . . .'⁵⁷ The 147 text of *Ragnars saga* seems to share at least the first two of these three sentences with the 1824 b text.⁵⁸ It is hardly too much to say that this chapter, and the subsequent parts of *Ragnars saga* dealing with Ragnarr and Áslaug up to the point at which she convinces Ragnarr of her true identity, may be quite comfortably read in the 1824 b text without reference to the events of Chapter I. *Hardly* too much, because there is a brief reference to Heimir at one point in this part of the saga,⁵⁹ and also because, if Chapter I is left out of account, the reader's natural ques-

⁵⁷ See Olsen, 122.

⁵⁸ See Olsen, 177.

⁵⁹ See Olsen, 128, 11. 6-7. Áslaug is here speaking to Áki and Gríma, saying 'I know you killed Heimir, my foster-father, and to no-one (engum manni) do I have more reason to feel ungrateful than to you.' The fact that Olsen, 179, footnote to 4r, line 9, discerned the words -ungum monnum (corresponding to 'engum manni?') in this part of the 147 text, which he found otherwise illegible at this point, does not necessarily suggest that the first half of the sentence—the part dealing with Heimir—was present in the 147 text. The 147 text in the (to Olsen) partly legible lines (Olsen, 179, 4r, 1-4) immediately preceding this illegible patch seems to differ quite markedly from the corresponding section of 1824 b (Olsen 127, 22-128, 1), partly in being less wordy; and Kráka has, of course, reasons other than the murder of Heimir for feeling ungrateful to Áki and Gríma—not least the fact that she, the daughter of Sigurðr and Brynhildr, is made to do the work of a kitchen-maid, as the 147 text (Olsen, 178, 2v, 4-6) makes clear.

tion as to *how* Áslaug got to Spangarheiðr in the first place is left unanswered. On the other hand, if these latter considerations, and Chapter I, are disregarded, a greater effect of suspense is achieved from the point in the saga at which Kráka's beauty is contrasted with the ugliness of her supposed mother, Gríma, up to the point at which she reveals her true identity to Ragnarr. Two interesting facts, one of which was briefly mentioned earlier, may be noted at this stage. One is that, as far as can be gathered from the poor state of the 147 text of *Ragnars saga*, this text began with what corresponds to Chapter II in the 1824 b text;⁶⁰ and the other is that, in the Faroese *Ragnars táttur*, which de Vries regards as derived from a version of *Ragnars saga* older than either of the versions reflected in 1824 b and 147,⁶¹ we find a version of the Kráka-story in which Kráka, who is supposedly the daughter of an old man called Haki, reveals herself to Ragnarr as the daughter of Sigurðr and Brynhildr, without any explanation being given, at any stage of the ballad, of how she came to be living with Haki.⁶² The Faroese *Ragnars táttur*, it may also be noted, begins with the story of Ragnarr's serpent-fight—with events, in fact, which correspond to those of Chapters 2–4 in the 1824 b text of *Ragnars saga*. I am not concerned here to examine de Vries's view that the Faroese *Ragnars táttur* goes back to an older *Ragnars saga*, but simply to point out that, provided the *Ragnars táttur* has been reasonably accurately preserved, we may assume that its singer and its hearers were not disturbed by the absence of an explanation of how Áslaug came

⁶⁰ See the reference given in note 19 above.

⁶¹ See de Vries (1915), 148 and 179. de Vries (1928), 296, regards the version of *Ragnars saga* reflected in 147 as a combination of the one reflected in 1824 b and of *Ragnarssona þáttur*.

⁶² See the variant texts of *Ragnars táttur* printed in N. Djurhuus and Chr. Matras, eds., *Fýroya kvæði . . .* (1951–63), 215–43. It must not be thought that the early history of Áslaug was unknown to Faroese tradition. On the contrary, it is told briefly in the Faroese ballad of Brynhild (Djurhuus/Matras, 201–203) how she was set afloat on the sea shortly after her birth, and there is evidence for the former existence of a lengthier account of her life-story in a Faroese song now lost, see de Vries (1928) 287–88, for documentation. Furthermore, the Faroese *Gests ríma* or *Ásla ríma*, which in content closely resembles chapter I of the 1824 b text of the saga, probably derives ultimately from the version of the saga reflected in that text. See de Vries (1915), 182–88, and Djurhuus/Matras, 244–47.

to be living under the name of Kráka in the humble company of Haki. They were presumably satisfied, as the audience of an Icelandic saga could possibly also be, with the dramatic effect of suspense leading up to Kráka's eventual revelation of her true identity.

In the Faroese *Ragnars túttur*, Áslaug reveals her identity to Ragnarr when he expresses his disbelief, after seeing her in the fine clothing he offers her, that Kráka can be a mere farmer's daughter.⁶³ In 1824 b, on the other hand, as is well-known, she declares herself to him after learning by magic of Ragnarr's secret plan to leave her, since he believes her to be of low birth, and to marry Ingibjörg, the daughter of King Eysteinn of Sweden.⁶⁴ The reasons for this difference have been carefully analysed by de Vries, who believes that the *Ragnars túttur* preserves the older form of the Kráka-story, and who agrees with Bjarni in regarding *Ragnarssona þáttur* as representative of a *Ragnars saga* older than the one reflected in 1824 b.⁶⁵ According to de Vries, this older *Ragnars saga* was more concerned, as the *þáttur* indicates, with the sons of Ragnarr than with Ragnarr himself. In the younger *Ragnars saga*—which for the moment we may regard as the one reflected, in different ways, in 1824 b and 147—the author or redactor evidently wished to bring Ragnarr more into the foreground than in the older version. One way of doing this was by presenting Ragnarr as being on better terms with his sons Eirekr and Agnarr, who in the *þáttur*, it will be remembered, tried unsuccessfully to oppose their father by making Eysteinn tributary to themselves rather than to Ragnarr.⁶⁶ In 1824 b, on the other hand, Eysteinn and Ragnarr fall out as a result of Ragnarr's abandoning his idea of marrying Eysteinn's daughter, and Eirekr and Agnarr are then made to invade Sweden for reasons which are not made at all clear in the text, but which would seem to be connected, like Ragnarr's estrangement from Eysteinn, with the latter's daughter. In the *þáttur*, of course, Eirekr had wished to marry Eysteinn's daughter, and had been offered her hand in marriage by Eysteinn after being defeated by him in battle. Since now, in 'the younger *Ragnars saga*', the two brothers are being pre-

⁶³ See Djurhuus/Matras, 222, stanzas 95–97.

⁶⁴ See Olsen, 132–37.

⁶⁵ See the references given above in note 47.

⁶⁶ See p. 47 above, and *Hauksbók*, 459–60.

sented as allied with their father rather than opposed to him, a reason must be found for Ragnarr's friendship with Eysteinn breaking up. This cannot be that Eysteinn refused him the hand of his daughter, however, since the *þáttr*—and presumably the older *Ragnars saga* from which it draws—is clear that Eysteinn was willing to offer her in marriage. Hence arises the notion of Ragnarr's plan to leave Kráka for the seemingly more nobly-born daughter of Eysteinn, and of the insult done to Eysteinn and his daughter when he abandons this plan as a result of finding out Kráka's true identity. de Vries also speaks in this connection of the skill with which the author of *Ragnars saga* adapts the Kráka-story to its new environment in Chapters 5 and 6 of the 1824 b text, and raises the question of whether the person responsible for these various changes, most of which, it may be added, seem to be common to the 147 and 1824 b texts of the saga,⁶⁷ was the same person as the one who linked *Völsunga saga* to *Ragnars saga*. I hope to give a 'yes-and-no' answer to this question in the remarks with which I shall now conclude the first part of this paper.

The conclusions of this part of the paper must be regarded as highly tentative, not least because of the poorly preserved state of the 147 text of *Ragnars saga*.⁶⁸ This text may be regarded as reflecting a version of *Ragnars saga* older than the one reflected in 1824 b, as Bjarni seems to hint; this version may be called X. The X-version was linked to *Völsunga saga*, as we must surely conclude from Ás-laug's reference to the meeting of Sigurðr and Brynhildr in connection with her birth, but not necessarily by means of an introductory chapter about Heimir and Ás-laug; at the X-stage of the descent, we may suggest, *Völsunga saga* was brought to an end, as it is in 1824 b and

⁶⁷ See Olsen, 177–82, and the footnotes pointing out the corresponding passages in the 1824 b text. For the argument outlined in this paragraph, see de Vries (1915), esp. 193 ff.

⁶⁸ I am grateful to Dr. Jónas Kristjánsson of Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Reykjavík, and to Professor Jonna Louis-Jensen of Det Arnamagnæanske Institut, Copenhagen, for informing me—the former on the basis of photographs, and the latter on the basis of an inspection of the manuscript itself, that, in the part which is primarily relevant to the argument outlined in this paragraph (Olsen, 179, 4r, see under note 59, above), the 147 text is just as difficult to read now as when Olsen edited it, if not more so.

in recent editions of *Völsunga saga*,⁶⁹ with the story of Hamðir and Sörli, and *Ragnars saga* was made to follow it as a sequel, beginning, as we may gather from the text of 147, with the story of Ragnarr's serpent-fight in Gautland. There was an element of inconsistency in this arrangement in that no explanation was given as to how Áslaug came to be living at Spangarheiðr as the supposed daughter of Áki and Gríma, but this was hardly more serious than the inconsistency involved in allowing Ragnarr to recite in the serpent-pit certain stanzas from *Krákumál* dealing with events not mentioned elsewhere in either *Ragnars saga* or *Völsunga saga*,⁷⁰ and it had the great advantage of providing an effect of suspense from the point in the saga at which the reader, like Ragnarr's *matsveinar*, begins to wonder whether the fair Kráka really can be the daughter of the hideous Gríma. 1824 b, on the other hand, represents a later stage of the descent, and reflects the work of a redactor with authorial pretensions who felt that *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* needed to be more firmly cemented together, and therefore composed the chapter about Heimir and Áslaug. His version of the saga may be called Y. This redactor, or *Kompilator* as de Vries calls him, will have added to *Völsunga saga* the reference to Áslaug in that saga,⁷¹ and the brief reference to Heimir, already referred to, in the part of *Ragnars saga* dealing with Ragnarr's wooing of Kráka;⁷² he will have regarded *Krákumál* as an

⁶⁹ See Olsen's edition, and R.G. Finch, ed., *The Saga of the Volsungs* (1965).

⁷⁰ See the references given above in note 33. A further inconsistency becomes apparent in the 147 text if it is accepted that Olsen, XCII and 189, is correct in taking the words immediately following the end of *Krákumál* in that text as referring to Ragnarr's death, by analogy with *Hauksbók*, 463, 10, since a few lines further on in 147 Olsen found he could read some words which seem to form part of the first of the two verses which, according to the 1824 b text, were recited by Ragnarr in the serpent-pit. This would mean that in the 147 text Ragnarr would have died after completing his recitation of *Krákumál*, but was nevertheless sufficiently alive to recite verses a few lines further on—unless, of course, the later verse-passage was included in a passage of reported speech. Inconsistencies of this kind, which will have prompted the Y-redactor of *Ragnars saga* to exclude *Krákumál* from his text of the saga, are on a par with those which prompted him to add the chapter dealing with Heimir and Áslaug, and indeed tend to support the view that this chapter was not present in the X-version of the saga.

⁷¹ See Olsen, 69, ll. 3–4.

⁷² See note 59 above.

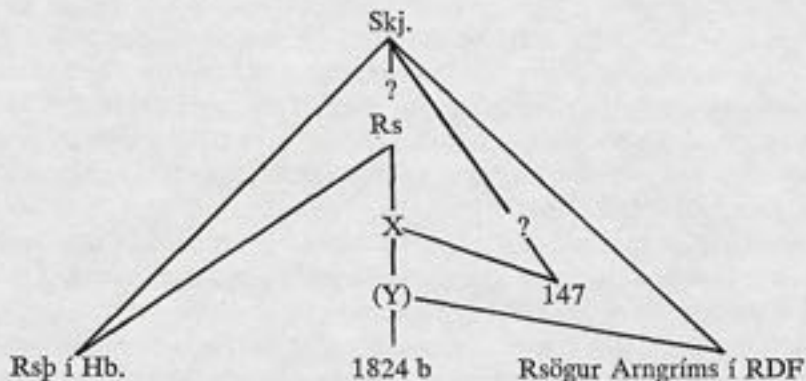
independent work, and removed it from the text of the saga; and will have made the end of *Ragnars saga* less chronicle-like and more romantic, removing the quotation from Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Knútsdrápa*, and generally blurring the political outlines of this part of the story.⁷³ The last three chapters of Y, and the insertion of the 28th and 29th *lausavísur*, with the few lines of prose introducing them, must methodologically be regarded as the work of this compiler.⁷⁴ The advantages of this view are that it allows for the possibility of *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* having originally been independent works, and it does fuller justice than Bjarni does himself to his fine distinction between what may now be called the X and Y versions of the saga. It will be evident by now that this view of the tradition owes a great deal to Bjarni's and de Vries's contributions; it differs from Bjarni's, however, in leaving open the possibility that *Völsunga saga* may originally have been independent of *Ragnars saga*, and from de Vries's in that it sees the X-version of *Ragnars saga* as older than the Y-version, whereas de Vries regarded 147 as reflecting a combination of

⁷³ This may be illustrated in particular by a comparison of those passages from 147, *Hauksbók* and 1824 b which have been selected for numerical comparison later in this paper; see p. 22 below.

⁷⁴ See Olsen, 160, ll. 3–25. de Vries (1928), 296, who sees the 1824 b text as reflecting a version of the saga older than the one reflected in 147, nevertheless regards these verses and lines as interpolated. On the possibility that certain material in 1824 b, including material from *Þiðriks saga*, was added by an interpolator after *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* had been joined together by means of the linking chapter, see also Per Wieselgren, *Quellenstudien zur Völsungasaga* (1935–36), III, 351–52. Wieselgren does not allow, however, as this paper does, for the possibility that the two sagas were joined together otherwise than by means of this chapter. If it is accepted (cf. note 18 above), that no traces of the influence of *Þiðriks saga* are discernible in the 147 text of *Ragnars saga*, then it may be assumed that the Y-redactor was responsible for those traces of its influence which are found in 1824 b. If, on the other hand, it is found that 147 does show the influence of *Þiðriks saga*, then we must assume that the X-redactor is primarily responsible for the marks of its influence in the 147 and 1824 b texts, and that those traces of the influence of *Þiðriks saga* which Edzardi, XXXVIII, thought he could find in chapters 1 and 19 of the 1824 b text of *Ragnars saga*, are to be attributed not to the direct influence of *Þiðriks saga*, but to the influence of the X versions of *Völsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga* on those passages which were added by the Y-redactor.

the Y-version of *Ragnars saga*, as it may now be called, and *Ragnars-sona þáttur*.⁷⁵

Bjarni's stemma may thus be tentatively re-drawn as follows:



II

I should like now, in the second and final part of this paper, to consider Bjarni's arguments—to which my own, as I have already said, are largely indebted—in the light of some criticisms made of them recently by Lönnroth. In the review of *Einarsbók* referred to earlier—parts of which have already been quoted in the course of this paper—Lönnroth criticizes Bjarni's contribution on the grounds, first, that the differences between the 'written sagas' dealing with Ragnarr loðbrók and his spouse are too 'glaring' to merit Bjarni's fitting them into a stemma 'by assuming various "lost written versions" as intermediate links between the still extant texts', and secondly, that 'Bjarni Guðnason fails to consider the possibility that some of the versions may be completely unrelated [*sic*] and based independently on oral tales'. He draws attention to the development of Áslaug's character noticed by Bjarni in the various extant manifestations of the older and younger *Ragnars sögur*, and claims that this is 'symptomatic of a general trend in the thirteenth century to romanticize the older heroic legends'. 'Perhaps', he concludes, 'Bjarni Guðnason would have been able to make an even more interesting analysis

⁷⁵ See de Vries (1928), 296.

of this general trend if he had been somewhat less devoted to his traditional philological problems of *rittengsl*—problems that do not really merit the tremendous efforts Icelandic scholars have made to solve them.¹ Later in the same review, after summarizing and discussing Hallvard Magerøy's contribution to *Einarsbók*,² Lönnroth claims, reasonably enough, that Magerøy has 'shown the way to a more scientific appraisal of the relationship between different versions than the ones we normally find in studies of the saga'. Less reasonably, however, he immediately goes on to raise the question of whether 'Bjarni Guðnason would have assumed *rittengsl* for all the stories about Ragnarr loðbrók had he used Magerøy's method'.³ Before this question can be in any way answered, it will be necessary to explain Magerøy's method.

Magerøy's chief purpose is to attempt to establish more reliable criteria than those offered by Liestøl in his *Upphavet til den islandske ættesaga* (1929) for determining whether the differences between surviving texts of the same story are to be explained in terms of 'oral' or 'written' variation.⁴ An acknowledgement of 'oral variation' between such variant texts depends on the view that these texts are more or less accurate, mutually independent records of variant oral versions of the story in question; the similarities and differences between them must therefore be explained by reference, primarily, to features which experience and experiment show to be characteristic of aural memory and oral communication. An acknowledgement of written variation between the surviving texts, on the other hand, depends on the view that these texts are more or less direct reflexes of scribally inter-related variant written versions of the story in question; the similarities between them must therefore be explained in terms of the scribal inter-relationship of these variant written versions; while the differences between them must be explained by the conclusion that the scribe, redactor or author of at least one of the texts or prototypes of texts

¹ See *M. Scan.* (1971), 178.

² Hallvard Magerøy, 'Eventyrvariantar og sagaversjonar', in *Einarsbók*, 233–54.

³ See *M. Scan.* (1971), 180.

⁴ See Magerøy, 233–34, and the English translation of Liestøl, *The Origin of the Icelandic Family Sagas* (1930), 35 ff. See also T. Andersson, *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins* (1964), 131 ff.

has in some way departed, for conscious or unconscious reasons, from the version which formed his written source—whether by conscious or unconscious omission or alteration, or by conscious addition, or by a combination of all or some of these. It is to the scribal interrelationship of the variant written versions of a saga or story that the Icelandic word *rittengsl* often refers,⁵ though Mageröy in fact uses the Norwegian term *litterær skyldskap*, meaning 'literary relationship'.

Mageröy compares with each other the two members of each of a number of folktale variant pairs, that is, thirty-four pairs of Icelandic folktale variants, and twenty pairs of Norwegian folktale variants.⁶ As far as can be ascertained, the two variants in each pair are recorded independently of each other from oral tradition. The purpose of the comparison is to find out, initially, how many words the two variants in each pair have in common, and then to calculate the percentage of words in common in relation to the total number of words in each of

⁵ Special caution must be counselled here. The way Lönnroth, a Swede writing in English, uses the Icelandic word *rittengsl* may suggest that it has acquired something of the status of a technical term. It should be noted, however, that the word is used in at least two rather different senses. In his *Ritunartími Íslendingasagna* (1965), 92, Einar Ól. Sveinsson writes: 'Með orðinu *rittengsl* er átt við, að söguritari sýni í riti sínu þekkingu á eldra rituðu verki. Vera má, að hann noti hið fyrra verk vísitandi, hitt má líka vera, að hann hafi orðið fyrir áhrifum þess án þess að vita af. Verið getur, að hann hafi það liggjandi á borðinu hjá sér, en líka getur verið, að hann hafi einhvern tíma áður lesið það eða heyrt það lesið. Enn fremur er hugsanlegt, að hann hafi skráð inntak þess eða inntak kafla úr því, og styðjist nú við það inntak, en ekki verkið sjálft. Allra þessara möguleika verður að gæta, þegar reynt er að ákveða *rittengsl*.' Bjarni Guðnason and Lars Lönnroth, on the other hand, seem to be using the word in some such narrower sense as 'the scribal interconnection that exists between two or more works or versions of a work or passages in those (versions of) works, when each link in the chain of connection has involved a copyist, redactor or author having the older work or version before him as he writes.' It is in this latter sense that I have understood their use of the word. This is not to say that Einar's conception of *rittengsl* is not a useful one (cf. his *Um Njálu*, 1933, 100 ff., 153–55); on the contrary, despite T. Andersson's strictures (*op. cit.*, 95 ff.) it can be extremely helpful in a context rather different from the present one, viz. in the study of borrowed elements in a given saga. I owe this observation to Dr. R. M. Perkins.

⁶ The Icelandic variants are selected from among those listed by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson in his *Verzeichnis Isländischer Märchenvarianten, Folklore Fellows Communications* No. 83 (1929), and the Norwegian ones from those listed by Reidar Th. Christiansen in his *Norske eventyr, Norske folkeminne* II (1921).

the two variants. As a result of this procedure, Mageröy finds that the number of words in common seldom exceeds 33½% of the total number of words in either of the two variants, and that when it does exceed this figure, the circumstances are exceptional—either the tale is of the chain-tale type, in which the element of regular and rhythmical repetition is likely to give rise to a greater similarity of wording between variants than would be found between variants of other types of tale,⁷ or—as happens in one case—one of the two variants, the one containing a percentage of words in common *higher* than 33½%, is exceptionally short (comprising only 66 words) in comparison with the other (comprising 224 words).⁸ A brief comparison of certain sections of variants of the Norwegian popular legend about Knut Skrad-dar, which Mageröy also carries out, shows that the number of words in common between these sections of variants does not exceed 33½% either.⁹

Mageröy then points out that, in view of the freedom which writers of medieval texts often felt in relation to their exemplars, surviving texts of scribally interrelated written versions of a saga may sometimes show, in parts, few, if any similarities. It is always possible in theory, therefore, that extensive differences between surviving texts reflect written rather than oral variation. The pairs of folktale variants examined by Mageröy nevertheless suggest, in his view, that in the case of short narratives at least, oral variation is a possible alternative to written variation where the number of words shared in common by the surviving saga-texts is limited to roughly one-third or less. If the surviving texts or parts of texts have more than roughly one-third of the words in common, on the other hand, it is likely that they reflect scribally interrelated written versions of a saga or story, and thus provide examples of *litterær skyldskap*, or *rittengsl*, particularly if the texts in question can be shown to have in common many series of more than six words in sequence, and several whole sentences.¹⁰ Mageröy then goes on to calculate the percentages of words in com-

⁷ See Mageröy, 237, 240.

⁸ See Mageröy, 244.

⁹ This is based on the variants of the legend printed by Liestøl in his *Norske ættesogor* (1922), 169–82.

¹⁰ See Mageröy, 247–48.

mon between comparable passages in the M and K texts of *Bandamanna saga* on the one hand, and in the A and C texts of *Ljósvetninga saga* on the other, and finds that, since these percentages are only in a few cases lower than 33⅓%, and are often far above that figure, the passages in question point to a literary relationship between the variant texts in the case of either saga. Of the pairs of passages so examined, the longest consists of one passage of 569 words in the M text of *Bandamanna saga* measured against one of 477 words in the K text, and the shortest consists of one passage of 152 words in the A text of *Ljósvetninga saga* measured against one of 133 words in the C text.¹¹

We may now apply this method of Mageröy's to the extant manifestations of *Ragnars saga*, as Lönnroth suggests Bjarni should do. I use the expression 'extant manifestations' rather than 'variant texts' since, if *Hauksbók* is to be included in the investigation, it should be remembered that *Ragnarssona þáttr* in *Hauksbók* is not a text of *Ragnars saga*; it refers to a 'saga of king Ragnarr', as we have seen,¹² gives what is presumably a summary account of certain events in that saga, and contains certain verses which most probably were also contained in that saga.¹³ If Bjarni's stemma is on the right lines, and if mine is correct, we should expect the verbal correspondences to be greatest between the 147 and the 1824 b texts. We should also expect the verbal correspondences between *Hauksbók* and either of these two texts to be considerably less than those which they share with each other, but greater between *Hauksbók* and 147 than between *Hauksbók* and 1824 b. In choosing passages for comparison I have deliberately excluded, for the purpose of comparing the 147 and 1824 b texts, passages which contain verses or references to verses, and passages involving a marked degree of repetition, rhythm, or alliteration, such as those enumerating the conditions under which Kráka is to visit Ragnarr in chapter 5 of the 1824 b text.¹⁴ The reason for this is

¹¹ See Mageröy, 249 ff.

¹² See p. 46 above.

¹³ The verses in question are those corresponding to nos. 11, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 in the 1824 b text, see *Hauksbók*, 460-62, and Olsen's commentary, Olsen, 203 ff.

¹⁴ See Olsen, 124, ll. 9-11. Kráka is to visit Ragnarr 'neither clad nor unclad, neither fed nor unfed, neither alone nor accompanied by man'.

that if, as Lönnroth suggests as a possibility, the variant texts are based independently of each other on oral tales, then the verbal correspondences between them are bound to be especially marked in verse-passages or passages dependent on verses, or in passages of a markedly repetitive, rhythmical or alliterative type, since such passages, as is well-known, survive longer and more easily in oral tradition than ordinary prose.¹⁵ My reasons for using passages which *do* contain a verse when I compare a passage from *Hauksbók* with one from 147, on the other hand, will be made clear at the appropriate moment.¹⁶ I have followed Mageröy's example in counting as 'words in common' all words which occupy the same or a closely corresponding contextual position in the two texts compared, and which, while basically the same, may sometimes differ from each other in case, number, mood or tense. Also included are variant derivative forms of the same word, and words forming an element in a compound.¹⁷ By 'legible words' in the 147 text I mean all those words which Olsen was able to read in their entirety, and those words in which he found enough letters discernible for it to be obvious from his text which words are in question. The expression 'theoretical legible total in 1824 b' refers to the number of words in the relevant section of the 1824 b text which gives the same percentage of the total number of words in that section as the actual total number of legible words gives in relation to the estimated total number of words in the corresponding section of 147.¹⁸ The estimated total number of words in each section of 147 has been arrived at by multiplying the average number of words per legible line in the whole of the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* by the total number of lines in each section.¹⁹ Three passages have been

¹⁵ Mageröy, 237, 240, 252, shows that he has taken this into account, also, in his remarks on folk-tale variants of the chain-tale type and on parallel passages in the A and C texts of *Ljósvetninga saga*.

¹⁶ See pp. 72-73 below.

¹⁷ See Mageröy, 238-39.

¹⁸ The percentage of words in common in relation to the 'theoretical legible total' in 1824 b is comparable to the percentage of words in common in relation to the actual total number of legible words in the relevant section of 147.

¹⁹ It was found that the average number of words per legible line in the whole of the 147 text of *Ragnars saga* was 12.8. The first of the three passages from 147 chosen for comparison covers 26 lines of 2r and 16 lines of 2v (see Olsen, 177-78),

chosen for comparison—one from near the beginning of the saga, one from near the middle, and one from near the end. The first deals with Ragnarr's voyage to Norway, the arrival of his *matsveinar* at Spangarheiðr, their conversation with Gríma, their first sight of Kráka, and their report to Ragnarr; the second deals with the slaying of the cow Sibilja by Ívarr and the defeat of Eysteinn, the conquest of Vífilsborg by Ívarr, Björn, Hvítserkr and Sigurðr, and their arrival in Lyngbarði (147) or Lúna (1824 b); and the third deals with the battle between Ragnarr's sons and Ella and the events leading up to it, from the point at which Ívarr, after amassing support for himself in England, sends to Denmark for his brothers.

- (1) Olsen 177-78, 2r,1-2v,17, corresponding to Olsen 122,1-124,4

Total no. of legible words in this section of 147	88
Estimated total no. of words in this section of 147	538
Total no. of words in common with corresponding section of 1824 b	78
Total no. of words in this section of 1824 b	600
'Theoretical legible total' in this section of 1824 b	98
Percentage of words in common in this section of 147	87%
Percentage of words in common in this section of 1824 b	80%

i.e. 42 lines. $42 \times 12.8 = 538$. The second covers 11r, which had 28 lines (see Olsen, 184, second footnote to 11r), 11v and 12r, in a part of the text, that is, where the average number of lines per page is 26-27 (see Olsen, LXXXVI). Now since Olsen found 11v totally illegible (see Olsen 185) and since in his view 'at least one line' had been cut away at the top of 12r, on which he found 24 lines discernible (see Olsen 185-86, and 185, second footnote to 12r) we may assume that 11v had 27 lines, and that 12r had 26. This gives us a total of 81 lines in this section. $81 \times 12.8 = 1037$. The third section covers 18v and 19r, down to half way through line 7. Olsen's footnotes to these two pages (Olsen, 192-93), show that one line, at least part of which is relevant to our purpose, is missing from the top of 18v, on which he deduced there was a total of 24 lines, and that 'at least one line' is missing from the top of 19r—which otherwise, however, he found legible. If we assume that 2 lines are missing from the top of 19r and add these to the 24 of 18v, we then have 26 lines to multiply by 12.8, which gives 333; to this we add the 78 words which Olsen could read in the remaining relevant lines of 19r. Answer: 411. The fact that in the second and third sections of 147 the estimated total should turn out to be slightly greater than the actual total in the corresponding sections of 1824 b need cause no surprise; it was shown earlier, p. 51, that in a fair number of instances the 1824 b text is somewhat less wordy than the 147 one.

(2) Olsen 184-86, 11r,1-12r,24, corresponding to Olsen 149,7-152,22	
Total no. of legible words in 147	315
Estimated total no. of words in 147	1037
Total no. of words in common with 1824 b	237
Total no. of words in 1824 b	1022
'Theoretical legible total' in 1824 b	310
Percentage of words in common in 147	75%
Percentage of words in common in 1824 b	76%
(3) Olsen 192-93, 18v,1-19r,7, corresponding to Olsen 166,17-167,27	
Total no. of legible words in 147	172
Estimated total no. of words in 147	411
Total no. of words in common with 1824 b	108
Total no. of words in 1824 b	407
'Theoretical legible total' in 1824 b	170
Percentage of words in common in 147	63%
Percentage of words in common in 1824 b	64%

These figures show that, in the three passages of *Ragnars saga* chosen for comparison, the two texts of the saga more than fulfil Mageröy's requirements for an acknowledgement of literary relations between saga-texts. The two members of each of the first two pairs of passages have two-thirds of the words in common; while the two members of the third pair have well over half the words in common. Space does not permit me to discuss here the merits and demerits of Mageröy's method; I simply wish to answer the question, raised by Lönnroth, of whether Bjarni would have assumed *rittensl* for the extant stories of Ragnarr loðbrók if he had used Mageröy's method. The answer in the case of 147 and 1824 b is that he certainly would have done; the figures listed here in no way conflict with Bjarni's views.

We certainly cannot expect the correspondences between *Hauksbók* and either 147 or 1824 b to be as striking as those indicated by the figures for 147 and 1824 b in relation to each other. Not only is *Ragnarssona þáttr* in *Hauksbók* not a text of *Ragnars saga*, as has already been pointed out;²⁰ it is also very much shorter than either the 1824 b text of *Ragnars saga* or the version of *Ragnars saga* reflected in 147. It consists only of five chapters, the last two of which—dealing respectively with King Gormr and Sigurðr hjörtr, both descend-

²⁰ See p. 68 above.

ants of Sigurðr ormr-í-auga, one of Ragnarr's sons by Áslaug—have no counterparts either in the 1824 b text of *Ragnars saga* or, as far as can be discovered, in the version of the saga reflected in 147.²¹ The 1824 b text of *Ragnars saga* has twenty chapters, and the 147 version of *Ragnars saga*, as will be clear from what has been said above, corresponds more or less closely, in length and content, to all but the first chapter, and the last three chapters, of the 1824 b text.²² There are thus few passages in the *Hauksbók* manifestation of *Ragnars saga* which correspond sufficiently in number of words and detail of content to be readily comparable with either 147 or 1824 b, and most of those which do so correspond are verse-passages, which, for the reasons suggested above, are unsuitable for our purpose; though it may be mentioned in passing that the seven *lausavísur* which the *þáttur* and 1824 b have in common occur in the same order in both these extant manifestations of *Ragnars saga*, and that of these seven the four which the *þáttur* and 147 can be seen to have in common occur in the same order in these two manifestations of the saga as well—a fact which suggests literary connections between all three extant manifestations, rather than mutually independent recording of material from oral tradition.²³

The one prose passage in *Ragnarssona þáttur* which seems to correspond with passages in 147 and 1824 b in such a way as to make Mageröy's method of comparison at all feasible is one which does contain a verse, it is true, but which also contains material which does not seem to derive from the poem from which the verse is quoted. The passage in question is the one beginning with a brief statement about King Ella's defeat in battle by the sons of Ragnarr and containing, among other things, the account of Ívarr cutting the blood-eagle on Ella's back; it ends with a short summary statement about the Viking activities of the sons of Loðbrók in various countries. The poem quoted in the course of this passage is Sigvatr Þórðarson's

²¹ See pp. 48–49 above, and the references given in notes 22 and 26.

²² See pp. 49–52 above.

²³ See above, note 13 to Part II. The four verses which the *þáttur*, 147 and 1824 b can be seen to have in common are those corresponding to nos. 18, 19, 20, and 22 in the 1824 b text.

Knútsdrápa.²⁴ Both the quotation itself and the manner in which it is introduced are the same in *Hauksbók* and 147; the poem is neither quoted nor referred to, on the other hand, in 1824 b. I have left out of consideration both the reference to the poem and the quotation from it when counting the numbers and percentages of words in common between the three passages. These numbers and percentages may now be listed.

147 (Olsen, 193-94, 19r, 9-23):

Total no. of words (excluding verse and ref. to verse)	149	
No. and percentage of words in common with Hb.	45	30%
No. and percentage of words in common with 1824 b	59	40%

Hauksbók (ed. Finnur Jónsson, 1892-96, 464, 2-14):

Total no. of words (excluding verse and ref. to verse)	115	
No. and percentage of words in common with 147	45	39%
No. and percentage of words in common with 1824 b	21	18%

1824 b (Olsen, 167, 27-168, 13):

Total no. of words (no verse referred to or quoted)	161	
No. and percentage of words in common with 147	59	37%
No. and percentage of words in common with Hb.	21	13%

I am ready to admit that these figures do not seem particularly striking at first glance, but taken together with the figures listed earlier for 147 and 1824 b, they do in fact confirm the expectation raised in the first half of this paper that towards the end of *Ragnars saga* there would be an increase in the differences between 1824 b and 147 on the one hand, and in the similarities between 147 and *Hauksbók* on the other;²⁵ and they also confirm the expectation raised by Bjarni's stemma and my own that the correspondences between *Hauksbók* and 147 would in general be greater than those between *Hauksbók* and 1824 b. Now since, according to Mageröy's criteria at least, the literary relations between 147 and 1824 b have already been well established by the figures given earlier for those two texts, it will be necessary to concentrate now on *Hauksbók* and 147 if literary relations between all three extant manifestations of *Ragnars saga* are to be established, since these two manifestations of the saga would seem

²⁴ See note 23 to Part I, above.

²⁵ See p. 52 above, and the reference given in note 35.

to be closer to each other than *Hauksbók* and 1824 b. Well, it must be admitted that the figures just listed for *Hauksbók* and 147—while they might just pass muster with Mageröy—are not particularly impressive. Mageröy's method requires that short narrative passages such as these must have *at least* one-third of the words in common if we are to speak with confidence of their literary interrelationship. In this case, the 147 passage, which consists of 149 words, has 30%—just under one-third—of its words in common with the *Hauksbók* passage; while the latter, which consists of 115 words, has 39%—rather over one-third—of its words in common with the 147 passage. The higher percentage in the case of the *Hauksbók* passage could well be explained, however, by the fact that this passage is considerably shorter than the 147 one. Since we cannot confidently state, therefore, that the two passages have *at least* one-third of their words in common, we must look for other features in them which suggest a literary interrelationship before we admit that oral variation is a possible explanation of the differences between them. It is for this reason that the two passages are printed here side by side; the words which they have in common—apart from those in the reference to *Knútsdrápa* and in the quotation from that poem—are italicized.

Hauksbók, ed. Jónsson, 464, 2–14:

. . . varð konvngur þa borin ofrlíði sva at mikill þori liðs hans fell en sialfr varð hann handtekin. *Ivar* ok þeir bræðr mintvz nv *hversv faðir* þeira var pindr letv þeir *nv rista orn a baki Ellv ok skera síþan rifin oll fra ryg-invm* með sverði sva at þar vorv *lvngvn vt dregin*. Sva segir Sigvatr skald i Knvtz drapv Ok Ellv bak at let hin er sat *Ivar* ara Iorvik skorid. *Eftir þessa orrostv gerðiz Ivar konvngur yfir þeim lvta Englandz sem hans frændr hófðv fyri att*. hann atti þa .i.j. bræðr) frillv borna en annar het Yngvar en annar Hvsto. þeir pinvþv *latmvdn konvng en helga* eftir boði Ivars ok lagði hann síþan *vndir sig hans riki*. *Loðbrokar synir forv*

147, ed. Olsen, 193, 19r, 9–23:

. . . þa lykr suo at landz menn flyia ok fa micinn osigur . enn ella *kongr* er leiddur fyri ragnars sonu . hann var sarr miog . *Ivar* bad cigi skiott rada vm liflat hans ok er nu rad at lata sier j hug koma *huernn* dauda hann valdi *faudr* vorum *Nu* skal sa madr er hagur er marka aurn a baki hanum ok rioda j blodi hans Sa madr er til þessa var kuaddur *reist aurnn á baki* hanum ok *skar rifin frá hryggnum* . ok dro vr hanum *lungun* ok adr enn þessu verki var lokit let ella *kongr* lif sitt Suo segir siguatr skald j knutz drapu . Oc ella bak at leit hinn er sat *Ivar* ara j iorvik skorid . *Eftir þessa orrostu geriz Ivar kongr yfir þeim hluta*

vm morg lond með hernaði England
ok Valland ok Frackland ok vt vm
Lvmbarði.

landz er adur haufdu þtt hans ett-
menn hann iok mlog sitt a marga
vega . Suo er sagt at hann leti drepa
iatmund hinn helga ok lagdi vndir sig
þiki hans loðbrokar synir foru vida
med hernaði vm england vestur ok
suo vida anars stadar.

It will be seen from this juxtaposition of the two passages that the order in which events are related is the same in both; that the details of Ella's torture by Ívarr are the same, and that in both passages the same verse from *Knútsdrápa*, and that verse only, is quoted; the wording of the reference to the poem is also the same in both passages. Nor is the similarity of wording between the passages confined to the torture of Ella, which because of its exceptionally gruesome nature might perhaps be expected to be remembered in detail in oral tradition; it extends to events which have little directly to do with the manner of Ella's death, such as Ívarr's accession to the throne of part of England, the slaying of King Edmund at his instigation, and the subsequent Viking activities of the sons of Loðbrók in various countries. It is also significant here that King Edmund is called 'inn helgi' in both passages. All these considerations point to literary relations between the works in which these passages are contained rather than to independent recording from oral tradition, and, taken together with the various lists given earlier, illustrate the kind of factors that should be borne in mind and thoroughly examined before casual statements are made about extant manifestations of a given saga being 'completely unrelated and based independently on oral tales'.