

## ÓLÁFR HELGI AND SKALDIC LOVE POETRY: MANSQNGR

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The meaning as well as the origin of the word *mansqngr* is lost in the mists of time. The first component “*man-*” probably means “captive, slave of either sex”. Beginning with Theodore Möbius, who in the last century gave a detailed catalogue of the material, it has been defined as a love poem<sup>1</sup>. In the latest articles on skaldic poetry which mention *mansqngr*, its meaning is usually defined as love lyric, the origin of which is explained by the influence of Provençal poetry. On the contrary, Mikhail Steblin-Kamensky, who thought that love lyric was impossible at the time of skaldic poetry, defined the meaning of the term as “something said of a woman in her erotic aspect”<sup>2</sup>. However opposite, both views have one thing in common: if, in order to claim that skaldic poetry is lyrical, it is considered necessary to look for its roots in Provence, then the possibility of its indigenous appearance is ruled out. Understanding the origin of the term is closely related to defining the genre of *mansqngr*. In Steblin-Kamensky’s view *mansqngr* is neither an independent poem nor a poetic genre, but a possible element of a work of art. His understanding is closely related to the meaning acquired by the term in the fourteenth century, which referred to an obligatory lyric introduction to Icelandic *rimur*. At first sight, this view is also supported by the fact that, with one exception, in Old Icelandic prose the use of this word is never accompanied by quotations of poetry.

The only instance when a piece of skaldic poetry is termed *mansqngr* by the *saga* (*Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ch. 56) is Egill Skallagrímsson’s *visa* on Ásgerðr, the widow of his brother Þórólfr:

Ókynni vensk, ennis,  
ung, þorðak vel forðum,  
hauka klífs, at hefja,  
Hlín, þvergnípur mínar,  
verðok í feld, þás, foldar,  
faldr kœmr í hug skaldi  
berg-óneris, brúna  
brátt miðstalli hváta (BI, 45, 14).

Egill’s friend Arinbjörn, to whom he is saying his *visa*, is asking him for the name of the woman about whom he made his *mansqngr*. Egill answers him with another *visa* about seldom hiding the name of a woman in verse as people skilled in poetry would guess it anyway (v.24). After that he discloses the name of Ásgerðr to his friend, as well as his desire to marry her. Later in the same chapter Egill’s engagement and marriage to Ásgerðr are mentioned. In the text of the *visa* Ásgerðr’s name is hidden with the help of a special device of skaldic technique called *offljóst*: *berg-óneris foldar faldr*. According to S. Guttenbrunner’s suggestion “Onerir = Thor, Berg-Onerir = Thor der Berge = Thorolf, da der Wolf ein Tier der Wildnis ist. Demgemäss bedeutet *fold Bergoneris* Erde, Acker des Thorolf, Thorolfs Gattin”<sup>3</sup>. If we accept this hypothesis, it follows that in the *offljóst* the name of the skald’s former “rival” is mentioned - the name of Ásgerðr’s deceased husband, whose wedding Egill failed to attend (ch. 42). It is significant that this unique example of the direct application of the term *mansqngr* to the quotation of a skaldic *visa* testifies to the conscious desire of the skald to conceal the name most important for him. We may suggest that the concealment of the name of the woman in

*mansöngur*, conditioned by the negative attitude of the audience, is an atavistic device, which might be connected by origin with the need for verbal tabooing in ritual texts going back to verbal magic. This would be in keeping with the hypothetical *double entendre* of Egill's *offjóstr*.

The affinity with magic in its genesis might account for why the *mansöngur* retains a magic, utilitarian aim. The pragmatic aim of Egill's verse is to win Ásgerðr, who is ill-disposed towards him. The utilitarian function becomes more important than the communicative one, which is confined to the prosaic commentary disclosing the skald's intention and the name of the woman. The pragmatic nature of the *mansöngur* is contrary to any kind of verbal expressiveness, to say nothing of aesthetics: descriptions of feelings are absent but implied by the statement of the actual situation itself. The implicit nature of the feelings related by the *mansöngur* is akin to the expression of emotion through action in Old Norse prose. In Egill's verse the feelings are shown through their outward manifestations, that is, the specific nature of the skald's behaviour in the given situation, just as in sagas, where the inner motives of behaviour become clear in their consequences, actions. Egill's *visa* belongs to a concrete situation, where the love-motif plays a secondary role, subordinated to the expression of Egill's friendship to Arinbjörn, to whom he is reciting his *visa*. This is both in keeping with the microstructure of the *visa*, whose object is not so much the woman as the self-asserting skald himself, and also in keeping with the macrostructure of the saga, in which Egill's perennial enmity with Eiríkr blóðøx is additionally motivated by his marriage with Ásgerðr.

The prose texts mentioning *mansöngur* can also give some additional information, if not towards defining the nature of the genre, then at least towards identifying the original meaning of the word. In *Gylfaginning*, *mansöngur* is associated with the name of Freyja: "*henni (Freyju) líkadi vel mansaungur*". The use of this term in a "mythological" context and its associations with Freyja, the goddess of fertility and love, and an expert in heathen magic *seiðr*, relates *mansöngur* to heathen fertility cults. Heathen associations are retained by the word *mansöngur* in a later epoch. In one of the Bishops' Sagas, *Jóns saga helga*, the term is used in relation to the poems of Ovid. According to the saga, Ovid says in his book (*Ars amatoria*) a lot "*um kvenna astir*", there "*byr mansöngur mikálf*". These pagan roots probably account for attempts to ban *mansöngur* after Christianisation. In the same saga it is said that Bishop Jón Ögmundarson did not wish to listen to "*mansöngskvæði eða vísur*" and did not let others listen to them. These contexts not only shed light on the contents of *mansöngur* (cf. its identification with the love lyrics of Ovid) but also directly refer *mansöngur* to the sphere of poetry, specifically skaldic poetry: *mansöngskvæði* are as unpleasant for the bishop as *visur*, that is, the whole of skaldic poetry.

*Mansöngur* is mentioned under the heading "On Poetry" in the collection of Icelandic laws *Grágás*: "*ef maþr yrkir mansöng um cono, oc varðar scoggang*" (*Konungsbók*, § 258). The punishment assigned for the composition of *mansöngur* equates it to libellous verse (*níð*), which is mentioned under the same heading. Thus *mansöngur* together with *níð* appeared to be the only poetic compositions persecuted by the laws. The contexts of Icelandic family sagas also show the same hostility to *mansöngur* as Scandinavian laws, which is difficult to account for exclusively by the impossibility of reconciling Christian morals to love poetry going back to paganism. For example, in chapter 2 of *Egils saga*, it is said that out of love for Sólveig Ölvir línúfa composed some *mansöngskvæði*. After that Sólveig's brothers attacked him and wanted

to kill him. As this chapter hypothetically relates the events of the year 868, it is possible that this is the earliest known mention of *mansöngur*, the poetic form of which, as well as the death sentence of its author, is present from the very start.

All other mention of *mansöngur* in sagas is also accompanied by stories of the persecutions imposed on its authors. One of the most famous stories is connected with the Norwegian konungr Óláfr helgi and skald Óttarr svarti, who nearly lost his life for composing *mansöngur*. In his youth he made a *mansöngsdrápa* about Ástriðr, who later became the wife of Óláfr. When, several years later, this skald appeared at the Norwegian court, he was immediately imprisoned and sentenced to death for the *mansöngur* he had composed years before. Óttarr was saved by his uncle, the famous skald Sigvatr, who suggested he should change some parts of his *mansöngsdrápa* and add to them another *drápa* eulogising konungr. After having heard *mansöngur*, the first *drápa* (which has not come down to us), Óláfr blushed. However the second part (from which 20 stanzas have survived) pleased konungr more, and he said that it would be best of all if Óttarr took his head from him as a gift for his *drápa*. To this Óttarr replied that he liked the gift, though the head was not beautiful. However, Ástriðr too, to Óláfr's discontent, felt like rewarding the skald. She rolled her ring on the floor asking the skald to take the ring and possess it. She asked Óláfr not to reproach her for wanting to pay for her praise ("láuna lóf mitt"), as he did for his. To this Óláfr only remarked that it seemed she could not refrain from showing her inclination. This episode confirms what we already know about *mansöngur*: its skaldic form, *drápa*, the usual absence of the poetic text from the saga, and the equally common story about the punishment threatened against its author. In spite of the laconic style characteristic of the saga, or in this case perhaps a deliberate reticence, this episode cannot conceal the main feature of *mansöngur* which defines all the rest and accounts for why its author deserved punishment in the eyes of konungr Óláfr and his contemporaries.

The hostility of sagas and Scandinavian laws to *mansöngur*, which probably reflects the world view of the native culture and was not just confined to the Christian condemnation of love poetry (as in "bishops' sagas"), has been explained in various ways. According to one hypothesis, the composition of love verses harmed the reputation of the person they were addressed to<sup>4</sup>. In this view *mansöngur* was equated to paying visits to women who were guarded, and it was persecuted by the laws because it harmed their good name. This explanation cannot be reconciled with the above story of Óttarr's *mansöngur* because it presupposes that the intention of Óláfr to punish the skald is motivated by his concern for Ástriðr's reputation at a time when she was not yet acquainted with her future husband. Another possibility is that the danger of *mansöngur* and hence the harsh punishment ascribed to it could be accounted for by a fear that it might act on the addressee like a magic potion<sup>5</sup>. The attribution of magic power to *mansöngur* could have been rooted in the idea that it is not simple speech (*samföst orð*), but poetry, connected words (*bundit mál, sundrlaus orð*); in other words, what was expressed in verse was equated with the real fulfilment of the desire<sup>6</sup>.

The skald possessed a peculiar, almost magical power to invoke gifts as an answer to his verses (analogous to the imperative giving of gifts in the ritual of *potlach*<sup>7</sup>). Like any panegyric skaldic poem, the *mansöngsdrápa* also requires a gift in answer from the one to whom it is addressed. Konungr Óláfr pays for his *drápa* by granting the skald his life (cf. the title of Óttarr's poem *Höfuðlausn*); Ástriðr pays him for her *mansöngur* with a ring (the implications of this word in old Scandinavian tradition are well-known<sup>8</sup>). The expectation of this gift and its common occurrence as an answer to

*mansöngur* is further confirmed by the example from *Fæstrbræðra Saga*, where it is said that skald Þórmóðr, who made the *mansöngsvisur*, got not only the ring but also the nickname kólbrúnarskáld. Thus the permanent guilt of the skald, which does not diminish in the course of time, consists in the affection of the addressee of *mansöngur* invariably won by his poetry. To expiate this guilt in the eyes of other people is possible only at the price of the poet's own life, or by his composing another poem. In the case of Óttarr his *Höfuðlausn* eulogised Óláfr and thus invalidated the action of his first *drápa*. Thus the most important feature of *mansöngur*, retained through the course of history and explaining the hostility both of family sagas and of Scandinavian laws, is that it infallibly precipitates action.

Though Óláfr was very angry with skald Óttarr svartir for his *mansöngur* about his wife Ástriðr, it did not prevent him from composing in the same genre himself. It is known that before meeting his future wife Ástriðr, konungur Óláfr wanted to marry her sister Ingigerðr, another daughter of the Swedish konungur Óláfr Eiríksson. When Ingigerðr married king of Russia Yaroslav the Wise, konungur Óláfr became outraged and decided to declare war on Sweden. In the manuscript *Tómásskinna* (as well as AM 61 fol.) of *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga*<sup>9</sup> we are told how Ingigerðr's sister Ástriðr visited konungur several times, asking him not to begin the war but to get married to her. On the third day, when konungur was still not inclined to do so, she mounted her horse and went away. Then konungur went to a mound which was nearby and said a *visa*:

Fagr, stóðk, meðan bar brúði  
 blakkr, ok sák á sprakka  
 (oss lét yndis missa  
 augfögr kona) á haugi;  
 keyrði Gefn ör garði  
 góðlöt vala slóðar  
 eyk, en ein glöpp sækir  
 jarl hvern, kona snarlig. (BI, 212, 10)

"It is true," added konungur, "as Ástriðr said, it would have been a big mistake to give the lives of many Christians for the second sister." In another manuscript of the same saga (*Flateyjarbók*), this *visa* is given in a different context. After the marriage of Ingigerðr and Yaroslav, Óláfr konungur happened to be in Russia, when queen Ingigerðr was leaving on a voyage. Óláfr watched Ingigerðr leaving and said, together with the *visa* quoted above, another one:

Ár stóð eik en dýra  
 jarladóms, með blómi  
 harðla græn, sem hirðar,  
 hvert misseri, vissu,  
 nú hefr (bekkjar) tré bliknat  
 brátt (Mardallar gráti  
 lind hefr) laufi (bundit  
 línu vörðr) í Gørðum. (BI, 212, 11)

It is possible that in the first stanza of Óláfr we have a migrating *visa* composed by a known author but accompanied by different prosaic commentaries. Most scholars (Sigurður Nordal, Russell Poole<sup>10</sup>) give preference to the context of *Flateyjarbók* in spite of its more general character. It is customary to believe that both *visur*, whatever their context in the saga, are composed by Óláfr about Ingigerðr. However, it is impossible not to notice that there is better motivation for Óláfr's poems in the manuscript

*Tómásskinnu*. They are included in the context of a famous episode in *konungr's* life. More than that, there are several verbal correspondences between the prose text of this manuscript and the skaldic poem: the word mound (*haugr*) on which *konungr* composes his *visur* is mentioned as well as "a mistake (*glöpp*) awaiting every jarl" etc. The prose context relates the departure of Ástriðr, and it is possible that it is about her and not, as is usually believed, about Ingigerðr that Óláfr is composing his *visa*. In that case it becomes clear why *konungr* Óláfr applies the words "clever and well-meaning" to Ástriðr and calls himself "beautiful". Óláfr's *visa* can hardly be regarded as *mansöngur*, in spite of the mention of "a woman with beautiful eyes". It can be shown that similar parenthetical insertions mentioning a woman become a purely formal feature of skaldic style after the 11th Century<sup>11</sup>. It is more likely that the first of the quoted *visur* by Óláfr should be regarded as *lausavísa*, concentrating on a specific actual situation and having an informative function. Attribution to this genre is confirmed by the dependence on the situation of Óláfr's stanza, whose contents, if we assume the version of *Tómásskinnu* as more convincing, is fully identical to the immediate prose context. The function of Óláfr's verse, like the function of *lausavísur*, is confined to communication.

The second *visa* should be considered in relation to the third *visa* of Óláfr *konungr*, composed in London, probably in relation to the marriage of a Norwegian woman, Steinvör:

Ból's þats lind í landi  
landrifs fyr ver handan,  
golli merkð við Galla  
grjótnis skal fjlna;  
þann myndak við vilja  
(valklifs) meðan líðak,  
(alín erumk björk at bólví  
bands) algrœnan standa. (BI, 210—211, 4)

Recently it has been suggested that this strophe was also composed by Óláfr about Ingigerðr<sup>12</sup>. Whether this is true or not, it is impossible not to notice the differences between these last two *visur* and the first one. Their main content is determined by the expression of feelings typical of *mansöngur*: pain and grief. The description of the feelings of the author occupies the whole *visa*, instead of being confined to a parenthetical insertion as in the first strophe. In these stanzas, as is usual in *mansöngur*, the "rival" of *konungr-skald* is mentioned: the kenning (*við Galla grjótnis*) is probably connected with the nickname of Steinvör's husband<sup>13</sup>, Þorvarðr galli, and vörðr í Gørðum (with a conjecture made by Roberta Frank<sup>14</sup> in the second verse) can be taken to denote Ingigerðr's husband, Yaroslav.

According to the traditions of *mansöngur*, the feelings of the skald are focussed on the image of a woman. It is difficult not to notice the similarity in the imagery of both *visur*, based on a wide-spread metaphor, the identification of the blossoming and fading of a tree with a woman. The use of this trope in Óláfr's *visa* made it possible to draw an analogy with the poetry of the troubadours ("*En Narbones es gent plantatz / L'arbres que 'm fai aman mourir*"), though much closer analogies have been found in Old Icelandic poetry itself (e.g., *Hamðismál* 5)<sup>15</sup>. Many more analogies could be found with Óláfr's *visur*, from genealogical fairy tales to Verlaine's "Nightingale", because there is hardly anything more universal in folklore and poetry than the psychological parallelism of tree/man, whose formal and logical development was studied in detail by A. Veselovsky<sup>16</sup>. Building on this observation, it is possible to conclude that in skaldic verse

as well as in the poetry of the troubadours, minnesingers and modern poets, this device goes back in its genesis to folklore metaphors.

The acquisition of folklore poetic devices by skaldic verse is a sign of important typological change because it causes a shift in both the extremely traditional poetic systems involved. Whereas in folklore the effect of parallelism is usually dissipated by the large scope of the form, the condensation of the same device acquires the maximum of expressivity in the tight structure of a skaldic *visa*, where the focus of view is extremely narrow. Both *visur* are entirely filled by one systematically constructed metaphor, one image. In the second *visa*, the deployment of the metaphor begins in the very first line (*Ár stóð eik en dýra*). The noun of the feminine gender *eik* can either be understood as a halfkenning consisting only of the base word without the attribute, or as a personified image, confirmed by the typically "personified" epithet *dýra* following it. This epithet, clarifying the second metaphorical level of the strophe, becomes fully loaded semantically: it conveys the meaning of eminence, revealing the peculiar, distinctive nature of the character. Functionally, the weak adjective *en dýra* becomes partially substantivised and acquires an unmistakably personifying meaning. A high poetic loading of epithet is enhanced by syntactic means (postposition in relation to the noun), rhythm (the marked final position in the skaldic line - *clausula*) and sound organisation (inclusion into rhyme - *skothending*). The return to typically folklore poetic devices (idealising epithet, metaphor, personification) is combined with a linguistic means traditional in skaldic verse - the kennings, describing a woman in terms of tree, which are placed at the beginning of the second *helmingr* of both *visur* (*bekkjar tré; víðr valklífs*). However, the norm of skaldic poetics appears to be violated by the use of nouns of masculine (*víðr*) and neuter gender (*tré*) as the basis of a kenning for woman (according to *Skáldskaparmál*, only feminine nouns denoting trees can be used in kennings for woman). The shifting of the inner form of a phraseological stereotype eliminates its automatism and brings to the foreground the metaphoric image of a tree which was set up in the first line by the word *eik*.

The last kennings of woman (*lindr línu, lind landrífs, björk bands*) are fully in keeping with skaldic canons of phraseology. However, even these kennings, included in a poetic system balanced on the dividing line between skaldic verse and folklore, acquire a tint of paradox. On the one hand, on the verbal level they support the part of the parallelism connected with the image of a tree ("lime and birch"); on the other hand, being equivalent to the noun in common speech they stand for (that is the word "woman"), they give the parallelism its missing link, providing its second member. An important role is played here by the systematic two-member construction of the stanza, which falls into two distichs and thus violates the canonical structure of the *visa* with its main unit *helmingr*, inside which intertwining sentences often unite the first and the fourth lines. The folklore assumption of an identity between the members of the parallelism is supplanted by a conscious device precisely calculated by the skald.

In a similar way the colour symbols used in folklore are remoulded by the personal feeling, developing and condensing the psychological parallelism to the point of visual reality. The colour green (*græn, algræn* in Óláfr's *visur*) is traditionally associated in folklore with youth, freshness, joy and is usually opposed to yellow or gold, which express the general idea of fading. However the suggestive richness of the epithet "*gollí merkð*", and especially "*bliknat Mardallar gráti*", unites the lyrical, elegiac theme of parting from the beloved with the motif, characteristic for *mansöngur*, of "the selling of the beloved for gold" (cf. Gunnlaugr BI, 187, 8). The verb "*blikna*", neutral at the literal level of expression, becomes imaginative (personifying) at the metaphoric level of

content, at which perception is based on the idea in Scandinavian tradition that gold causes paleness. In *Háttatal*, for example, it is stated that owing to the patron's generosity the skald's arms become pale with golden rings: "*Armr kná við blik blikna / brimlands víðum randa*" (vísa 45). Snorri explains that *Mardallar grátur*, i.e. "Mardöll's = Freyja's tears" denote gold because Freyja is weeping for her husband Óðr, and her tears are red gold. Thus again the poetic image is constructed by uniting the two members of a parallelism: "*tré* (neuter gender) *bliknat*" because of gold, and the woman ("*bekkjar tré*", an irregular kenning for woman) "*bliknat*" because of "*Mardallar grátur*".

An aura of folklore associations enriches even the regular kennings, describing a woman in terms of tree, among which the most suggestive are those including "lime": "*lind landrifs*" and "*linu lind*". Lime is a traditional symbol in love poetry, going back to spring rituals and inherited from folklore not only by skalds, but also by minnesingers, goliards and the authors of Middle English lyrics<sup>18</sup>. The universal nature of the images used by Óláfr does not suggest a borrowing but testifies to the connection of his poems with the indigenous traditions of love poetry. The intertwining of two traditions, that of folklore lyrics with its *loci communes* and that of skaldic poetics with its cult of individual experiment, facilitates the birth of authored lyrics expressing the feelings of an individual person, namely the skald, through folklore imagery.

The content of Óláfr's *visur* is determined by the desire to express his personal emotions. He states his feelings explicitly in the third stanza (*þol's; þann myndak við vilja; alin erumk hjórk at þolvi*) and less directly in the second (*eik en dýra*). The second *vísa* is of interest because the authorial presence is as if removed from the text, in opposition to the *usus* of skaldic poetics, aggressively asserting the personality of the author. The open intrusion of the author into the core of a skaldic poem is altered by the acquisition of the "impersonality" of folk tradition. The intrusion of the author becomes covert, with the effect that the author's evaluation and attitude remain perceived by the audience constantly but in a form mediated by the "second reality". For the first time in skaldic poetry the conditions appear for the detachment of the persona from the author, that is for that peculiar embodiment of the author's personality which characterises the system of lyrical poetry. The grasp of traditional means of folklore, familiar to the skalds from oral tradition, results in deviations from the normative conditions of skaldic poetics, the displacement of the usual correlation between the principle of construction and the material. Óláfr's *visur* - examples of typologically late skaldic *mansöngur* - already do not manifest pragmatics as a functional imperative; there can be no doubt that their aesthetic functions dominate over their communicative functions. There is still external motive for the composition of these *visur*, but they are less determined by the situation. They are hardly composed *ex tempore*, as is proved by their equal adequacy when addressed to Steinvör and to Ingigerðr; indeed they could have been aimed at any woman. In other words, Óláfr's *visur* make the situation in the poem typical, thus marking a new step towards lyric and breaking with the laws of skaldic poetry, in which a *vísa* is an integral part of the situation from which it arose. The approximation to lyric is achieved through acquisition of folklore means, grasped in a new authorial way, moulded by personal feeling, and greatly enhanced by the very small scale of a skaldic *vísa*, and most importantly by "estranging" the highly normative and conventional nature of skaldic poetics.

As we have seen, folklore artistic devices are acquired by skalds in typologically late love poetry, such as Óláfr's *visur*, and are practically absent from the *mansöngur* of the "*skaldasögur*" (*Hallfreðar saga*, *Gumlaugs saga ormstungu*, *Bjarnar saga*

*Húðælakappa, Kormáks saga*), in which the greatest part of skaldic love poetry is found. The only exception is the extended simile in Hallfreðr's *vísa* about Kolfinna, which is retained in only one manuscript of *Hallfreðar saga* (ch. 10) and whose authenticity has been questioned<sup>19</sup>:

Pykki mér, es ek þekki  
 þunníunga Gunni,  
 sem fleybrautir fljóti  
 fley meðal tveggja eyja,  
 en þás sek á Sögu  
 saums í kvinna flaumi,  
 sem skrautbúin skríði  
 skeið með gyldum reiða (BI, 162, 24).

The double comparisons of Hallfreðr's *vísa* make explicit and also syntactically develop the metaphors introduced by Óláfr into skaldic poetics. If Óláfr's metaphors are deeply traditional because they are based both on a typical image of folklore lyrics and on a peculiarly skaldic poetic means (kennings, describing a woman in terms of tree), Hallfreðr's metaphors are highly individual and, as far as we can judge, unique in skaldic tradition. The likening of a woman to a sailing ship (*fley*, *skeið*), which is given in the first *helmingr*, becomes more complicated in the second part through the polysemy of rhyming nouns, *saumr* (both sewing and fastening of a ship's planks), *flaumr* (both crowd and eddy) and also the adjective *skrautbúinn* (well-dressed - as of a woman - and ornamented - as of a ship). In Óláfr's as well as in Hallfreðr's verse a folklore means (simile) becomes the device of an individual author: an image which is impersonal in folklore is filled with acutely perceived personal feeling. In the latter, the acquisition of folklore imagery and artistic means is accompanied by important changes on all levels of the organisation of the *vísa*: phraseology, syntax and versification.

The lexical organisation of Hallfreðr's *vísa* is not entirely traditional: the rich vocabulary, poetic heiti, archaic words, are absent from it; kennings, though retained, are minimal. Apart from the compound word *fleybrautr*, there are only two kennings in all eight lines of the *vísa*: *Gunn þunníunga*, *Saga saums*. It is conspicuous that: neither kenning is entirely conventional. They are additionally motivated by the revealing, baring of the inner form of the base word: the name of the goddess "Saga" (seeress) is made to clash in the line (*sek á Sögu*) with the verb with which it is etymologically connected (*sjá*)<sup>20</sup>. In the motivated nature of its kennings Hallfreðr's *vísa* can be compared with analogous poetic experiments (cf. Kormákr's *vísa*: *Öl-Sögu meik auga annat* <...> *hundraða þriggja*; BI, 71, 7). In the sphere of syntax its organisation violates all the norms of skaldic poetics.

In contrast to the canonical syntactic structure of a skaldic *vísa*, intertwining the disjointed parts of simple sentences, Hallfreðr's *vísa* comprises one complex sentence, which occupies its entire eight lines. Normative skaldic poetics with its fairly primitive syntax varies the organisation of the strophe with the help of different ornaments of syntactic "weaving" (analogous to the ornament of the viking age), whereas Hallfreðr investigates the syntactic richness of supraphrasal unity by articulating his single sentence to include four adverbial clauses. As a result, instead of acting as highly artificial ornament, hiding trivial content in its complexities and thus enhancing its significance, the syntax of Hallfreðr's *vísa* becomes a means of revealing sense. Like the vocabulary, the syntax of this *vísa* loses not only its hypertrophical exquisiteness, but also its conventionalism. Motivation of the expression plane by the content plane becomes for Hallfreðr the principle of poetic composition, whereas its neglect was of the essence of



skaldic poetics.

The adoption of the folklore device does away with the artificiality not only of skaldic syntax and phraseology but also of the unbreakable rules of skaldic versification. The highly formalised skaldic alliteration falls on the verbal repetition (*sem fleybrautir fjjóti / fley meðal tveggja eyja*) which appears in skaldic poetry extremely rarely and only as a conscious device (cf. famous Hallfreðr's visa on the sword, BI, 159, 11). Thus sound similarity becomes subservient to semantic identity, and alliteration, losing its formal nature, begins to mark the semantically most important peaks, which are the basis for the whole extended simile not only in the line but in the whole stanza. The alliteration here, marking the key words, unites the two short lines by semantically rich sound repetition, and thus reconstructs the "epic" unity of the long line lost in skaldic poetry. Naturally, in this return to the main structural unit of epic verse (the long line) there appears a threat to the autonomous nature of the skaldic unit proper (the short line), fixed from both sides by the consonance or full rhyme. In two of the eight lines of Hallfreðr's visa (5 and 8), rhyme, which constitutes an innate property of this poetic system (unlike alliteration which is more ancient than the skaldic verse itself), is entirely absent, depriving these lines of the canonical frame of sound. When individual segments are taken out of the artificial ornamentation which separates sound and sense, unmotivatedly underlining one element and hiding others, the whole sound picture of the stanza is destroyed. Versification, together with phraseology and syntax, stops serving as an obstacle to perception of the content, and the three fortresses which make penetration of the sense most difficult (and because of that most poetically valuable) begin to topple. The simplification of verse and style bears witness to the overcoming of formal hypertrophe, which was the consequence of incomplete authorship affecting only the level of form. The need to emphasise the importance of content disappears because the content, ceasing to be trivial, that is, identical to the non-artistic facts of reality, becomes valuable as such. In visur composed by Óláfr and Hallfreðr, which create their own unique poetic image and transform traditional devices (metaphors, similes) into means of lyrical self-expression, the activity of the author begins to spread to the level of content. The personality of the author is realised through the new "non-skaldic" means - no longer infinitely complicating formal restrictions and making them more detailed, but creating and poeticising an image.

The use of poetic devices in a new constructive way is found in the visur ascribed to Magnús berfœttr, King of Norway from 1093 to 1103:

|                                    |                                |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sú's ein es mér meinar,            | Hvat's í heimi betra,          |
| Maktildr ok vegr hildi             | hyggr skald af þröð sjaldan    |
| (mör drekkr suðr ór sörum          | (mögk's langr sás dvelr drengi |
| sveita) leik ok teiti;             | dagr) an víf en fögru;         |
| sá kennir mér svanni,              | þungan berk af þingi           |
| sín lönd er verr röndu             | þann harm, es skalk svanna     |
| (sverð bitu Högnar hurðir)         | (skreytask menn at móti)       |
| hvítjarpr sofa lítit. (BI, 402, 3) | mim aldri finna. (BI, 402, 4)  |

The name of the woman mentioned in the first visa as the means of individualisation usual for *mansöngur* was the sister of the King of Scotland, Eadgar, with whom Magnús was waging a war. This accounts for the presence of "military" motifs in parenthetical sentences, which is quite significant in itself. The relegation of everything concerning battles and heroic feats, the main subject of skaldic poetry, to parenthetical insertions, and the devotion of the main part of the visa to the expression of the inner world of the

author, becomes a symptom of changes which had taken place in the hierarchy of poetic values. It is not surprising that the second visa is fully devoted to describing the author's feelings, which are expressed by the key words of *mansöngur*: *þrá, harmr*. The visa is no longer conditioned by the situation. The generality of description achieved is close to a maximum: there appear general expressions previously unthinkable in skaldic poetry, e.g., *Hvat's í heimi betra*. The artistic merits of Magnús's visur are disputable: they do not impress the imagination by their imagery or originality of style, but it is impossible to doubt that they give an example of pure lyric. Although it follows all the canons of *dróttkvætt*, the style of the "lyrical" visa of Magnús is surprisingly artless: it includes neither kennings nor intricate interweavings of sentences. The hypertrophe of the "plane of expression", the consequence of the initial stage of conscious authorship, disappears when the activity of the author involves the "plane of content". The more individual the contribution of the author to the content, the less anomalous, conventional and ornate is the form. When the creative act, formerly directed only at the form, involves the content, making the authorship complete, lyric in the proper sense of the word is born. The magic effectiveness of skaldic verse is ousted by the aesthetic effectiveness of lyrical poetry.

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