SAGNASKEMMTUN
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Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson

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LÍTIL SAMANTEKT UM HERMANN

Hermann Pálsson var fæðingi í Húnaþingi á þeim bæ er heitir að Sauða-
nesi. Í héráði þessu hafna varða viðmenn mikill og hlemmenn, engu
minni en í Reykjardal í Nórdursýslu. Hermann þótti í æsku hið besta
bónaefni, hagur á þræ sem járn, slættumaður miðini og hesfær vel. Var
það skemmtan hans á vetrum að hleypa græðhestum um ís þögð Húna-
vötn. Pó fyisti hann að féta í spor frænda sína húvenskra sem gerst
höfðu lærðómssmen og námshestar frægstir á Fróni. Nam Hermann
mikið nám, fyrst í þeim stað er Akureyri heitir við kné meistara Sigurðar,
en síðan suður í Reykjavík við fóskarir Nordals hins gamla, Eóss hins
spaka og Alexanders. Og enn þreyti hann fræði bæði forn og ný með
Írum í Dyflinni.

Að námi loknu, nær miðri tuttugtu öld, gerðist Hermann merkis-
maður Íslands meðal Pétta. Um sömu mundir festi hann róð sitt og gekk
að eiga Guðrúnu döttur Póvarðar aðalfhíðrós í banka landsins í Reyk-
javík. Er það mál manna að með þeim hjónum sé jafnæfi um vítsmuni
og hófðingaskap. Hafa þau haft aðsetu í Eiðinaborg, og þaðan hefur
raust Hermanns borist frá þularstölli umborgis gervallan hinn bollótta
heim.

Svo mælti Fíður hinn óskjálg, þá er Hermann var á æsku aldri, að af
honum mætti auðveldlega gera þrájá mann. Væri hann einkavel fallinn til
kennimennsku, söku þess hve rómur væri mikill yfir máli hans, enda
engi brestr á orðgnött og andagipt. Skáld væri hann æfar mikil að
nattúru fari, og mundi hann vislega lenda í flokki skáldmæringa ef hann
fágði þá íón kostgefiða. Pó kvadast Fíður ætla að hvornig þenna kost
mundi Hermann taka, heldur mundi hann þrutna af mannviti og gerast
visendamaður. Væri hann til þess best laginn, meður því að hugmynda-
flug hans væri svo þjórgurt og rifandi að lærdómurinn mundi aldri verða
honum fjótur um fóti.

Sú hefur orðið raun á sem Fíður spáði, að Hermann hefur lagt alla
stund á vísendi og fræði. Pó hefur hann nokkuð stundað yrkingar,
 einkum til himilis þarfa og sér til hugarhægðar. Hinur dáfællugu Söngvar
frá Suðureyjum sýna glögglaga gáfu hans til skáldlistar; þar bítrist oss í
senn húvenskur frumlegileiki og trümensska við frumbrag Suðreyinga.


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BEYOND EPIC AND ROMANCE:
SIGURÐARKVIDA IN MEIRI

One of the singular features of medieval Icelandic literature is the apparent absence of heroic epic. Whereas West Germanic literature developed an epic of sorts, Biblical epic in both England and Germany, secular epic in the English Beowulf and Waldere and the German Nibelung and Dietrich epics, Iceland never arrived at the epic concept.\(^1\) Depending on the perspective, it may be argued that the Icelanders remained laudably pristine or lamentably retarded at the level of the short heroic lay as we know it in the Poetic Edda. This distinction between North and West Germanic is so taken for granted that we have failed to consider how odd it is that Iceland remained ignorant of epic so long and persisted into the thirteenth century as a lonely outpost of rhapsode and cantilena.

The anomaly has become even more obvious in the last two decades, which have witnessed a determined departure from an earlier view of Icelandic literature as a manifestation of Germanic form and spirit undisturbed by the ecclesiastical urbanity that transformed native impulses in England and Germany. More recent scholars have converged from several directions with the common message that Icelandic literature is not nearly so insular as we were led to believe. Lars Lönnroth emphasized the European sources of saga writing.\(^2\) A consortium of

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2) See European Sources of Icelandic Saga-Writing: An Essay Based on Previous Studies (Stockholm 1965) and references.
conventions operate in the case of sagas towards a production of narrative texts to be read (silently or aloud) and spoken. The structural pattern of the entire saga is repeated in successive smaller units at several lower levels of organisation, which facilitates production as well as reception of a continuing text that can conveniently be interrupted at a number of points, to be continued when the opportunity arises.

Although the norm for saga composition is thus set, it leaves enough leeway for individual variation to the author, as can be seen from detailed studies of various sagas. The individual touch of each author may probably best be seen in the way he avails himself of the conventional means of giving prominence to or taking it away from parts of his textual communication.

The basic pattern can be summed up in this way. It has to consist of a clearly delimited framework within which units are ordered in chronological sequence. The topic of the entire text, as well as of any lower unit has to be stated explicitly, the usual topic being the actor. Since actions and spatio-temporal orientation of the text and the actions are also important components, they have to be added to the topic as new information, or “topicalised”, placed into the prominent front position for the purpose of setting them into focus.

In order to bring parts of the text into focus, other strategies may also be adopted, such as changing from the narrative “speech act” to other types of speech acts that occur in dialogues, or interpolated poetry. Another foregrounding device is the change of the narrative past tense to the present. Similarly extra-textual reference to the situation of the author – audience time sphere can also serve the same purpose.

The narrative concentrates on actors and actions, setting them into time and space, so it dispenses with any slowing down elements, such as description, which is static. Therefore excessive modification (particularly by means of verbless structures) is avoided. Yet, it may be used for downtoning, as can other devices such as passive and medio-passive constructions, use of past tense for unimportant actions and so on.

11) F. S. Cawley in his edition of Hrafnkels saga (Havard 1932), comments on various grammatical peculiarities as deriving from “popular style”, i.e. spoken language. Similarly, elements of spoken discourse are contained in saga dialogues as I have argued earlier (D. Máček, “Dialogue as a discourse Pattern in Saga Literature”, paper presented at the 4th International Saga Conference, Munich 1979).

12) It is possible to regard various literary genres as different “speech acts”.

RORY MCTURK (LEEDS)

APPROACHES TO THE STRUCTURE OF EYRBYGGJA SAGA

In this paper I shall review a recent discussion of the structure of Eyrbyggja saga by Bernardine McCreeh,1 and will suggest that her remarks may be supplemented partly by Paul Bibire’s discussion of the verses in this saga at the Second International Saga Conference,2 and partly by some remarks of my own. References to the saga are to the edition of Einar Ól. Sveinsson in the Íslensk forrön series, vol. IV, 1935; I have been unable to use the new edition by F. S. Scott, expected very shortly in the Editiones Arnemagnæanae series.

McCreeh concentrates on certain supernatural episodes in Eyrbyggja saga, arranging them in a series of five pairs, characterizing the first and second member of each pair as “pagan” and “Christian” respectively, and finding it significant that, in the action of the saga, the first and second member of each pair occur respectively before and after the conversion of Iceland, described in ch. 49. She first compares Porstein Porskabit’s reception after his death by drowning in ch. 11 into Heilafell, the mountain especially revered by his father, Fóroflr Mostrarskegg, whose paganism is described at length in ch. 4, with Póroodr skattkaupandi’s appearance as a ghost, also after drowning, in ch. 54, where, as McCreeh points out, the writer comments that those who welcomed the ghost at Fróða were adhering to the old, pre-Christian ways in at first regarding its appearance under such circumstances as a

good omen. It has since been suggested, by Kjartan G. Ottósson⁴, that, since there seems to be no evidence for a genuine, pre-Christian belief that haunting by the drowned bodes well, the comment was introduced by the author to illustrate the evils of paganism from a Christian standpoint; this suggestion tends if anything to reinforce McCreech’s argument. Secondly, McCreech compares the rivalry in chs. 15–16 between Pórolfr beggjótr’s daughter Geirríðr and the widow Katla for the attentions of Gunnlaugur Porbjarnarson, whose suffering through witchcraft, foresworn by Geirríðr, turns out (in ch. 20) to have been caused by Katla, with the disagreement in chs. 50–51 between Púrór Barkóttir and Pórgunnna over the bed-furnishings owned by Pórgunnna but coveted by Púrór, and retained by the latter after Pórgunnna’s death in spite of her instructions that they should be burnt; not until they actually are burnt in ch. 55 do the hauntings at Fróða begin to cease, though Pórgunnna’s own ghost seems to be laid to rest by the Christian burial of her body at Skálholt in ch. 51, in accordance with her own wishes. Here again Kjartan Ottósson’s views tend to support McCreech’s; he argues that, in preventing the burning of the bedclothes in defiance of Pórgunnna’s wishes, Púrór is playing a rôle comparable to that of Eve in the Old Testament, while Pórgunnna is a representative of Christianity; and that these features and the account of Pórgunnna’s burial are largely the work of the saga-author, though the motif of the bedclothes is itself an old feature, inherited from oral tradition⁵. Thirdly, McCreech compares Katla’s curse on Arnkell Pórolfsson just before her death in ch. 20 with Pórgunnna’s request in ch. 51 that her bed-furnishings should be burnt after her death; this request is not a curse, but has the effect of one when it is not complied with, since failure to burn the bedclothes seems to be the main cause of the hauntings at Fróða. In cursing Arnkell, Katla prophesies that he will suffer at his father’s hands, and this prophecy is indeed fulfilled in ch. 37, where Arnkell is killed by Snorri goði as a result of trouble between him and Arnkell arising from the fact that Arnkell’s father, Pórolfr beggjótr, had made over some land to Snorri and in so doing had deprived Arnkell of his rightful inheritance (chs. 31, 35). Thus Katla’s malice can be said to live on after her death and to contrast, as McCreech suggests it does, with the unselfishness of Pórgunnna, whose supernatural appearance after her death (in ch. 51) ensures that those carrying her coffin to Skálholt for burial are provided with food and shelter on the way. Fourthly, McCreech compares the posthumous activities of Pórolfr beggjótr in Pórsárðalr, described in ch. 34, with the hauntings at Fróða described in chs. 53–55. She does not develop the comparison, though she notes that Pórolfr’s hauntings are temporarily brought to an end through the efforts of his son Arnkell, which remain effective as long as Arnkell remains alive (ch. 34); she could also have pointed out that Arnkell is later described (in ch. 37) as a noble representative of the pagan period (altra manna best at sér sam altha hlutí i formum síði⁶), whereas it is a Christian ceremony, a mass sung at the advice of Snorri goði, one of the most active proponents of the new faith (see ch. 49), that finally brings the hauntings at Fróða to an end in ch. 55. Fifthly and finally, McCreech notices the connection between the account of Pórolfr beggjótr’s activities as a ghost in ch. 34 and the story of the bull Glaesir, which in ch. 63 immediately follows the account of Pórolfr’s renewed hauntings at the beginning of that chapter. The bull, which eventually kills Póroddr Porbandsson, the most prominent farmer in the Alþafjörð district since the death of Pórolfr’s son Arnkell, who had been at odds with his father, seems with its dapple-grey colour to be a supernatural agent of Pórolfr’s continuing posthumous malice; and it may indeed be significant, as McCreech suggests, that before Pórolfr’s body is burnt after his renewed hauntings he is said to be as stout as a bull (diger sem naund⁷), and that the cow which subsequently gives birth to Glaesir licks the stones onto which Pórolfr’s ashes have blown after the burning. McCreech’s suggestion that the saga is criticizing from a Christian standpoint Póroddr’s disregard of his old foster-mother’s instructions to kill Glaesir as a calf before he can do any harm may seem far-fetched until it is recalled that this situation is comparable to the one in which Púrór disobeys Pórgunnna’s instructions to burn the bedclothes after her death, with disastrous results; it is arguable that Póroddr in ch. 63, like Púrór in ch. 51, is guilty of the sin of Eve⁸.

⁴ Kjartan G. Ottósson, Fróðórungr í Eyrbyggja, Studia Islandica..., 42. hefti (Reykjavik 1983), 96–99, 135.
⁵ See Ottósson, 54–57, 133–134.
⁶ See Sveinsson (1935), 103.
⁷ See Sveinsson (1935), 170, and 170, n. 6.
Thus, in itself, McCreesh’s five-part scheme is not entirely unconvincing. While the specifically pagan emphasis in the first episode in each pair is perhaps not always as strong as she would like, Kjartan Ottósson’s remarks tend to show that the Christian emphasis in the second episode is in some cases even greater than McCreesh herself realizes. The scheme is unconvincing, however, insofar as it is apparently intended to account for the structure of Eyrbyggja saga as a whole; McCreesh introduces her presentation of it with a review of discussion by previous scholars as to whether or not this particular saga has “structural unity or a clearly defined pattern of construction”. It does not seem to me that her arrangement of supernatural episodes “around”, as she puts it, “the central pivot of the Conversion”, accounts satisfactorily for the total structure of Eyrbyggja saga. In the first place, it is debatable whether the conversion of Iceland, as described in ch. 49, can be regarded as truly central even in relation to the episodes used by McCreesh to form her five-part scheme, let alone in relation to the saga as a whole. While it is true that the first and second episode in each of her five pairs occur respectively before and after the conversion in the action of the saga, as already noted, the second episode in the first four of these pairs occurs in the chapter-sequence (50–55) dealing with the Fróða marvels, which immediately follows the chapter describing the conversion; only in the case of the fifth and final pair does the second episode, the one involving Glaesir, occur apart from the continuous series of events at Fróða. Looking at the five pre-conversion episodes in McCreesh’s scheme we find that, in comparison with the post-conversion ones, they are reasonably spread out, as it were, in the relevant part of the saga; the first one occurs in ch. 11, the second in chs. 15–16, the third in ch. 20, and the fourth in ch. 34; the fifth, however, also occurs in ch. 34 and is, indeed, essentially the same as the fourth, the one involving Pòröldr baggíför’s hauntings. In the pre-conversion series, then, we are really dealing with four episodes rather than five, though these four are reasonably spaced out; in the post-conversion series, by contrast, four out of a total number of five episodes are bunched together in six consecutive chapters. Thus the five-part scheme is hardly as neat, or even as real, as it seems to be at first sight; it certainly does not have the balance and symmetry that might be expected from the diagrammatic form in which McCreesh presents it. It may also be noted that the scheme does not by any means account for all the supernatural episodes in the saga; it disregards, among other incidents, the snowstorm magically induced by the sorceress Pòrgrima galdrakínn at the instigation of Pòröldr skattkaupandi, in which Björn Breiðvikingakappi is caught in ch. 40 on his way home from visiting Pòröldr’s wife, Purrödr, at Fróða; and the sinister episode in ch. 43 of the human head which, in a half-strophe of fornyrðislag, prophesies that Geirðr, the scree-slope on which it is found, will be reddened with the blood of men – a prophecy fulfilled in ch. 44 at the battle of the Aþtafjórðr, in which Snorri göði and Steinþór Pòrlaðsson engage in combat, with losses on both sides, before finally becoming reconciled in ch. 46. In Eyrbyggja saga as a whole, moreover, the conversion of Iceland is neither physically central, as it is in Laxdala saga, nor psychologically central, as it arguably is in Niðals saga; it occurs in the forty-ninth of a total of sixty-five chapters or, in terms of the action of the saga, between the fourth and fifth of the six narratives involving Snorri göði, which, as Bibire has convincingly suggested, provide the saga with a kind of ground-bass; and even in comparison with Laxdala saga, which does not describe the conversion at much length, Eyrbyggja saga gives little space to it; ch. 49 is the third shortest chapter in the saga, the second shortest being ch. 38, which completes the third of the six Snorri göði narratives, and the shortest of all ch. 48, which deals with the emigration to Greenland of two of Pòrbrandr Pòrfinsson’s sons (Pòrleifr kimbi and Snorri). It is noteworthy that, in seeking to apply her scheme to Hollfœðar saga and Fóstbarða saga, McCreesh takes account of the number of verses in these two sagas, perhaps because she is relatively hard

9) See McCreesh, 272.
10) See McCreesh, 273.

11) In Laxdala saga as edited in the Æstenk fornrit series, V. bindi (also by Einar Öl. Sveinsson, Reykjavík 1934), the conversion of Iceland is reported in the forty-first of a total of seventy-eight chapters, i.e. almost exactly halfway through the saga. On the possibly deliberate organization by number of the chapters in this saga, see Edward G. Fichtner’s paper at the Fourth International Saga Conference, “Arithmetical proportion in Laxdela” (23 pp.), and the discussion of this paper between Fichtner and Otto J. Zittelsberger immediately following its delivery. The paper and the discussion are recorded in mimeographed form in Fourth International Saga Conference, München, July 30th – August 4th 1979, Summaries, Papers (München 1979) and Discussions (München 1980; see 25–31 respectively).
13) See Bibire, 9.
up here for supernatural incidents (as well as for central instances of conversion)\textsuperscript{14}; whereas one could read her discussion of *Eyrbygginga saga* without discovering that there was a single verse in the saga.

Bibire, on the other hand, is very much aware of the verses in *Eyrbygginga saga*, and has examined their contribution to its structure. Among the chapters of the saga he identifies five groups, one of which embodies six narratives, while the remaining four embody one each; the largest group, the one embodying six narratives, takes up twenty-two chapters, and is concerned with Snorri goði, while the smallest one (for which I use the word “group”, albeit inappropriately) consists of only one chapter, and is concerned with the bull Gleásir. The remaining three groups are concerned respectively with the Málhöfninn (seven chapters), Björn Breiðvikingakappi (four chapters), and the berserks Halli and Leiknir (two chapters). While each of the narratives embodied in these groups treats the events it describes for the most part in the order in which they are supposed to have occurred\textsuperscript{15}, none of the groups consists of a directly continuous series of chapters. Except in the case of the Gleásir narrative, which takes up only one chapter, each group is interrupted at least once by a chapter or chapters belonging in most cases — though not all — to one or another of the other groups; it should be noted that the five groups taken together do not account for all the chapters in *Eyrbygginga saga*, a point to which I shall return below. These five groups, as Bibire makes clear, are characterized by the use of scaldic verses to “point” — i.e. reinforce or mark — events and themes of particular importance. In *Eyrbygginga saga* it is more often events than themes that are pointed in this way; and the events in question are those which irreversibly modify the narrative situations in which they occur, and thus amount to “crises” in the narrative.

\textsuperscript{14} In the case of *Hallfreðar saga*, McCrath, 275, finds neither the conversion of Iceland (hardly surprisingly) nor Hallfreð's own conversion sufficiently central to suit her purposes, and takes as “the focal point” Hallfreð's "return to the fold after a sojourn among the heathen". In the case of *Fóstbrœðrar saga*, where, as she has to admit, "the action is set entirely within the Christian period", she takes as "the turning-point" Porgrímr's death and "his sworn brother's transfer of allegiance to St. Óláfr".

\textsuperscript{15} There are, however, occasional not very striking examples of anachrony (i.e. of discrepancy between the order in which events are narrated and that in which they are supposed to have happened), notably at the beginnings of chs. 45 and 60. On the term "anachrony", see Gérard Genette, *Narrative discourse*, transl. by Jane E. Lewin; foreword by Jonathan Culler (Oxford 1980), 33-85.

So, in the group of chapters concerned with Snorri goði, the first of the six narratives is pointed by two scaldic strophes, and the remaining five by one each. The six narratives may be listed as follows, with the relevant chapter and strophe numbers in brackets: (1) the dispute between Illugi svarti and the Kjalleklingar, in which Snorri mediates (ch. 17, strs. 1-2); (2) the trouble between Snorri and Vigfús Bjarnarson, culminating in the slaying of Vigfús by Snorri (chs. 23, 26-27; str. 20, quoted at the end of ch. 26); (3) the dispute between Snorri and Arnkel, culminating in Arnkel's slaying by Snorri (chs. 35-38; str. 26, quoted in ch. 37); (4) the dispute involving, on one side, Snorri and the sons of Porbrandr Porfinnsson, and, on the other, the *Eyrbyggjar* and Breiðvikingar, culminating in the battle in the Álptafjörður (chs. 39, 41-46; str. 33, quoted in ch. 44); (5) the dispute between Snorri and the Borgeirðingar, culminating in the battle at the Pórnness pang (ch. 56, str. 34); and (6) Óspakr Kjallaksson's raids, culminating in his slaying by Snorri's ally, Viga-Sturla Pjöðreksson (chs. 57-62; str. 35, quoted in ch. 62). Of the seven verses involved in these six narratives, the first two are said in the prose to be from the *Ilugadrapa* of Oddr skáld; the remainder are attributed in the prose to Pormóðr Trelísson, and differ from the first two, which are in *droitrkvaett*\textsuperscript{16}, in being in the *hákarlag* metre; three of them (strs. 33-35) are said to be from Pormóðr's *Hrafnsmál*. Thus, as Bibire shows, a pattern emerges of six narratives in each of which the crisis is pointed by a verse attributed to Oddr or Pormóðr; the seven strophes serve as a unifying device, linking together all the narratives concerning Snorri goði, and thus help to emphasize his central importance in the saga.

The four remaining groups of chapters under discussion embody only one narrative each, as already indicated. The second group, embodying the narrative of the Málhöfninn, takes up chs. 15-16 and 18-22. The relevant strophes here are nos. 3-19, a total of seventeen, the first two of which occur in ch. 18, while the last occurs in ch. 22; the remainder occur in ch. 19. All of them are spoken by Pórarinn svarti and all deal retrospectively with the fighting involving his slaying of Porbjörn digri, who had accused Pórarinn of stealing his horses; this slaying forms the
conflict between love and warfare as is found in the narrative of Björn Breiðvikungakappi. Since Bibire’s paper was delivered (in 1973), Joseph Harris has argued with some persuasiveness (in 1976)\(^\text{17}\) that the narrative of the berserks in Æbyggjia saga is an analogue to the story of the building of the rampart around Valhöll in Snorri’s prose Edda; that it shares with this story a source in a local legend that developed at Hraun (the site of Viga-Styrr’s farm) partly on the basis of an incident that took place there and partly under the influence of the migratory legend known as the Masterbuilder Tale; and that the legend in its localized form reached Æbyggjia saga (dating from c. 1240) by way of the original version of Heiðarvögos saga (dating from 1200–1220), as well as being independently adopted by Snorri, who in his prose Edda (dating from c. 1223) cleverly developed it into a bogus myth. Harris’s emphasis on the story as a legend is easily reconcilable with Bibire’s view that Æbyggjia saga’s version of it shows similarities to the legendary sagas. As for the dating of the saga, which Bibire does not discuss, Harris’s view (c. 1240) comes closer to Rolf Heller’s, as reiterated in 1984\(^\text{18}\), than to that of Peter Hallberg, who in 1979 argued, against Heller and others, that Æbyggjia saga was written well into the second half of the thirteenth century\(^\text{19}\).

The last chapter-group to be considered here in fact consists of only one chapter, as already indicated; this is ch. 63, embodying the Glaesir narrative, which I have also touched on above in outlining McCreech’s scheme. Here the crisis of the narrative, the killing of Pórodd Porbrandsson by Glaesir, is anticipated and pointed by the two strophes (36 and 37) foretelling the killing, and spoken by Pórodr’s old foster-mother. The supernatural nature of the bull and the verse-prophecies, and the fact that the old woman is not named, give this otherwise realistically presented narrative something of the atmosphere of folktale, as Bibire points out.

The pattern in Æbyggjia saga emerging from Bibire’s discussion accounts for much more of the saga than McCreech’s five-part scheme does, and if it does not account for all of it, this is because Bibire, who is chiefly concerned with the contribution of the verses to the saga’s

\(^{19}\) Peter Hallberg, “Æbyggjia sagas ålder – än en gång”, \textit{Acta Philologica Scandinavica} 32 (1979), 196–219; see especially 207, 213.
structure, concentrates more on those chapters which either contain the verses or share their subject-matter, than on those which do not. My own concentration below on the chapters in this latter category is offered as a development, rather than a criticism, of his views. McCreech makes no mention whatever of the verses in *Eyrbyggja saga*, as already indicated, whereas Bibire accounts in one way or another for all thirty-seven of them; he is indeed far more thorough in his treatment of the verses, which form the basis of his discussion, than McCreech is in her treatment of the supernatural incidents, which, together with the conversion, form the basis of hers. As Bibire points out, *Eyrbyggja saga* tends not to use the verses to point supernatural events, though there are, as he recognizes, exceptions to this general rule: Björn Breiðvikangakapi’s three-strophe commentary (strs. 29–31) on the magically-induced snowstorm in ch. 40; the half-strophe (no. 32) spoken by the head prophesying battle in ch. 43; and the two strophes (36–37) in the Glassir narrative in ch. 63. Certainly the major supernatural events of the saga – the hauntings of Póroflr begiðfør on the one hand and the Fróða marvels on the other – are not accompanied or pointed by verses. This means that there is little overlap between McCreech’s and Bibire’s discussions, and that, although Bibire’s is the more thorough and comprehensive of the two, McCreech’s remarks are occasionally helpful in supplementing his.

The chapters of the saga not accounted for in Bibire’s discussion – since they contain neither verses nor material pointed by verses in other chapters – make up five sections of the saga, as follows: 1–14, 24, 30–34, 48–55, and 65. The first of these sections, chs. 1–14, has been helpfully described by Lee M. Hollander as an “introduction, dealing with the events leading to the emigration to Iceland, the first settlers and their institutions”; this allows the section in question to be seen as different and apart from the saga proper without being denied a place in the total structure of the saga. The fifth and final section, ch. 65, dealing with the descendants and death of Snorri goði, may be similarly disposed of by being regarded as an epilogue, inessential to the series of narratives dealing with Snorri goði, and even more so to the other narratives in the saga; Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards in fact call it an epilogue in the introduction to their translation of the saga. The second of these five sections, ch. 24, deals with the discovery of Greenland by Eiríkr rauði; the third, chs. 30–34, deals with Póroflr begiðfór’s increasing nastiness in his old age, his death, and his hauntings up to the time of his subdual by Arnkel; and the fourth, chs. 48–55, deals with the two emigrants to Greenland mentioned earlier, the conversion of Iceland, Pórgunn’s arrival in Iceland, her disagreement with Púrdir over the bed-furnishings, and the Fróða marvels (it may be noted here that, in the group of manuscripts on which the *Íslensk fornrit* edition of *Eyrbyggja saga* is mainly based, the chapter dealing with the emigrants to Greenland, numbered 48 in that edition, comes at the beginning of this fourth section; in the archetypes of the saga’s two other main groups of manuscripts, however, it appears to have come at the end of it). Of the five sections, only three – the second, third and fourth – remain to be accounted for, if the first and fifth may indeed be regarded as an introduction and an epilogue respectively. Apart from the negative fact that they do not contain verses, what, if anything, links these three sections together, enabling them to be regarded as a distinctive group? There is little in the third section that is reminiscent of the second; on the other hand, the fourth section recalls not only the third, with its heavy emphasis on the supernatural, but also the second, with its account of the emigrants to Greenland and the conversion of Iceland (an event briefly mentioned in the second section in connection with the discovery of Greenland, see ch. 24). If it can be accepted that, as indicated earlier, Póroflr’s first hauntings and the Fróða marvels are presented in such a way as to suggest comparison and contrast between paganism and Christianity, it may be maintained that the account of Iceland’s conversion, which, as Vésteinn Ólason notes, has little direct connection with other events in the saga, is appropriately introduced near (or at) the beginning of the fourth section, in order to establish the context in which these events will be compared and contrasted with Póroflr’s hauntings, described in the third section; and it may further be suggested that, despite the very local, Icelandic settings of the supernatural events in these two sections, all three sections are linked together by a preoccupation with events of more than merely local importance, such as the colonization of Greenland, which is referred to in the second section and recalled in the fourth, and

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20) As the title of his paper implies; see note 2, above.
23) See Sveinsson (1935), Ivi – Ix, and Ix, n. 3.
25) See the point in the text to which note 23, above, refers.
the conversion of Iceland, which is described in the fourth section and prepared for in different ways by its brief mention in the second section and by the description of Pórólfr's hauntings in the third. With these events the saga's concerns extend not just beyond Snæfellsnes, where most of the action takes place, but also beyond the national limits of Iceland itself—by Greenland in the one case and to Norway in the other, since it is with the return to Iceland from Norway of Gizurr hviti and Hjalti Skeggjason, noted at the beginning of ch. 49, that the conversion of Iceland is set in motion. It may be added that, in the fourth section, Pórirnarr karlsfni's expedition from Greenland to Vinland (on the American continent) is mentioned (ch. 48); and that Pórgunnar, who is herself a Hebridean, arrives in Iceland in a ship from Dublin, with Irishmen, Hebrideans and Norwegians on board (ch. 50). These three sections, then, may be said to serve the purpose of providing the events of the saga with a fuller historical and geographical background than they would have otherwise; their theme, it may be suggested, is Iceland's development as a nation, as reflected partly in its relations with other countries, but also, and more importantly, in its conversion from

-- 26) Most of the action in fact takes place on or near Snæfellsnes. Exceptions are the activities in Norway and the British Isles leading up to the settlement of Snæfellsnes, and described in chs. 1–6; the visit of Snorri Porgrimsson (later Snorri goði) to Norway, briefly described in ch. 13; Eiríkr rauði's colonization of Greenland, briefly described in ch. 24; Vermund Porgrimsson's acquisition of the berserks in Norway, described in the first half of ch. 25; Póródr skattkaupandi's visit to the British Isles, and Bjorn Breiðvikin-gakappi's visit to mainland Scandinavia, described at the beginning and end of ch. 29 respectively; Arnbjorn Asbrandsson's departure for Norway with Bolfrís krími, described in ch. 39; Snorri Porbrandsson's departure for Greenland with his brother, Bolfrís krími, and his subsequent death in Vinland, both briefly described in ch. 48; the journey from Fróða to Skáholt ending with Pórgunnar's burial, described in ch. 51; Snorri goði's move to Sælingsdalr (midway between Snæfellsnes and Strandir), and his two expeditions to Borgarfjörð, described in ch. 56; the sixth and final Snorri goði narrative, involving Óspakr's raids, which (apart from a brief episode on Nes, the western tip of Snæfellsnes, described in ch. 61) takes place mostly in the Bitra area of Strandir, and occupies chs. 57–62; and Guðleifr Gunnlaugsson's meeting, after being driven off course on his way to Ireland, with a mysterious figure, believed to be Bjorn Breidvikingakappi, in an unnamed country in the west, described in ch. 64. The word "action" can hardly be applied to ch. 65, which mainly lists Snorri's descendants; it considerably enlarges the saga's geographical setting, however, insofar as it gives in some cases their places of abode and those of their relatives by marriage.

paganism to Christianity. It is in fact by theme that the three sections are interrelated, rather than by any obvious causal or personal linking of the events they describe, and in this respect they cannot easily be compared, as a series, with any one of the groups of chapters in which the crises and themes are pointed by verses, and with which Björn is mainly concerned. On the other hand, the supernatural episodes in the third and fourth sections, with the fantastic and memorable nature of the events they describe, surely provide a more than adequate pointing of the thematic contrast between paganism and Christianity, whether or not verses dealing with the events in question, and now lost, were available to the saga-author; and the highly localized character of these episodes, already noticed, ensures that the conversion of Iceland, an event of national importance, does not seem altogether remote from the more local concerns of the greater part of the saga.

It should indeed be stressed that the three sections under discussion are by no means consistently remote, in subject-matter or presentation, from the "verse-pointed" groups of chapters, if I may so call them. Ch. 24, for instance, which constitutes the second section, adumbrates the alliance of Snorri goði with Viga-Styr, which in ch. 27 prevents Styr from taking up the case against Snorri for the killing of Vigfuss, as Vésteinn Ólason has pointed out; it thus connects with the second of the six narratives about Snorri goði, even though it is mainly concerned with the discovery of Greenland by Eiríkr rauði—a figure hardly otherwise mentioned in the saga. The third section, ending with the laying of Pórólfr's ghost by Arnkell and the statement that Pórólfr then lay quiet as long as Arnkell remained alive, raises the question of what is likely to happen in the event of Arnkell's death; it thus looks forward to the crisis of the third Snorri goði narrative, the slaying of Arnkell by Snorri and others in ch. 37, and further still (as McCreech's arguments help to show) to the Glaesir narrative, which in ch. 63 is immediately preceded by Pórólfr's renewed hauntings. The fourth section, including as it does (whether at its beginning or end) the brief account of Bolfrís kimbí and Snorri Porbrandsson's emigration to Greenland, presents the emigration as a consequence of the reconciliation following the battle in the Álpiarfjörð, thus linking the section with the fourth Snorri goði narrative, of which that battle forms the crisis. This same section also, in

27) See Ólason, 9.
28) He is mentioned only once again, and then briefly, in the following chapter (25).
connecting the supernatural events at Fróða with the quarrel between Póröfr and Fróða, recalls the episodes involving Geirrör and Katla in chs. 15–16 and 20, as McCreech also helps to show. Of these two episodes the first, which was briefly discussed earlier, has to do with the two women’s rivalry for Gunnlaug Porbjarnarson; the second deals with Geirrör’s attempts to apprehend by magic, and Katla’s attempts to save by the same means, Katla’s son Oddr after Geirrör has claimed that he was responsible for cutting off the hand of her daughter-in-law Auðr in the fighting leading up to the slaying of Porbjorn digri, which forms the crisis of the narrative of the Máliðingar (Geirrör is in the end successful, and both Oddr and Katla are put to death). The second episode thus comes near to pointing the crisis of the Máliðingar narrative, and may be said to assist the verses (strs. 3–19) in doing so. The first and second episodes, which occur respectively in the first and second of the two chapter-sequences embodying the Máliðingar narrative (chs. 15–16 and 18–22), also serve the purpose of reinforcing the link between these two sequences; there is a supernatural episode in each sequence, whereas the pointing strophes occur only in the second. If the supernatural episodes in the verseless sections of the saga dealing with Póröfr beggjófr and Fróða have a pointing function, as suggested earlier, and a linking function implicit in the comparison they embody between paganism and Christianity, then these functions are prepared for by the narrative of the Máliðingar, where verse-pointing and the supernatural are to some extent combined, and where the supernatural is used to link as well as point. It may further be noted that Katla’s dying curse, already mentioned in a slightly different context, may be said to foreshadow Póröfr’s hauntings, with its prophecy that Arnkell, Póröfr’s son, will acquire the reputation of having an evil father. The narratives of Björn Breiðvikingakappi and Gæsir also show, in chs. 40 and 63 respectively, a combination of verse-pointing and the supernatural, as already indicated. The narrative of Björn Breiðvikingakappi is recalled in the Fróða section (as Bibire recognizes) by the fact that Kjartan, the son of Póröfr and probably also of Björn himself, plays an active part in laying the ghosts; and the Gæsir narrative, as McCreech shows, connects back with the account of Póröfr’s first hauntings in following on immediately from the account of his renewed hauntings. As McCreech also shows, the Fróða section parallels and recalls ch. 11 of the saga, which forms part of what has here been called the saga’s introduction, with its presentation of certain supernatural events as consequence on death by drowning. It may finally be noted that the saga’s introduction (chs. 1–14) and epilogue (ch. 65), which deal respectively with the settlement of Iceland from Norway (partly by way of the British Isles) and the descendants of Snorri goði, combine with the three sections under discussion to provide the events of the saga with a relatively capacious setting in time and space. Thus the effect of contextual enlargement, which was attributed to these sections above, is made all the stronger by the links they show with the remainder of the saga, and by their frequent similarities to it.

Thus the conversion of Iceland, to which McCreech assigns a position of central importance in Eyrbýggja saga, in fact has only a subsidiary function in its overall structure. The saga consists of sixty-five chapters, the first fourteen and the last of which form an introduction and epilogue respectively, while the remaining fifty (15–64) are mainly taken up, as Bibire has shown, with six narratives about Snorri goði, each of which is marked or “pointed” by a verse or verses, and which together represent a five times repeated pattern with which four other verse-pointed narratives (dealing respectively with the Máliðingar, Björn Breiðvikingakappi, the berserks, and Gæsir) are in different ways combined. These fifty chapters also include, however, three sections (chs. 24, 30–34, 48–55) which, since they contain neither verses nor verse-pointed material, fall outside the scope of Bibire’s inquiry and which, as I have argued here, give an effect of spaciousness in dealing with events of national rather than local importance, particularly the conversion of Iceland, while at the same time using, instead of verses, two highly localized accounts of supernatural happenings (Póröfr beggjófr’s hauntings and the Fróða marvols) to point the conversion and indicate its relevance to the remainder of the saga. Since the supernatural and the verses seldom coincide in Eyrbýggja saga, McCreech’s and Bibire’s discussions, which concentrate on the former and the latter respectively, to some extent supplement each other, as I trust I have shown; and I hope that my own remarks have supplemented theirs in such a way as to offer a preliminary view of the structure of Eyrbýggja saga as a whole.

29) Ch. 6 describes how Björn, and later Auðr, son and daughter respectively of Ketill flatnæfr, move to Iceland from the Hebrides, where they had both earlier moved from Norway—Auðr with her father, as described in ch. 1, and Björn somewhat later by way of the Norwegian island of Mostr (see chs. 2 and 5).