

The British Text of *Svínfellinga saga* –
bad copy or creative compilation?

In prior times, ere Theory began, texts were thought of as stable or at least stabilizable phenomena 'Establishing' the text, annotating its obscurities and 'introducing' it with observations on its biographical provenance, printing history and literary-historical context were activities which ... underpinned all worthwhile discourse. Afterwards, the text could be handed over safely to interpreters ... and to critics ...(Ruthven 1983: 3–4).

With the advent of medieval studies as an academic discipline in the second half of the nineteenth century, the priority was to make medieval literature available in printed form. It was believed that the only good medieval text was an edited one, established to recreate a lost medieval artefact from the evidence of its diverse surviving copies. This ideal inevitably led to an acceptance of the authority of the edited text, the 'stable' or 'stabilizable' artefact available to the interpreters and the critics (Trigg 1985: 15–22). Once this 'most original' text had been established from collating variants in the extant vellum manuscripts and paper copies, it was regarded, in New Critical terms, as a stable, self-contained and autonomous object (Trigg 1985: 50). Subsequently, it became the basis for translations, critical evaluations, interpretations and inter-disciplinary discussions.

Against this milieu, editors like Guðbrand Vigfusson (1878) and Kristian Kålund (1906–11) prepared their editions of *Sturlunga saga*, the fourteenth-century compilation. Subsequent editors like Jóhannesson et al (1946) established their text according to the groundwork done by Vigfusson and Kålund. The principal activity of these editors was to attempt a) the establishment of an 'accurate' text, thus arriving at a compound version which does not preserve either of the original vellum texts,¹ b) the separation of the original constituent sagas, the dating of these and of the compilation together with their manuscripts,² and c) comment on and evaluation of material from *Sturlunga saga* as a source for the historian and the sociologist. While the work of these editors in making available a reliable text remains invaluable and the study of *Sturlunga* without their editions inconceivable,³

contemporary contextual approaches have suggested that there are other questions to be asked of Old Norse texts.⁴ Which version of the story is best, prior, original or most literary is not an appropriate question: a story consists of all its versions and variants. Furthermore, the origin of the elements of the story and their status as 'objective' history are irrelevant to an understanding of their relationships with one another (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 216–17). It is also doubtful whether more can usefully be discovered about the origin of the various elements of the Old Icelandic sagas without resorting to speculation. The individual extant texts should be studied as received and preserved artefacts in their own right, answering questions about the creative process of selection, reorganization, addition and compilation which shaped them and revealing something of the interests and concerns of their compilers. Saga studies should also focus on the effect of the formal narrative construction of the story on its auditors, readers, tellers, writers, and their culture and society (Durrenberger 1992: 23). The perspective and point of view of each individual text can illuminate the others and in this way the modern reader can approach a better understanding of the meaning of the individual sagas and their relationships with each other.

Ironically, and in contrast with the notion of the stable edited text, at the most obvious physical level medieval texts are not 'stable', 'self-contained' or 'autonomous' – they are notoriously unstable.⁵ A brief survey of the status of the manuscripts of *Svfnfellinga saga* will corroborate this view.⁶

The saga is found only in manuscripts of *Sturlunga saga*, a compilation from ca. 1300 of a number of independent works by different authors dealing with the last 150 years of the Icelandic Commonwealth. Parts of two fourteenth-century vellum manuscripts of *Sturlunga* survive: *Króksfjarðarbók* (AM 122b fol., conveniently called vellum I),⁷ and *Reykjarfjarðarbók* (AM 122a fol., vellum II). By the seventeenth century the original manuscript had been lost but these two vellum copies were more or less complete. Fortunately, both were copied on paper before they were badly damaged. A version of *Svfnfellinga saga* occurs in I; no traces of it are to be found in II. Any study of the text of II therefore has to be based on the two main paper copies (IIp): a) British Museum MS Add. 11,127 fol. (Br, ca. 1696, the main object of this investigation) and b) Royal Library of Stockholm pap. 8, 4to (H, ca. 1650). These MSS, in turn, are descended from Sk, a copy of II by Björn Jónsson of Skarðsá (ca. 1635) which has also been lost. Björn Jónsson's own

annotated chronological abridgement of *Sturlunga* (AM 439 4to, ca. 1646) is of value for this investigation.

Thus the text of *Br*, which seems to preserve the best representative of the original text of *II*, is three times removed from it and has been through a series of editorial choices and decisions affecting its shape and content.⁸ Furthermore, as it appears in this compilation, the text of *Svínfellinga saga* has never been represented reliably by printed editions. Vigfusson's edition (1878), based on *IIp*, contained many inaccuracies. Kålund (1906–11) based his edition on *I*, filling in gaps from *II* and *IIp*, but had only limited access to *Br*. Jóhannesson, Finnbogason and Eldjárn (1946) based their version mainly on Kålund's text. In the case of *Svínfellinga saga*, the texts of the various manuscripts were changed to fit the editors' preconceived notions of what the shape of a 'proper' separate saga should be. Thus Vigfusson excluded a long section first identified by Ólsen (1897: 365–71) from *Br*, because it did not belong to the saga, while Jóhannesson et al conflated the versions of *I* and *IIp* but also omitted the interpolations in *Br*. Their text has subsequently been used as the basis of two translations into English (McGrew 1970–74; Ringler 1972). Kålund's edition remains truest to both versions of the text, including both but printing *Br*'s text in smaller type.

A careful examination of the *Br* text of *Svínfellinga saga* is fraught with problems: there is no consensus in the extant manuscripts about its beginning or end, there is a long interpolation thought to belong to one or two other sagas, and there are many stylistic, factual, and lexical differences between the two main texts. Yet such a study provides insight into the principles on which this particular text was compiled, offers some explanation for the presence of the interpolations and textual variants in the light of these principles and gives some idea of its status as either an unreliable copy of the original or a creative compilation in its own right.

Previous research has suggested that *I* and *II* were abridged versions of an earlier original and that *II* was fuller than *I*.⁹ A physical word-count confirms the *Svínfellinga* text of *Br* to be longer than that of *I*, the latter being only about 70% of the length of the former. However, this is misleading because of the inclusion of a long interpolation not found in *I* and an added section at the end. A close comparison of the two texts reveals that *Br* rushes on, abbreviating the story substantially up to the climax, where it broadens out to dwell in horror on the slaying of Guðmundr and the mutilation of Svartr. Thus it is that Jóhannesson's text

follows I initially but uses Br for the latter stages. A brief comparison of some parts of the two texts will reveal the nature and the effect of their differences.

The tendency to abbreviate sets Br off to a bad start and initially seems due to carelessness rather than careful planning, causing ambiguities in the chronology of events. Thus, for instance, the omission of *En þrím vetrum síðar fór útan Heinrekr biskup Kársson ok Þórðr kakali* in the first paragraph creates the impression that all the listed events took place in one year, 1247, whereas the timespan is actually three years, from 1247 to 1250. The effective telescoping of time and place which brings all the main families to the region of the conflict, but identified by Jóhannesson et al as indicative of the inaccuracy of the text (1946: xlv), loses some of its impact in the process of abridgement. Later, when the reconciliation, facilitated by Bishop Brandr, between Ögmundr and Sæmundr is related, the brevity of Br changes the sense somewhat. It is debatable, of course, whether such inconsistencies constitute 'errors' if they follow the internal structural logic of the text.

An obvious difference between the two texts which immediately establishes the copyist of Br as an individualist with a separate agenda is the many instances of inverted word order. A few examples will suffice:

Br: Halldóra Arnórsdóttir var móðir hans

I: Hans móðir var Halldóra Árnorsdóttir

Br: Sæmundr varð reiðr við þetta

I: Sæmundr varð við þetta reiðr mjök

Sometimes, as in the following example, the inversion foregrounds issues or characters. Here, the focus is on Sæmundr, the person Ögmundr and Þórðr are discussing:

Br: Þótt Sæmundr sé mægðr við mík

I: Ok þótt ek sé mægðr við Sæmund

It almost seems as if the two scribes were working from dictation, each writing down the essence of what was being read out aloud, but obviously following their individual fancy with regard to diction, phrasing and word order.¹⁰

Other kinds of omission include: adjectival phrases stating personal attributes of characters in the story, the omission of which causes a slight focal shift: *ríkr ok góðgjarn* (of Brandr Ormsson), *góðr bóndi* (of Guðmundr Þorsteinsson); genealogical information, sometimes due to carelessness, such as the omission of Guðmundr gríss from the list of Digr-Helgi's sons, but sometimes with the effect of focusing more sharply on the main protagonists, for instance the omission of Helgi Loptsson's daughters for a sharper focus on Svart, Helgi's brother.

Lexical differences are of two types: obvious misreadings or omissions from a common original, for instance *þingi* for *alþingi*, or the use of synonyms or different words according to the scribe's own preference, for instance *fjólraett* 'much talked about' for *alltíðraett* 'very much talked about'. A focal shift on the character of Snorri sveimr is achieved by Br's use of *lítilsháttar* 'lowly, of little consideration', where I has *líttill bóndi* 'no great farmer'. Later, when Hafr-Teit detains Móðólfr djákni by the arm, Br states that he *hefr upp hamarinn ok lýstr á hálsinn, svá at Teitr lét þegar laust*. The use of *hálsinn* in Br is possibly a scribal error. It is plausible that Móðólfr would aim at the arm (*handlegginn*, as in I) which is detaining him in order to secure his release and get away. Another instance of this kind, where one word changes the meaning considerably, occurs at the moment of Sæmundr's death: Br states *Árni hjó þá á hálsinn, svá at [öxin] stóð í herðunum*. This means that the head rolls off but is not completely severed from the body. For *herðunum*, I uses *sandinum*, making the blow much more violent as the head is taken off completely and the axe bites into the sand.

Sometimes a shift in perspective is achieved by the syntax. In the following instance, the scene in which Helgi læknir comes to the sick Ormr, the shift from active to passive voice achieves a different effect:

Br: *Þá kom til hans Helgi læknir, er þá bjó á Másstöðum*

I: *Hann lét senda í buð eptir Helga lækni, er bjó á Másstöðum í Vatnsdal.*

The difference in voice suggests a slightly different relationship between Helgi and Ormr: *hann lét senda ...*(I) implies a more authoritative action by Ormr, whereas *þá kom til hans ...*(Br, line 35) indicates a friendly gesture towards Ormr on the part of the physician.

Stylistically, the more compact, terse manner of Br produces a faster-moving narrative, as the following examples will show:

Br: Ormr Jónsson bjó at Svínafelli

I: Ormr Jónsson reð fyrir á bæ þeim, er at Svínafelli heitir.

Br: Egill hét maðr, skyrhnakkr. Hann bjó í Mörtungu

I: Egill hét maðr, er bjó í Mörtungu; hann var kallaðr skyrhnakkr

Br: Ragnheiðr hét kona hans

I: Hann átti þá kona, er Ragnheiðr hét

Br: Þá kom til hans Helgi læknir, er þá bjó á Másstöðum

I: Hann lét senda í buð eptir Helga lækni, er bjó á Másstöðum í Vatnsdal

Br: Hann kvað eigi myndi göra atgöðir

I: Hann kom til ok sagði at honum syndízt svá meinit, sem eigi mundi tja atgöðir at hafa

The tight syntax and lexical economy of Br create a greater sense of tension and immediacy throughout, further enhanced by an even greater use of direct speech than in I:¹¹

Br: Guðmundr bað hana eigi þess biðja, at hann færi eigi með bróður sínum, 'mun ek eigi þá meira virða, er halda réttindum fyrir honum.'

I: En hann svarar henni heldr styggliga, ok kveðsk svá aldrs kominn, at hann mundi sjalfr ráða ferðum sínum.

Br: Fjárgarðr Austmaðr mælti, sá var með þeim bræðrum, 'göngum at þeim ok látum eigi kirkju standa fyrir þeim.'

I: Þá tok til orða Fjárgarðr Austmaðr, er í ferð var með þeim bræðrum, bað þá at ganga ok láta eigi kirkju standa fyrir þeim.

This device is especially forceful at the climax, when Sæmundr realizes that he is going to be killed. I's version is subtly, almost drily, euphemistic compared to the bland brutality of Br:

- Br: Ögmundur mælti: 'Þú skalt deyja,' segir hann, 'ok svá Guðmundr, bróðir þinn.'
 I: Ögmundur segir at Sæmundr skyldi þá ekki lengi kunna at segja fra tíðindum.

Such choices, which seem to indicate the scribe's bias and narrative point of view and offer implicit comment on characters and events, are significant for discovering the underlying procedural rationale of his text. After the scene between Ormr and Helgi læknir quoted above, Br adds the following sentence: Þat segja sumir menn, at Ögmundur Helgason tæki Ormi blóð þar á þinginu á gjósæðinni, ok sðan felldi sóttina at honum. This assertion, which is not made in I, suggests that people blamed Ögmundur Helgason for Ormr's illness and adds a significant implicit comment on the role of Ögmundur in the subsequent events when his overbearing manner leads to the conflict between him and the Ormssons, eventually culminating in their slaying. Another passage which seems to cast aspersions on Ögmundur's motives after the death of Ormr makes explicit the fact that Ögmundur invited Guðmundr to live with him and Steinunn, his father's sister, as a foster son: Ögmundur bauð Guðmundi heim til fósturs til Steinunnar, föðursystur sinnar. Sæmundr tók þar fé Guðmundar í [kirkjufé], en Ögmundur varðveitti [annat] fé Guðmundar. Þá var Guðmundr sjau vetra, er faðir hans andaðist. Þat fannst brátt á, er Ormr var frá kallaðr, at Ögmundur hélt sér vel fram um héraðsstjórn, ok gōrðusk margar greinir með þeim Sæmundi. Furthermore, the inclusion of this last sentence in Br a) provides the first indication of the impending clashes between Ögmundur and Sæmundr, b) makes an explicit comment on the belligerent behaviour of the former and c) establishes an effective transition to the next section, which deals with the clash about Höskuldr, a tenant of Ögmundur's. An addition which emphasizes the prominent peace-weaving function of Steinunn, Ögmundur's wife, in Br is '...gōrið fyrir guðs sakir ok nauðsyn yðra, at þér aukið eigi vandræði við frændr mína.'

The suspense thus far created is sustained in Br by the following section, not found in I: Ábóti hét at leggja til sammings með þeim, en bað Ögmundur eigi halda vini sína til rangra hluta með ofkappi, 'því at þess er ván, at Sæmundr vili þat eigi hafa, hvárki af yrnir öðrum mönnum.' The conciliatory role of Abbot Brandr Jónsson, the Ormsson's uncle, seems tenuous as he expresses his apprehension about the reaction of Sæmundr. This uneasiness is subsequently reinforced by the words Sæmundr var ofsamaðr mikill ok óeirinn ok gōrði at því engan manna mun, en Ögmundur var ótillátssamr ok átti mikit undir sér, which also appear in I but have greater impact in

this context. Later, Br includes an entire paragraph relating the visit of Egill skyrhnakkr, one of Ögmundr's companions, to Sæmundr. The compiler introduces him as a powerful man with a large company of followers, obviously a strong ally to have in any dispute. The narrator states that Egill segir Sæmundi mörg vingjarnlig orð Ögmundar. This could represent an attempt to strengthen the newly-established truce between the feuding factions, but could also be an implicit slur on the intentions of Ögmundr and his followers.

As mentioned before, the narrative in Br is tight, fast-moving, even brutal at times, but at the moment of Guðmundr's slaying, the pace slackens, portraying the full horror of the event:

Br: Gekk Þorsteinn þá at með reidda öxina. Hann hjó til Guðmundar, ok kom höggit þar er mættisk hálsinn ok herðarnar, ok sneiddi mjök út á herðarblaðit. Var þat allmikit sár. Gekk sú hyrnan miklu lengra niðr, er út vissi á herðarnar ok á öxlina.

Þá gekk at Guðmundr Brandr Guðmundarson ok tók hendi sinni ofan í sárit ok vildi vita, hversu djúpt var, ok leitaði með fingrunum. Síðan mælti hann við Ögmund ok Jón, son hans: 'Eigi villið þér Guðmund feigan, ef ekki skal meira at vinna.'

I: Gekk þá Þorsteinn með reidda öxina at Guðmundr Þorsteinn hjó á halsinn við herðarblaðit mikit hang Þá gekk at Brandr Guðmundarson ok þreifaði ofan í halssárit ok mælti, kvað þá eigi vilja Guðmund feigan, ef þeir gerði eigi at meira.

An indication of the Br text's concern with the wider political and social context of this small regional saga about local events in the lives of one family, the Svínfellings, is the inclusion, in contrast with I, of temporal references, for instance *Þat haust var veginn Snorri hinn fróði í Reykjaholti*, which do not only provide a chronological framework for events, but also place the saga against the wider backdrop of Icelandic history. I believe that this is one of the reasons for the presence of the interpolation in Br (and IIp generally). The business at hand was not only to record the saga of the Svínfellings, but also to give an account of the larger sweep of events in the country as a whole. It is this last objective which led to the insertion of the five sections, identified by Kálund and numbered from a to e.

In the edition of Jóhannesson et al, where all extraneous material has been omitted, *Svínfellinga saga* is exceptional for its concentration on the strife between Sæmundr Ormsson and his uncle Ögmundr in the years 1248–52.¹² To the modern reader it therefore seems strange that the compiler of *Br* should have interrupted the narrative with the insertion of material which Vigfusson (1878: 80, n4) found ‘inserted in the midst of the *Svínfellinga saga*, where they break off the context’.¹³ Significantly, in his abridgement of *Sturlunga (AM 439.4to)*, Björn Jónsson (the first copyist of *II*) retains these sections virtually verbatim, whereas he condenses the *saga* quite drastically.¹⁴ For the purposes of this discussion it is relevant to examine the connection between these interspersed sections and their context in *Br*, as well as the implications of their placement in the text.

The following narrative scheme is based on those of Bragason (1986: 61–62) and Byock (1982: x), showing that *Svínfellinga saga* follows the basic feud pattern. The additions to *Br* are added in bold, following Ólson’s dating (Kálund 1906–11: 116 n1):

Introduction

Presentation of the main characters: Brandr Jónsson, Ormr Jónsson and his sons, Ögmundr Helgason

Conflict

Ögmundr tries to garner more power

Sæmundr and Ögmundr quarrel about a certain dependent

Sæmundr intends to get Ögmundr sentenced at the *alþingi*

Sæmundr influences Guðmundr and they attempt to attack Ögmundr but he escapes

a – (1250) the dispute between the Ormssons and the sons of Þórarinn, supporters of Ögmundr; the matter is mediated by Þórðr kakali; Sæmundr claims the disputed *goðorðs*; the brothers and Sæmundr are reconciled; they take sides against him

b – (1249) Þórðr kakali forces the Sæmundarsons to sail to Norway; Aron Hjörleifsson fails to plead Harald’s case

c – (1250) the feast at Grund and Þórðr kakali’s distribution of authority over certain districts to his friends; Þórðr’s departure for Norway

d – (1251) the return of the Sæmundarsons from Norway and their drowning off Mýdalseyri

e – (1251) The abduction of Guðmundr Ormsson by the Þórarinnsons, the settlement of the subsequent dispute and the slaying of Þorstein Tjörfason by Oddr Þórarinnson

Sæmundr gets Ögmundr sentenced and takes his property away

Brandr arranges peace between the adversaries

Climax

Ögmundr has Sæmundr and Guðmundr executed

Advocacy, reconciliation and resolution

Brandr settles this conflict

Ögmundr has to pay wergild and leave the district

The aftermath, returning to the conflict between the Þórarinnssons and Hrani Kóðránnson; Gizurr Þorvaldsson's return to Iceland; Hrafn and Sturla lead the attack on Gizurr

The inconsistent chronology and disjointed sequence of these sections seems to rule out the possibility that chronology was the only reason for their inclusion or 'displacement' here. Other possible explanations are that these insertions present a) two feud strands interwoven with the main events of *Svínfellinga*: the one between the Þórarinnsons and the Ormssons, which highlights the breakdown of kinship and ends in the killing of Þorstein Tjörfason, and the other between Þórðr kakali and the Sæmundarsons, ending in their seemingly senseless drowning, b) an expansion of the backdrop against which the main events of the saga are set, showing the links between the Ormssons and the Þórarinnsons, between them and Þórðr kakali, one of the main protagonists of the last years of the Commonwealth, and referring to the conflict between Þórðr, Hrafn Oddsson and Gizurr Þorvaldsson, thus plummeting the saga into the mainstream of Icelandic events hurtling towards the loss of independence, rendering it more than merely an interesting regional narrative, and finally c) a kind of 'logic of the imagination' whereby the inserted incidents expand on the impression created by the entire Sturlunga compilation that, as Yeats puts it in 'The Second Coming', 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world' (1982: 210). It is clear that the compilation does not, in

the first place, concern itself here with the separateness of the individual sagas, but with their inter-relatedness around a central theme – the events of the last years of the Sturlung age and their significance.

The above comparison shows that the Br version of *Svínfellinga saga* differs significantly from that of I in several ways: in respect of historical and factual veracity, there is a certain measure of carelessness and inaccuracy in Br as a result of the tendency to abbreviate; stylistically, the compilation displays an individual character evident in diction, word order, syntax, and discourse; narratologically, the selection and arrangement of material shifts the focus from individual motive to the climax of the feud between the main protagonists, while the additions to the feud sequence open up the perspective, linking the chain of events to other families and geographical regions and showing them in relation to the greater sweep of the final years of the Sturlung Age. The text effectively combines the methods of historical veracity and creative fiction.¹⁵ The arrangement of the material seems to have an overall significance, making the combined whole more than merely the sum of its constituent parts (Tranter 1987: 7).

To conclude: even if there is evidence of careless scribal abbreviations and omissions which create ambiguities in the meaning and chronology, the text of *Svínfellinga saga*, as it appears in Br, is creative and individual, not merely a bad copy written by a sloppy scribe. It is with the idea of the ephemerality of true reconciliation in a period of continuous intensification of conflict that the compilation is concerned. It achieves a fast-moving, brutal and sometimes intensely poignant narrative, but could also be said to be a response to a particular political situation, a response perhaps assembled in great haste, but nonetheless with surprising subtlety. It is one version of the story of the men of *Svínafell* which amply repays careful scrutiny, adding another dimension of meaning to a small saga in the great Sturlunga compilation.

ENDNOTES

- 1 I concur with Úlfar Bragason (1986: 15) that '... the textual problems of Sturlunga are great because the vellum manuscripts are not well preserved and because of the mixing of their texts in the paper copies. ...it is often difficult to know what has been in each of them and impossible to reconstruct

- fully the original text'. About Kálund's text, Brown (1952(1): 36) comments that the method of blending does not achieve his stated aim of preserving the sentence-structure and language of the original.
- 2 Thus Vigfusson states the following about the text of *Sturlunga saga* (1878: cviii): '... the *Sturlunga* of the MSS., and still more of the paper copies, was in a terrible state of confusion, so that it had even become a by-word that "no one could remember the *Sturlunga*" It was as necessary to uncurl this tangle as it was to give a sound text, if the book was to be of any real use.'
- 3 In fact, each new edition has increased our understanding of the nature of the compilation and of the inter-relatedness of the separate sagas.
- 4 I am aware of the difficulties and ambiguities underlying the term 'text'. I use it somewhat loosely and conventionally, signifying both edited and manuscript texts.
- 5 This is especially so in Iceland where damp, rot, smoke, dirt and the seventeenth-century bookbinders were the manuscripts' greatest enemies.
- 6 For full details of the information summarized here, see for instance Vigfusson (1878: I clxxi-clxxix), Kálund (1901; 1906-11: I I-LXXIV), Jóhannesson et al (1946: vii-xxi, xlili-xlvi), Brown (1952: lii-lxii), Einarsdóttir (1968: 44-63), Bragason (1986: 11-24).
- 7 This is Kálund's designation, followed by most later editors and commentators.
- 8 Tranter (1987: 2) makes the valid point that the act of compilation is not one of neutrality but implies selection which in turn implies value judgement.
- 9 Vigfusson (1878: clxxiv) concluded that besides the omission of *Porgils saga*, I bears the character of an abridgement, while Kálund saw II as a later expansion. Ursula Brown (1952(2): 33-40) found that the text of II was the more satisfactory for *Porgils saga ok Hafliða*, as did Simpson and Hare for *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða* and *Guðmundar saga dýra*, (1960: 196). After comparing the texts to the annals, Einarsdóttir concluded that both I and II are abridged versions of the original text (1986: 44-80).
- 10 Such a method is known to have been used on at least some occasions during the late medieval period (Love 1984: 77). It is not clear whether the method was used in Iceland, however.
- 11 The high concentration of direct speech in the saga, but based on an examination of the printed editions, has been commented on by several scholars (for instance Ringler 1972: 11).

- 12 This feature has been recognized, *inter alia*, by Jóhannesson et al (1946: xliii–xliv) and Ringler (1972: 11), who both comment on the single-minded exclusion of any extraneous matter to focus on a single chain of events.
- 13 Vigfusson places sections b, c, and d before *Svínfellinga saga* (chapter 215 in his edition) as chapters 212, 213 and 214, and e directly after a. In Jóhannesson et al, a, b, d and e are printed as chapters 159 – 162 in the *Íslendinga saga*, while c occurs as Addendum II, 5.
- 14 Simpson and Hare (1960: 196) also comment on this phenomenon in 439 as does Brown (1952 (2): lv). I believe that Björn's method provides a clue to the significance of the interpolation in Br's version of *Svínfellinga*.
- 15 It has become clear that the medieval Icelanders made no clear distinction between the craft of compiler, author or scribe and did not perceive *veraldlegar samtíðarsögur* and *Íslendingasögur* as different genres but regarded both as historical literature (Bragason 1986: 7).

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