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On the Imagery and Style of *Riddarasögur*

The present paper, which is greatly indebted to the works of scholars who have written extensive analyses of the *riddarasögur*, such as Marianne Kalinke, Geraldine Barnes, Kirsten Wolf, Peter Hallberg, Eyvind Halvorsen, Jónas Kristjánson, Henry Goddard Leach, Gerd Weber and many others, attempts to explore the ways in which even the translated *riddarasögur*, let alone the original ones, rely on indigenous literary traditions. It will focus on a few remarks concerning the plots, motives, images and stylistic traits of *riddarasögur*.

Riddarasögur appear in Scandinavia as a result of the assimilation of motives, images, plots borrowed from Continental romances, *lais*, *chansons de geste*. The process of assimilation of these Continental poems in Scandinavia begins with their more or less precise rendering into Old Norse prose during the reign of Hakon Hakonarson (1217-1263). No literal translations have come down to us in extant manuscripts, and it is unlikely that they ever existed. It is unlikely because no word-for-word renderings are reflected in the manuscripts and indeed because the art of secular translation in the Early Middle Ages in general did not presuppose any literal accuracy. There is no reason to believe that Scandinavian translations should be any different from those into other vernacular European languages: French, German or English. It is common knowledge that literal translations were confined to sacred texts (mostly Biblical) and were made only from "sacred" languages: Hebrew, Greek, Latin. In no Medieval traditions do we find literal translations of secular texts aimed primarily at the entertainment of the audience. The art of translating fictional narratives remained unsubjected to any kind of normalization and received very little reflective comment in Medieval Europe. Apart from Latin poetics (e.g. by Matthew of Vendome and John of Garland) and the writings of Church fathers (e.g. Boethius, St Jerome), the only sources of literary comment on the art of translation are the prologues to the works rendered into vernacular languages. These prologues never mention any words meaning "translate" (words with this meaning did not exist in Old Norse either), and comments are usually restricted to the discussion of practical problems arising in the course of transplanting the original to a new soil. The specific difficulties most often mentioned in prologues result from the more complicated, learned nature of the original in comparison with the more archaic local tradition (Latin in the case of Western Europe and French in the case of Germanic countries) and necessitate simplification, abridgement, interpretation of the original for the benefit (entertainment and instruction) of the audience.

Initially, continental romances, *chansons de geste* and *lais* would have been found worth rendering into the vernacular purely as a source of new plots. In order to render these plots into Old Norse any precision of translation was unnecessary. While (and after) the free and usually shortened translations were being made first in Norway and afterwards in Iceland, the process of assimilating the plots, which were borrowed from romances and served as the basis of the *riddarasögur*, consisted in the creators' adapting them to their own literary tastes and those of an audience brought up on the indigenous, typically Scandinavian tradition of sagas. The final stage in the assimilation of motives, images and plots borrowed from continental romances is the composition in Iceland of original *riddarasögur*, usually unrelated in their plot to any foreign sources. Extremely rarely (as far as we know only in the case of *Tristrams saga ok Hsoddar*) a more abridged Icelandic version based on the Norwegian saga was made. Thus it is unlikely that there was an intermediate stage in assimilation which followed translated *riddarasögur* and preceded original Icelandic compositions. The depth of assimilation is manifested in the fact that the plots of romances, *lais* and *chansons de geste*, as they are reflected in the *riddarasögur*, appear to participate in the creation of a new, specifically Icelandic genre, *rímur*. In the *rímur*, rhyming

epic poems, the plots of romances regained the poetic form of which they were deprived while confined to the prose of *riddarasögur*. The use in the composition of *rímur* of the plots of romances mediated by *riddarasögur* testifies to completion of the process of assimilation.

The receptiveness towards Continental romance, its assimilation and finally its inclusion into a different system of poetics (*rímur*) enabled Scandinavia to become a kind of ideal repository for the preservation and conservation of plots and key-motives of romances enabling them to survive there longer than in any other European country. Possibly the successful assimilation of romances can be accounted for by a principle of "natural selection" – *riddarasögur* were enriched only by those peculiarities of imagery, sets of motives and ways of unravelling of plots which found a firm foundation in the poetics of native sagas.

French romances are easily recognisable in the plots of translated *riddarasögur*, though the main features of European romance prove to be abandoned in them. At the stage reflected by the earliest manuscripts, translations were already subjected to profound adaptation semantically, structurally and stylistically. Its main mechanisms can be summarised as follows.

Detailed descriptions (of nature, dress, appearance) characteristic of romance, or lyrical descriptions, not fully appreciated by the translators and their public, are ignored. Rhetorically refined descriptions are either omitted or abridged. Emotionally charged passages are shortened and ousted by objective statements; detailed pictures are simplified. Such omissions were inevitable in the transformation of the poetic text of the original into the prosaic text of a saga, and at the same time the translator was trying to clarify the narrative structure of his saga. Similar changes occur in other cases of the transformation of poetic texts into prose even within the same literary tradition (cf. the prose version of *Le Roman de Tristan*).

As the Norse translations are dominated not by characters but by actions, description of the internal world of an individual is superseded by narratives of events, mostly battles and heroic feats of mighty warriors. Internal monologues are seldom retained, any kind of reflection is usually cut out, descriptions of mental processes are normally omitted, as they do not further the development of the narrative. Emotions are only mentioned in *riddarasögur* as providing motives for the main conflicts. In their rendering of the emotional world *riddarasögur* prove to be much closer to the *Íslendingasögur* where the feelings of characters are revealed through their own actions and the words of other people, than to the romances where internal monologues help readers to understand the state of the characters' minds. The verbal expression of psychological complexity does not interest the translator, so all kinds of introspection usually disappear from them.

In *riddarasögur* the figure of the narrator, who in romances plays the role of mediator between text and public, is totally overshadowed. The fragments of text where in the French original the narrator explicitly intrudes into the narrative structure of the poem are usually omitted by the authors of *riddarasögur*. Systematic omission of authored digressions, which in romances create the effect of a proximity of the narrator to his audience, is in keeping with the native saga tradition: in *Íslendingasögur* the author never intervenes in the action and never directly addresses the audience. The omission of authored digressions in *riddarasögur* leads not only to a significant compression of the text, but also to a "detachment" in the narration characteristic of the native sagas of Icelanders.

Repetitions, frequent in romances, are systematically excised by the authors of *riddarasögur*. In romances the actions of the hero are often first precipitated, then described, and finally related by another character. Thus some episodes are described with minor variations several times by different characters and the narrator. All these repetitions are cut out of *riddarasögur*, where events are related only once and always from the distant and objective point of view characteristic of the poetics of the native saga. Since repetitions in romances do not move the action forward but serve as a means of emphasis, by omitting them the creators of *riddarasögur* come closer to the explicitly unemotional style of the sagas of Icelanders. It is in

keeping with the poetics of the indigenous saga that the translator always narrates the events in the third person, never precipitating actions or in any way showing his knowledge of the further course of events.

Periphrastic constructions and rhetorical formulas are usually replaced by simpler syntactic structures. Instead of negative periphrasis, affirmative phrases are normally used. Both these types of abbreviation serve to clarify the sense.

Alongside these kinds of abbreviation of the original, the authors of *riddarasögur* must have felt the need to employ various means of expansion. Most of their additions serve to clarify the meaning or to enhance a stylistic effect. One word of the original is often replaced in the translated saga by a collocation; instead of a word-combination, a sentence, sometimes including ornamental alliteration, is used. If the translator is not sure whether his audience knows a toponym or a mythological name, he feels the need to clarify it by reference to native Old Norse toponymy or mythology.

One of the most characteristic additions in *riddarasögur* are references to other texts. Like many medieval authors who prefaced an original story with the remark that they found it in an "old Latin book", the translators of *riddarasögur* often gave references to other sagas or writers, other episodes in the text, their putative foreign sources, or indeed anything that "was written before". It seems as if the authors of *riddarasögur* were trying to put their own story into a wider literary context. One possible function of these references to other sources was to endow the story with an air of truthfulness, although sometimes they could have been purely rhetorical.

In many *riddarasögur* we find apologetic interpolations dwelling on the plausibility of a frankly impossible story, as if the authors of the sagas had been criticised for lying. In contrast to the sagas of Icelanders, *riddarasögur* included a lot of fantastical elements, supernatural beings, etc., so their authors could have felt a need either to assert that they were trustworthy, or to try to rationally explain them away, or to find precedents for them. The appearance of these authorial inclusions in *riddarasögur* is of great historical importance as it not only testifies that fiction has become a consciously used component of the literary form, but also directs our attention to its probable sources (ancient literature and medieval Latin poetry – cf. the references to "Skald Homer's Saga of the Trojans" or "Master Walter's Saga of Alexander"). In the sagas of Icelanders there occurred no reflections on the truthfulness of the story, since anything said in the *Íslendingasögur* was believed to be true, both by the audience and by the authors of the sagas. But the mere fact that the creators of *riddarasögur* felt the need to persuade listeners that their works included no fiction proves that the trustworthiness and the "realism" of the *Íslendingasögur* remained an ideal.

In contrast to the sagas of Icelanders, *riddarasögur* often include interpolated didactic fragments not found in the original texts of the romances. In these additions, which go back to the traditions of sermons or of saints' lives, the fates of the heroes are explained in terms of the will of God. Openly didactic statements distinguish *riddarasögur* from both romances and *Íslendingasögur*, though in translated sagas they are never put into the mouth of the narrator but only into the mouths of characters (most often the main hero or King Arthur). In this latter respect *riddarasögur* correspond to the style of "detached" narrative typical of the poetics of the sagas of Icelanders.

All these changes can be attributed not so much to an inability of the Scandinavian translator to grasp the sense of the original, but to a desire to transform the original so as to make *riddarasögur* accessible to an audience unfamiliar with courtly culture, by assimilating the genre of romance as far as possible to that which dominated the Old Norse literary tradition – the genre of the saga.

The view that Scandinavian translations go back to oral tradition cannot be accepted, not so much because of the proximity of the *riddarasögur* to their originals but, paradoxical though it may seem, because of the nature of their deviations from the originals. The systematic nature of

the changes introduced by the translator into his text shows that, in their state as reflected in the surviving manuscripts, *riddarasögur* are written, not oral works. The Scandinavian translator evidently had at his disposal a literary original from which he was making a written translation (possibly ordered by a nobleman or king). The text of the translation, fixed by the manuscript, could later be read aloud, as some of the surviving sagas show, as an entertainment at feasts. The main form of reception of *riddarasögur* was reading aloud (or silently), and their main audience was the literate part of the population. Thus in the sequence – the person ordering the translation, the author, the scribe, the reader, the listener – both the initial and the final positions are optional. It is not an actual proximity to oral tradition but a stylised approximation to it that makes the authors of *riddarasögur* hide in the shade, concealing their names. Apart from Brother Robert and Abbot Robert named in *Tristrams saga ok Hsöndar* and *Elis saga ok Rysamundu*, none of the names have come down to us. Thus even in texts going back to a foreign tradition, there is a desire to eradicate the traces of editorial work and underline the anonymity of the translator's work, making the sagas appear a development of indigenous tradition.

In their writing the authors of *riddarasögur* are guided not by the desire to preserve the spirit or even the meaning of their original, but by the need to be understood by their audience. As a result, a narrative is born whose poetics has much in common not only with the sagas of Icelanders but also with the *fornaldarsögur*, spread across Scandinavia, *konungasögur*, which became known in Norway from the middle of the thirteenth century, Norwegian historical treatises (such as *Agrip af Noregs konungs sögum* or *Historia Norwegiae*). The poetics of the saga, the dominant genre in the whole of the indigenous Old Norse tradition, presupposes a narrative in which the narrator does not explicitly intervene. It is exactly this type of narrative that prevails in the *riddarasögur* and distinguishes them from romances.

Riddarasögur remain completely immune to the chivalric semiotics of romances. The notion of *amour courtois* which is central to romance is ousted in *riddarasögur* by the motive of bridal quest occurring in Old Norse in typologically earlier traditions (cf. *För Skirnir* or *Frymskviða*). The motives of love's captive, the lover as servant, voluntary submission of the knight to the lady, love as disease are hardly ever mentioned by Scandinavian translators, who tend to attribute social rather than psychological motives to their characters' behaviour. On the contrary, the motives of incitement, impelling the hero to action, which were traditionally associated in Old Norse culture with feminine images, are regularly recreated in *riddarasögur*.

The desire to avenge an insult, to restore honour and good name, become in *riddarasögur* a moral imperative just as in *Íslendingasögur*. The saga hero sets out on a journey not only to seek adventures or to test his valour. He has a concrete aim in mind – pursuit of honour, revenge against an enemy, regaining a legacy appropriated by an adversary, finding a suitable bride. His motivation and deeds are modelled on the behaviour of characters in *Íslendingasögur*, while his literary portrait is modelled on the descriptions of konungs and jarls in *konungasögur*. In *riddarasögur* special attention is given to the image of King Arthur. The idealisation inherent in this image influences the description of all characters in *riddarasögur*, including negative ones, who become significantly ennobled. This idealising tendency can probably be accounted for by the desire of all Scandinavian rulers, beginning with Hakon Hakonarson, during whose reign and by whose order the first translations of romances were made, to identify themselves with the legendary ruler of Britain.

The means of describing characters in *riddarasögur* also bring to mind the indigenous saga tradition. The verbal affinity between the description of kings and rulers in *riddarasögur* and in *konungasögur* is striking: the same set of formulas is reproduced with only slight variations. Both saga genres mention the same stereotyped set of features: the hero's handsome appearance, his ability to use weapons, his generosity, his kindness to friends and harshness to enemies, the high opinion of the people surrounding him. The closeness of the description of characters in *riddarasögur* to that in *konungasögur* can be accounted for by the desire of translators to

reproduce models of behaviour corresponding to the ideas and tastes of a Scandinavian audience.

Indigenous models of behaviour prevail in the images of wilful and self-asserting maiden-kings favoured by *riddarasögur*, which were inherited from Old Norse mythological and literary traditions. The images of maidens rejecting marriage and humiliating their bridegrooms bring to mind the images of shield-maidens from *fornaldarsögur*, valkyries from the Eddaic lays and the Scandinavian queens described by Saxo Grammaticus in his *Gesta Danorum*.

The affinity with the vernacular saga is even more characteristic of the indigenous Icelandic *riddarasögur*, in which the images of maiden-warriors are incomparably more widely spread than in the translated sagas. At this stage of the assimilation of the Continental romances we can only find the fragments of plots, images, motives borrowed by *riddarasögur* from romances. The homogeneous nature of Icelandic *riddarasögur* (as opposed to the translated *riddarasögur* going back to different genres) testifies to their freedom from any sources and to the completion of the process of assimilation from Continental literature.

Insofar as the assimilation of plots is concerned, the indigenous Icelandic *riddarasögur* (except *Haralds saga Hringbana*) reveal independence from translated sagas and their originals. It is true that their plot is often constructed around the quest for a bride, which cannot but remind us of Tristan's story. However, this kind of plot occurs not only in the native mythological and heroic lays but also in folklore - fairy-tales and realistic tales.

The system of imagery and key-motives is definitely influenced by the romance tradition (a case in point are the fairly rare images of an accused queen/princess and a evil councillor, usually the opponent of the hero). Though the latter image is not entirely unknown to the Germanic tradition (cf. Sifka/Bikki in the Ermanaric cycle or even Unferp in *Beowulf*), it is likely that in *riddarasögur* the images of evil councillors motivated by romantic feelings do go back to the tradition of chivalric romance (e.g. the Tristan cycle). The same source could be suggested for the motives of healing by the princess, the punishment/exile of the lovers, the chastity test (both in its traditional variant, involving ordeal by fire, as in the Tristan-romances, and involving magic objects - as in the *Lai du cort mantel*). However all these motives are widely spread in folklore (and registered in indexes of folk-motives).

In comparison with the creators of translated sagas, the authors of original *riddarasögur* come one step closer to folk tradition. In these sagas we seldom find the motives of realistic tales, treated by the audience and their creators as truth and sometimes ending with the death of the hero, but mostly find the motives of fairy-tales, which were never perceived as truth and always ended with the hero marrying and becoming king. This characteristically fairy-tale ending is very typical of the Icelandic *riddarasögur* and is usually combined with the epilogue traditional in the indigenous sagas of Icelanders - a brief history of the hero's descendants. Among the characteristically fairy-tale motives widely spread in the Icelandic *riddarasögur* are found the youth of the unpromising hero, an evil step-mother, the acquisition of a magic object, magic transformations, a magic helper, helping the hero to escape from evil forces, an impossible task, an insuperable obstacle. The proximity to fairy-tale accounts for the perception of time - the action is taken beyond the limits of historical time, and time is perceived as fictional.

The composition of the Icelandic *riddarasögur* differs from that of fairy-tale. In fairy-tale the composition is concentrated on one hero overcoming the obstacles to his marriage with the assistance of magic helpers and objects. In the Icelandic *riddarasögur* on the other hand the composition includes various minor plots, including the stories of other characters as well as the hero's doubles, a type of composition that reminds us of the structural complexity of the native *Íslendingasögur*. Very much in keeping with the tradition of *Íslendingasögur* and not with that of fairy-tales we find a lot information irrelevant to the immediate unravelling of the action, such as toponyms, genealogies, abundance of personal names etc. In the *Íslendingasögur* this kind of information was by no means an artistic device but a stylistically irrelevant element, perceived as truth and included as such into the saga as an integral part of its content. In the *riddarasögur* the

function of such information, like the interpolations containing assurances of veracity, is to give an air of plausibility, providing the illusion of truthfulness. Thus it becomes a semantically charged artistic device appearing as a result of the introduction of fiction.

The Icelandic *riddarasögur* owe a lot not only to folk tradition but also to the indigenous saga tradition and are influenced by the continental romances mediated by the translated *riddarasögur*. The direction of assimilation was away from the tradition of romance and towards the indigenous saga and folk tradition, which previously served as one of the sources of the romances themselves.

Not only the system of imagery but also the structural organisation of *riddarasögur* has similarities to that of the indigenous sagas of Icelanders. The translators of the sagas expand some fragments of the text and abridge other parts so that the compositional macro- and micro-structure of *riddarasögur* begin to deviate from the originals. As a result of the expansion, abridgement and reorganisation of the material, the same minimal narrative units prevail in the composition of *riddarasögur* as form the basis of *Íslendingasögur* – three-member scenes. These are built in accordance with the same laws as the scenes in *Íslendingasögur*, consisting of an introduction (describing the circumstances, place and time when the dialogue takes place), a central component (including the exchange of phrases) and a conclusion dealing with the result of the characters' meeting.

The development of a similarity between the microstructure of *riddarasögur* and the organisation of *Íslendingasögur* is connected with the transformation of their macrostructure. In their composition the *riddarasögur* move further and further from continental romances. Prologues, which form an integral part of the composition of romance, are always omitted from *riddarasögur*. Instead a characteristically saga introduction is used, which concerns the characters and the circumstances in which the action of the saga takes place. Just like *Íslendingasögur*, *riddarasögur* always begin with the introduction of the main characters of the saga and conclude with an epilogue describing their fate and/or that of their descendants. The plot of *riddarasögur* is usually constructed around a conflict, which becomes deeper as the narrative reaches its culmination. The episodes in *riddarasögur* are arranged in such a way that each one successively becomes more perilous for the hero. Just before the climax is reached, the authors of *riddarasögur* use retardation, one of the most characteristic features of the indigenous saga style. In order to draw the attention of the audience to the main episode, the creators of *riddarasögur* slow down the narration in the saga and increase the number of details. The translators of romances often have to merge together individual episodes or change their order and hence the sequence of events, drawing in many motives and themes from the native tradition, so that the sagas become even more similar in composition to the *Íslendingasögur*.

Like the composition, the system of images and the set of key motives, the language and style of *riddarasögur* definitely go back to the native Norse literary tradition rather than to continental romances. It is likely that, from the point of view of the creators of *riddarasögur*, the losses that occurred when poetic romance was rendered in the language of prose were so great that they felt they had to compensate for it by introducing their own poetic devices such as alliteration, rhyme, assonance, parallelisms. The authors of *riddarasögur* hardly ever use expressive lexical repetitions. Instead, as a means of emphasis, they use alliterative pairs, alliterative formulas and repetitions of etymologically related words, which are a characteristic feature of folk style and widely used in native Germanic epic.

Alliteration is the most common principle of textual organisation for a Germanic audience and it is most commonly used in *riddarasögur*. Alliteration is employed by the authors of *riddarasögur* as a means of helping the audience to feel equally poignantly the tenseness of combat and the emotional tenderness of parting from one's beloved. Additional power of expression is achieved by alliterating antonymous pairs, so that the semantic opposition is underlined by phonetic similarity. In the prose texts alliterating fragments can be divided into

segments, resembling the short lines of Germanic alliterative verse, each segment having two alliterating syllables and a varying number of unstressed syllables. Such prose is not inferior in the expressive power of its phonetic organisation to the original poetic romances, which use all the riches of rhymed verse, full of repetition and variation. Obviously the role of alliteration in *riddarasögur* is purely stylistic, not structural as it is in alliterative verse, so it can be used selectively in the most emphatic episodes of the text. However it is a device inherited from the native Germanic poetical system. Thus although alliterative prose does not occur in the sagas of Icelanders, the main sound device in *riddarasögur* is by no means an innovation but goes back to the oldest Germanic tradition.

It is to this tradition that we can trace the formulas and lexical repetitions used in *riddarasögur*. In the phraseology of translated sagas there are deviations from the so-called "objective" classical saga-style of the *Íslendingasögur*. In *riddarasögur* we can find traces of greater subjectivity of style manifested in the use of direct speech to express "thinking aloud". The innovation of *riddarasögur* consists in the use of direct speech not only in monologues or dialogues but for the representation of characters' thoughts, when an internal monologue is usually preceded by the statement that the character "said something to himself". "Thoughts aloud" of this kind are entirely alien to the Old Norse prose tradition. They are incompletely assimilated into *riddarasögur* as they are used rarely and usually in episodes in which the character is moved by some powerful feeling. Thus we may conclude that the native objective saga-style also has a strong influence on the phraseology of *riddarasögur*.

The influence of native phraseology is manifested in what may be called "exaggerating" formulas. When the authors of *Íslendingasögur* want to emphasise how long an event or the glory of a hero will endure in human memory, they use formulas like "as long as Northern lands are inhabited" or "as long as the land is inhabited". In *riddarasögur*, usually in contexts stressing the glory of the hero, formulas with an even greater degree of exaggeration are used, e.g., "as long as the world stands", "as long as the world is inhabited", "under the sun". In the prosaic contexts of *Íslendingasögur* these are not used, but in skaldic poetry, and especially in the panegyric poetry, similar exaggerating formulas are abundant, so we may assume that such formulas were familiar to the authors of *riddarasögur* from native poetic tradition.

In *riddarasögur* the authorial intrusions which are contained in great numbers in the romance originals are systematically omitted. It does not follow however that the authors of *riddarasögur* avoid all means of expressing authorial presence. In translated sagas many formulas like "now it is necessary to say", "as was said before", "as is said" etc. are used. Exactly the same kind of formulas are used in the sagas of Icelanders. In *Íslendingasögur* these formulas are considered to be the relics of an oral state of the sagas, and a distinction is made between the genuine (those inherited from the oral tradition) and the rhetorical or emphatic. In *riddarasögur* these formulas are commonly used to introduce a new episode, to return to what was said, to conclude an episode, or to connect or relate episodes.

Obviously in translated sagas these formulas cannot be regarded as relics of oral tradition or as having a mnemonic function. But their role in the saga can hardly be limited to a connective or rhetorical function. In some cases these formulas contain a reference to a foreign text, which might or might not be the original from which the translation was made. Probably formulas are used when the author substitutes for translation a free retelling which does not literally reproduce the original text. These formulas are used, however rarely, in those *riddarasögur* for which the originals are unknown and which appear to represent indigenous Icelandic compositions. The rarity of formulas in *riddarasögur*, in comparison with the sagas of the Icelanders, can be accounted for by the difficulty their authors have in relating their work to the oral or written native tradition, as well by the absence of justification for attributing their work to the foreign tradition of romance.

It is worth mentioning that there are exceptions in so far as the use of introductory

formulas is concerned. The text in which the introductory formulas are not used is *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar* - the only Icelandic *riddarasaga* that borrows from the translated saga not only the set of topoi and motives but the entire plot. As the formulas in *riddarasögur* are used as a device creating an illusion of colloquial speech, imitating the oral nature of the saga-performance, the use of such formulas in a written text (which goes back to another written text, *Tristrams saga ok Ísoddar*, that renders the French romance written by Thomas) becomes meaningless.

As in romances, we sometimes find in *riddarasögur* formulaic addresses to the audience, exhortations to listen attentively, expressions of gratitude etc. However tempting it is to see in these the relics of oral tradition, it is more likely that they are a consciously used literary topos, intended to create the impression that a fictive narrator is present, addressing a fictive audience. The use of formulas imitating oral performance is part of the translator's art, showing his ability to improvise. The individuality and artistry of the translator are manifested in the variety of assertions confirming or denying his authorial contribution to the work he has created, which have developed into an artistic device.

All types of formulas mentioned relate to the expression of the author's presence in the texts of *riddarasögur*. Moreover the inclusion of the author in the text is achieved here primarily by the same means as in the native tradition. Traditional formulaic saga introductions are included in *riddarasögur* as well as traditional saga epilogues. New characters are also introduced in *riddarasögur* by means of characteristically saga formulas. Needless to say, both formulaic introductions and epilogues are absent from the original romances.

In *riddarasögur* native Scandinavian words comprise the greatest part of the wordstock. On the other hand borrowings occur very seldom and in extremely marked situations such as appellatives or when the realia and hence its denotation are absent. If a native word exists to denote a proper name (e.g. ethnonym), then it is this word that is preferred by the authors of *riddarasögur*. The borrowings that occur are mainly from French or Latin, and these constitute a small part of the vocabulary of *riddarasögur*. Mostly native words are used as key words of chivalric culture. Even translation loans are often accompanied by a comment by the Scandinavian translator. The author of the saga not only explains the meaning of any realia which is not clear to his audience, but also intrudes into the narrative, doing it less explicitly than the authors of the Romance originals, but in accordance with the poetics of the sagas of Icelanders, in which the implicit inclusion of the author into the text was characteristic.

It may seem that some semantic groups occurring in *riddarasögur* keep them apart from the sagas of Icelanders, such as the names of trees (apaldr - "apple-tree", eik - "oak", lind - "lime"). But in skaldic poetry the names of trees occur quite frequently, especially in kennings of women. Another stylistic feature shared by *riddarasögur* and skaldic poetry is the description of landscapes. Normally all lyrical descriptions are omitted by the authors of *riddarasögur*, together with anything that does not further the action, but *riddarasögur* do admit some license on this matter. The function of such descriptions which do not have a direct relevance to the immediate plot of the saga is to create a particular mood in the reader or listener. Descriptions of nature might appear to have been borrowed by *riddarasögur* from their romance originals, as they never occur in the prose part of *Íslendingasögur*. However, they do occur in the poetic texts, the skaldic *visas*, quoted in the *Íslendingasögur*, so it is fair to suggest that here too *riddarasögur* could have drawn on the native poetic tradition.

Another stylistic feature distinguishing *riddarasögur* from the sagas of Icelanders is that synonymic variations are employed in them much more widely than in the *Íslendingasögur*. The use of two or three synonyms in consecutive sentences frequently enables the author to avoid repetition. Sometimes in sagas synonyms are united into clusters or lists. This seems to testify to the authors' stylistic exigency. However enumeration is found in skaldic poetry in exactly the same contexts, such as descriptions of battle (cf. *Amórr jarlaskáld*). The affinity with skaldic verse is enhanced by the use of alliteration and rhyme in the corresponding fragments of *riddarasögur*.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the choice of epithet for a noun, or even the choice of a verb, is conditioned not by the semantics but by the sound. In skaldic poetry the main function of enumerations was to enhance the expressiveness of a stanza. It is likely that in *riddarasögur* this device was used with the same aim and was inherited from the indigenous Germanic tradition.

Synonymic pairs occur in *riddarasögur* so frequently that we might think that the minimal textual unit in these sagas is not a word but a pair of synonyms. In some cases synonymic pairs consist of a borrowed word and a native word providing the translation of a foreign lexeme into the native language (cf. *kurteisleg og elskuleg* – “courteous and well-behaved”). An analogy with the history of synonymy in English can help to clarify the origin of synonymic pairs in translated Scandinavian sagas. At the same time as *riddarasögur* were created, there appeared a need in English to assimilate Romance borrowings. Possibly, as in Middle English texts, synonymic pairs in *riddarasögur* appeared as a result of the need to translate, define the meaning, or explain the semantics of a borrowed word.

This explanation would have been plausible if in *riddarasögur*, unlike Middle English texts, both words had not usually been native. A more likely hypothesis would be that the translators of the sagas felt that one native word, be it a noun or a verb, can hardly encompass the fullness of the semantics of a French or Latin word, about the exact meaning of which they could have had doubts. A synonymic collocation obviously has richer semantic overtones than just one word, all the more so given that the synonyms chosen by the translator can never be semantically absolutely identical. It is likely that in *riddarasögur* we can observe a kind of linguistic experiment: first seeking a means of assimilating foreign vocabulary, its interpretation and translation into the native language, then attempting to reveal the semantics of a foreign word, next desiring to enhance the stylistic effect, and finally turning a stylistic device into a redundant mannerism of style.

As far as morphology is concerned, it is possible to show that in *riddarasögur* there are far more affinities with the native morphology of the saga than are commonly recognised. It is true that instead of subordinate clauses *riddarasögur* widely use prepositional constructions with participle 2 in the function of adverbial modifiers of time, cause, etc. Most examples in *riddarasögur* include the preposition *eftir* or *at*, plus participle 2, that is the construction that was widely spread in *Íslendingasögur*. Constructions with participle 2 in the dative case and without the preposition, characteristic of a borrowed style, are more seldom used in translated *riddarasögur*. In some cases, participial dative constructions going back to the Latin ablative absolute have a formulaic nature and become a stylistic feature used in an expressive function.

In comparison with participle 2, constructions with participle 1 occur more frequently. However that does not always testify that they are a borrowed feature of style. The attributive use of the participle has parallels in both Icelandic sagas and poetry, where participle 1 was often used as an attribute to the noun, normally in formulaic combinations. The appositive use of participle 1 can hardly be regarded as a manifestation of borrowed style and is usually functional. Examples where participle 1 denotes a secondary action accompanying the main action expressed by the predicate have parallels in sagas and in skaldic and Eddic poetry, and therefore cannot be regarded as a borrowed feature of style. Only the predicative use of participle 1, where a participial construction is used instead of a simple predicate, can be attributed to stylistic exigency, although even here a participle is sometimes used as a homogeneous member to an adjective.

Participle 1 usually occurs in *riddarasögur* in key episodes of the text, in contexts of high emotional significance for the whole saga. Participles in *riddarasögur* are concentrated in a relatively small fragment of the text placed at the culminating point of the narrative, and they undoubtedly have an expressive function. Participle 1 becomes an expressive means of helping to underline the key words denoting the emotional state of the hero and to attract the attention of the audience to them. It is no exaggeration to state that the more important the episode is for the whole narrative the more concentrated are the participial forms. Needless to say, in the

corresponding parts of the originals, which are usually more expansive and no less expressive, but where participial constructions do not occur at all, heightening is achieved by other means.

Thus the high frequency of participles I in *riddarasögur* is often determined by their stylistic or syntactic function, and usually it has parallels in the native literary tradition.

The morphological peculiarities of *riddarasögur* usually have a correlation with their characteristic syntactic features. The use of the *praesens historicum*, for instance, is connected with the inversion of the predicate and the subject. The use of the present tense in relating past events is one of the characteristic features of the native saga style. It is used in both *riddarasögur* and *Íslendingasögur* as a stylistic device which not only helps to “enliven” the scene but also creates the sense of participation by the audience in the events described. Although the use of this stylistic feature can vary in different surviving versions of the saga, this can be accounted for by the individual stylistic peculiarities of the respective versions of the saga.

Another characteristic feature of the native saga style is the inversion of the predicate and the subject. It is widely used in *riddarasögur*, though its frequency varies between different versions of the same saga. The use of inversion is frequently preceded by the use of “epic” *n?*. The distribution of “epic” *n?* is closely dependant on the use of *praesens historicum*. In the versions of sagas where *praesens historicum* is used instead of the past, “epic” *n?* prevails over other adjectives. All three peculiarities of the morphological and syntactic organisation of *riddarasögur* – the use of *praesens historicum*, “epic” *n?*, and inversion of predicate and subject – are inherited from the native saga tradition.

It is from this tradition that *riddarasögur* inherit the alliteration which is regularly used here as a stylistic device, lexical repetitions and formulaic phrases. Although it is hard to define exactly the origin of typical scenes it is possible that they go back to another native poetic tradition, the skaldic. Formulaic introductions and epilogues, characteristic of the sagas of Icelanders, are always retained in *riddarasögur*. Thus the analysis of the sound structure of *riddarasögur* as well as of their lexical, phraseological, morphological and syntactic organisation enables us to show how deeply rooted *riddarasögur* are in native Old Norse literary tradition.

It is difficult to formulate the principles of assimilating their originals better than the authors of *riddarasögur* did themselves. Translating the lines of Chrétien de Troyes “*Yvain (Le Chevalier au lion)*” about Queen Guinevera retelling the story of Calogrenant to King Arthur (“*Les noveles Calogrenant / Li raconte tot mot a mot, / Que bien et bel conter li so!*”), the Norwegian author of *Hvens saga* omits the expression “*tot mot a mot*” – “word by word”. Instead he says that “the queen told the king the whole saga with great art” (“*en drytning sagði honum með mikilli snild alla sögu...*”). The Norwegian adaptor himself acts in a similar way, setting himself the aim of rendering the original not “word by word” (“*tot mot a mot*”) but “with great art” (“*með mikilli snild*”), thus transforming a tale of a courtier into a saga.