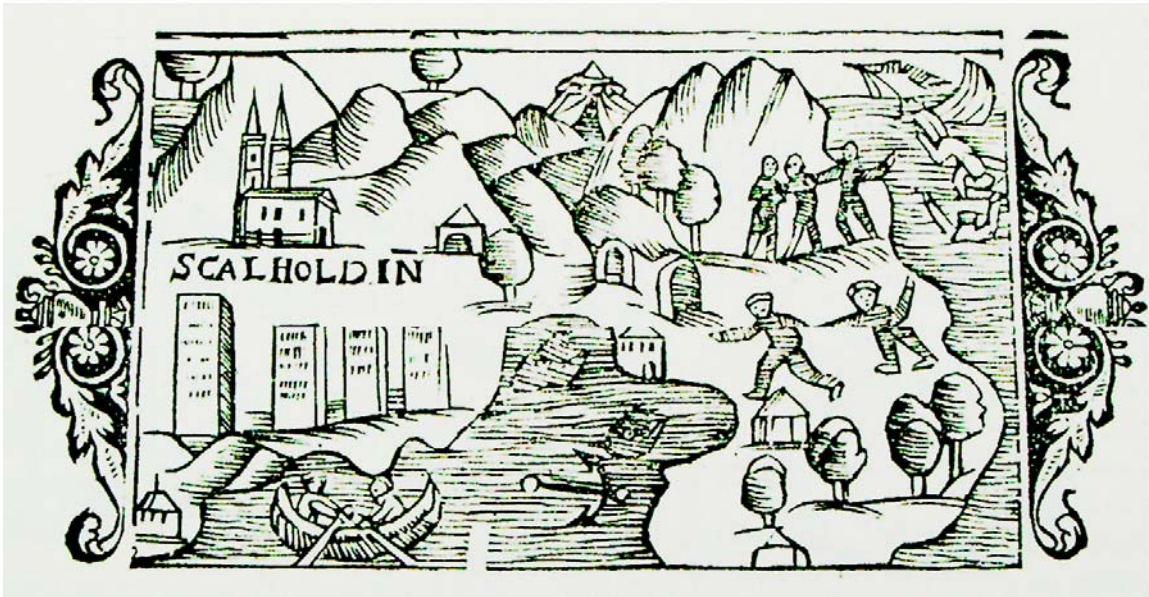


STRANDED IN MIDGARDR
***Draugar* Folklore in Old Norse Sources**



Submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy
at the Centre for Viking and Medieval Studies
University of Oslo
May 2003

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The dead have no existence other than that which the living imagine for them.
(Jean-Claude Schmitt)

There are several instances in which the Old Norse texts depict the dead as continuing their existence within the boundaries of Miðgarðr. These revenants were usually called *draugr* (pl. *draugar*) and were considered to be of a physical nature. The *draugar* had many different activities that varied from killing people and cattle to staying inside their grave-mounds protecting their treasure. The encounter with one of them usually ended in a wrestling match; but it was not an easy task to defeat them because, instead of being flimsy corpses, they possessed a superhuman strength. The belief in the existence of such creatures can be attested by some law prohibitions against raising the dead.¹ There are also several irregular burials in which the corpse was decapitated or the head was absent and this has been interpreted as a precautionary measure to prevent the return of the dead.² Some bog burials (such as that of the Tollund man) have also been interpreted as a way to keep the dead from rising again.³ Several grave-mounds were broken into, and sometimes the explanation is that they were entered to be robbed, but there are some evidences that show that in some instances that was not the purpose and they might have been entered to ‘kill’ the ‘inhabitant’ of the grave mound.⁴ The fear of the dead is present in cultures of all times, and the Old Norse society was not an exception.

However, it is not my purpose in this dissertation to analyze if people believed or not in the existence of *draugar*. Nor is my intention to clear up and interpret actual grave-mounds or irregular burials to prove that the corpses that they contained were believed to be revenants. My main aim in this study is to analyze the *draugar* as they were represented in literary sources and get a closer look at the mentality of the culture that created such creatures.

I will open this study by summarizing the previous research that has been done in the area. However I will review only the main publications that have been devoted in to the study of *draugar* in particular, while other minor sources will be used later in the text.

¹ Cf. *Norges Gamle Love* I: 19; II: 308; II: 327.

² Cf. Carelli, Peter 2000: 77 ff.

³ Cf. Ström, Folke 1942: 187-88.

⁴ Cf. Brendalsmo 1992: 84 ff. and Brøndsted, Johannes 1960: 249.

It is my belief that if the *draugar* were considered to exist, even if it was only as mere literary characters, their origins should have a mythological base. The scholars have taken for granted the existence of the *draugar* as a supernatural creature but they have forgotten to ask ‘where did the idea come from?’ or ‘which are the elements that led to their conception?’ In Chapter three I will discuss the possible explanations that allowed the *draugar* to be considered as a creature likely to exist. I will approach the subject both from a mythological and a linguistic point of view.

Previous research about *draugar* has tended to drag out general conclusions about them using only few primary sources. In most cases these few primary sources are analyzed repeatedly in several publications and this has led to a general agreement in ‘what is a *draugr*’ and ‘how do they behave’. In my point of view there has been a great oversimplification in the study of the ‘undead’. The most common opinion is that *draugar* are all the same kind of creature, and as much there has been a distinction in which *haugbúar* and *draugar* are considered to be different kinds of beings. But it is my belief that ‘*draugar*’ was used as a word to name the corporeal revenants in general, and that there were four different kinds in which the ‘undead’ manifested themselves. There were three different kinds of *draugar* and also a non-corporeal way in which the dead appeared. It is generally agreed that there was a belief in the existence of a ‘soul’, but the topic has been approached only in the study of the ‘*fylgjur*’ and similar creatures, but never as the actual appearance of the dead in a non-corporeal way. The appearances of the dead have been considered to be always of a physical nature, but I intend to prove that they could also manifest themselves in an ethereal way. In Chapter four it is my aim to prove that the ‘undead’ could manifest themselves within Miðgarðr in four different kinds of creatures, each one with its own and specific typology. I will analyze each one of them in a separate section in order to find out the detailed particularities of each one of these four different kinds of revenants.

Finally, in Chapter five I will analyze the erotic escapades of *draugar*. My intention is to show that sexual activities were not exclusive of the living, but were also an actual need in the afterlife.

In order to avoid the generalization that has been prevalent in previous research I will gather for this analysis as many primary sources as possible. This study will comprehend all the occurrences of *draugar* and contact with the ‘undead’ that occur in the corpus of the Family Sagas and the *Íslendinga Þættir*. Also most of the instances that occur in the Heroic Sagas will be used in this analysis. Other primary sources, such as *Gesta Danorum*, *Olafs saga Tryggvasonar* and some King Sagas included in *Heimskringla* will be used briefly. I will gather, then, the cases

of contact with the ‘undead’ and *draugar* and group them according to the particularities of the revenants that they depict, but I will pay special attention to the different nouns used to name them. My sources to the mythology will be the *Poetic Edda* and Snorri’s *Edda* and *Ynglinga Saga*.

Eddic Poetry will be quoted referring only the name and stanza of the poem that is being used. When it comes to the Family Sagas I will quote in Roman numbers the chapter and in Arabic numbers the page corresponding to the Íslensk Fornrit edition. This same format will be used to quote the Heroic Sagas, but in this case the first reference will correspond to Rafn’s 1829 three-volume edition, and the equivalent to Guðni Jónsson’s 1950 four-volume edition will be given afterwards between brackets. All the Icelandic authors will be referred to providing first their name and afterwards their patronymic.

I also would like to clear out that this is a study of *draugar* only in literary sources. Therefore whenever it is stated in this text that ‘*draugar* were usually ugly’ or that ‘burning was a usual way to exterminate a draugr’ I do not mean that this actually happened outside the literary world. But it would be extremely hard both for the author and the reader to have most of the sentences in this study starting with ‘the characters of the saga believed that ...’ or something similar. What is being discussed in here is a reality that existed only within the texts, and the assertions about *draugar* that are made in this dissertation correspond to that realm.

This introduction would not be complete without expressing my gratitude to Gro Steinsland, who used a plethora of her patience and knowledge in orienting me throughout the process of writing this dissertation. I would like to express my appreciation also to Terje Spurkland for his advice and also for his help with the Old Norse language.

Chapter 2

Survey of Previous Research

Apart from several articles and book-chapters, there are only two major studies that deal almost exclusively with the *draugar*, and the two of them are doctoral dissertations.⁵ I will first review these dissertations in chronological order and then I will proceed to do the same with the fore mentioned articles and book-chapters. There are some other publications that do not deal mainly with *draugar* but make a brief use/analysis of them in their subject matter. They will be excluded from this History of Research chapter, but will be used later in the analysis.

Dissertations.

In 1943 Hilda R. Ellis published her 1940 doctoral dissertation entitled *The Road to Hel: A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature*. As it is implied in the title, Ellis' concern is essentially the conception of the dead, while in this study I will deal mainly with the conception of the 'undead'. However, one of the main ideas that she develops is that of two possible abodes of the dead. She points that the sources lead us to believe that there were two main tendencies concerning the fate of the dead: one is that of the continuation of life in the realm of the gods versus the continuation of life within the grave-mound. The second alternative is the one that is related to the objectives of this dissertation. In the first chapter of her study she analyzes the archaeological evidence that support both sets of beliefs. That is, respectively, the tradition of ship burial, cremation and sacrifices as an indicator of a journey to the other world and, the setting of a burial chamber, provided with grave-goods that point to a continuation of life inside the mound. In chapter two she looks for literary evidence that might support the archaeological evidence of chapter one. She found out that the Old Norse corpus mentions cremation only as a way "to destroy a dangerous corpse"⁶ but never as a regular funerary practice. While cremation is atypical in the literature, ship-burial is not, but it "has apparently no special significance here, and again we get the impression that while the custom has been remembered by the saga-tellers, they have no recollection of the beliefs that prompted it."⁷ In general, she finds out that, even if the pagan burial traditions have lost their significance in the

⁵ There is a third dissertation on *draugar*, which is Kjell Tore Nilssen's 1992 Masters dissertation named *Draugr – De norrøne forestillingene om fysiske gengangere*. But its argument don't add much to what the other dissertations and papers have said and therefore will be omitted from this History of Research chapter.

⁶ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 38.

⁷ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 39-40.

saga-age, the literary evidence supports the archaeological one, for in sagas the same set of beliefs appears: grave goods and sacrifices accompany the dead to the next world or they were intended to stay with the dead and serve him inside the grave mound. She concludes that the suttee and the grave-goods are “likely to have belonged originally to the conception of a life elsewhere and then to have been transferred to the other idea of life continuing in the earth, to which they could easily be adapted.”⁸

In chapter three she explores, in a rather descriptive way, the places in which the literature places the realms of the dead. According to her sources they may dwell with Oðinn, Freyja, Gefion, Ran, the mountains or the grave mound. She found out that those who portray an afterlife inside a mountain belong all to the same family⁹ and says that this belief may be a particular family cult. When it comes to a continuation of life within the grave-mound “we see that the picture given is not always one of jealous guardianship or violent conflict. The sagas sometimes give us a brief picture of the good and influential man resting at peace in his grave, and still retaining an interest in the affairs of the living.”¹⁰ But then, by the cases that she refers to, it can be perceived that she takes all *draugar* as belonging to the same classification. In her analysis she mixes the *haugbúar*, with the *aptrgǫngur*, the *fyrirburðir* and the ‘*uppsitjendr*’. Therefore it becomes a little bit difficult for her to reach a conclusion, as will be seen later. Summarizing, she finds out that “In all these cases, with the possible exception of Klaufi in his sledge,¹¹ it is clear that the haunting is done by the actual body itself, which leaves its grave-mound and is possessed of superhuman strength and unlimited malice.”¹² Up to now she only recognized Klaufi as belonging to a different kind of *draugar*, but later, in the sixth chapter she finds out that

the dead poet [i.e. Þorleif jarlaskald¹³] who steps from his howe to address the sleeping shepherd is obviously of a very different family from the *draugar* who ravage the countryside, delighting in physical violence to man and beast, and different again from such a being as the more amiable *Dorgunna*¹⁴, who leaves her coffin on her way to burial to ensure proper treatment for her bearers.¹⁵

This are the only two instances in which Ellis realizes that there are several different kinds of *draugar*, but she fails to treat them as such. Instead of doing a comparative analysis, as the one

⁸ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 64.

⁹ Cf. Ellis, Hilda R 1943: 89.

¹⁰ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 91.

¹¹ See below Chapter 4.4.

¹² Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 94.

¹³ See below Chapter 4.1.

¹⁴ See below chapter 4.3.

¹⁵ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 164.

that I intend to do, she keeps on mixing the characteristics of the different groups of revenants. This leads to several contradictions and generalizations in her book.

In the fourth chapter she analyzes the ‘Cult of the Dead’. She traces its origins, in the Old Norse set of beliefs, to the cult around Frey’s burial-mound as told in *Ynglinga saga*.¹⁶ From this passage she associates the cult of the dead with rituals for the fertility of the land. Afterwards she goes to analyze the practice of sitting on a burial mound (*sitja úti*) and finds out that it has several mystical implications, as a possible contact with the dead. She also points that in the literature this seems to have been an activity reserved only for kings.¹⁷ And, most important is that she finds out that there is some archaeological evidence for this practice, since “[a] number of Swedish howes of the Migration period are not rounded at the top but flattened to give them an appearance of platforms.”¹⁸

The next chapter is devoted to the ‘Conception of the Soul’. Here, Ellis deals mainly with Shape-Changing, Valkyries and spirits connected with the individual, such as the *fylgja*, the *hamingja* and the *dís*. Later on she goes to the idea of rebirth, and connects it with the name-giving custom in the pagan Scandinavian society. The only point in which this chapter is might be relevant for my topic comes at the very end, when she says that “in several cases we find the burial mound playing an important part in the idea of the dead being reborn into the world”¹⁹ but since we intend to study the dead who come back as a living corpse and not through reincarnation, I will not approach this topic.

Chapter six, on ‘Necromancy’ is more relevant for the purposes of this research. Here she summarizes the Eddic ‘waking of the dead’ instances. These are *Baldrs draumar*, *Vqluspá*, *Vqluspá hinn skamma* and *Gróagaldr*. Ellis points that this kind of dead are linked with two different kinds of knowledge, one is that of future and past events and the other is of magic charms.²⁰ She mentions a related instance, which is that of Mimir’s head, which also transmits knowledge. In contrast, she points that in the Sagas of Icelanders “[t]he *draugar* who cause havoc in the countryside by walking after death are powerful, unpleasant and, on the whole, rather stupid people”²¹ and that “[t]he *draugar* may impart advice, when they appear in dreams to those

¹⁶ Cf. *Ynglinga saga* X.

¹⁷ Cf. Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 105. For a deeper analysis of the *sitja úti* see Segev, Dror (2001) *Native Lore and Native Magicians in Medieval Magic and Magicians –In Norway and Elsewhere: Based Upon 12th-15th Centuries Manuscripts and Runic Evidence*. Skriftserie nr. 2. Senter for Studier i Vikingtid og Nordisk Middelalder, Universitet i Oslo, Oslo. Pp 155-188.

¹⁸ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 110.

¹⁹ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 146.

²⁰ Cf. Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 156.

²¹ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 163.

whom they favor, but never wisdom”²² but she argues that there are some exceptions to this rule. Again, Ellis reached this conclusion due to her generalization of the Old Norse ‘undead’ and that the exceptions that she find are due to it. However, she quotes Klare’s *Die Toten in der altnord*, where discussing the *draugar* in general, it is argued that “there are certain resemblances between the powers possessed by the *draugar* and those of the living witches and wizards; the *draugar* sometimes practice shape-changing, control the weather, see into the future and so on.”²³ She points also that “ [t]he character of the *draugar*, when we have a chance to gain information about them, are much the same as they have been in life, with certain elements intensified”²⁴ which is one of my main arguments in this paper, and lead me to the idea of the social differentiation of the *draugar*, exposed in this dissertation’s fourth chapter.

Ellis’ final chapter studies the idea of ‘The Journey to the Land of the Dead’ in order to find some of the recurring motifs in such stories. Since my topic is exactly the opposite, this chapter will be disregarded.

In general, Ellis concludes that there are two different set of beliefs when it comes to the fate of the dead; one indicates the continuation of life in the halls of the gods while the other tends towards a continuation of life within the grave-mound. Both of them are archaeologically supported. One of the main ideas is that the saga-writers knew about both sets of traditions, but they fail to interpret the scenario that led to them. In summary, when it comes to the *draugar* in Ellis’ book it is perceptible that she tended to a generalization which led her to several contradictory assumptions, expressed mainly as exceptions to the rules that she found about the characteristics and origin of the Norse ‘ghosts’. This contradictions show up when she studies the corporeal nature as well as the behavior of the *draugar*.

Elizabeth J. Stern submitted a *draugar*-oriented doctoral dissertation, still unpublished, to UCLA in 1987. It is entitled *Legends of the Dead in Medieval and Modern Iceland*. Its first chapter is devoted to the study of the *haugbúar* in particular, while the second discusses *draugar* in general. Before proceeding it becomes necessary to point out that she was the first, and so far the only, to have successfully isolated the *haugbúar* cases and analyze their typology, differentiating them from other kinds of *draugar*.²⁵ However it was not intended to be a

²² Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 163.

²³ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 163.

²⁴ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 164.

²⁵ As we shall see in the section devoted to articles and book-chapters Nora Chadwick tried to do something similar in her 1946 article, entitled *Norse Ghosts (A Study in the Draugr and the Haugbúi)*. However she failed to isolate the *haugbúar* from the other kinds of *draugar* and ended up attributing them alien characteristics and talking about *draugar* in general.

comparative analysis of the *draugar*, but an analysis of the legends of the dead taking the *haugbúar* as representatives of the medieval Icelandic folklore.

She opened her first chapter, *Grave-Dwellers and Grave-Robbers*, setting the *haugbúar* apart by stating that “[t]he word *draugr* is by far the most common term applied to a revenant in or out of its grave, but for convenience in this study I will refer to a ghost encountered within a grave as a *haugbúi*.”²⁶ She decided to undertake the study of these particular revenants due to their popularity both in the Heroic and in the family Sagas. However, she is aware of the other variations of the continuation of life-after-death within Miðgarðr, of which “[p]hysical survival as a living corpses was the most popular [...] but a wide range of beliefs involving a less concrete afterlife, even a disembodied spirit or soul was available and expressed in mythological and secular forms.”²⁷ After explaining which are the different realms of the dead within the gods, and the ways of getting there, she explains in detail which were the burial customs during the Viking Age. Regarding the practices of cremation and inhumation she considers that the coexistence of both as well as the periods in which one was alternative more popular than the other “certainly indicates a greater complexity of belief [and] that popular belief definitely recognized the possibility of both spiritual and physical survival after burial, while only spiritual survival in this world seems to have been possible after cremation.”²⁸

Then Stern goes straight into the study of the idea of continuation of life within the *haug*. One of her first concerns it to explain the preservation of the *haugbúar* myths into the Christian age in which sagas were written. She found a successful answer in the fact that “after the coming of Christianity, burial mounds would have been familiar features of the Icelandic landscape, so that the *haugbúi* tradition in literature would not be resting on an imaginary fictional image.”²⁹ As to the tradition of breaking into a mound, so well attested in Saga Literature she found several archaeological sources that confirm that this phenomenon was not merely a literary one. Her archaeological sources span from the ship-burials in Gokstad, Oseberg and Tune to Irish chronicles and runic inscriptions left inside a mound’s grave-chamber in the Orkney Islands.³⁰ The Kylver, Nørre Næra and Gørlev runic inscriptions as well as the Eggja stone, she states, contain sentences aimed to keep the dead inside their graves.³¹ She also points out the existence

²⁶ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 8.

²⁷ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 11.

²⁸ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 16-17.

²⁹ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 17.

³⁰ Cf. Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987:18-21.

³¹ Cf. Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 24.

of “runic curses [that] also threatened those who disturbed a grave or memorial stone”³² of which she mentions the case of the seventh-century Swedish Björketorp stone. In short, she gives enough evidence as to prove that the traditions of breaking into a mound as well as the belief in the existence of *haugbúar* were not merely a literary motif but actually took place in people’s mentality. However, she points out that they did not seem to be part of the Icelandic folklore, since most of the *haugbúi* tales took place out of Iceland. She argues that “legends of ghosts carrying out an active existence within their burial mounds were not acceptable on the territory of [Icelandic] daily life”³³ but were associated with something that was only possible in far away lands.

In her analysis of the encounters with *haugbúar* she found that the literary sources follow certain patterns. The first is that in breaking into mound the “winning of wealth is such a pervasive motif that it surfaces somehow during the story in every case, even when honor is the explicitly stated motivation.”³⁴ There are some other patterns that “are included even when totally unsupported by the preceding narrative [and] indicate that these stories belong to a complex of motifs well-established in oral tradition.”³⁵ Stern argues that such are the cases of the escape from the mound using a rope, the acquisition of wealth, the standardized description of the corpse and the stench that it produces.³⁶ But she found out that the most schematized pattern is that of the fight against the *haugbúi*. “It is always a hand-to-hand combat [...] only when the revenant had been overpowered by wrestling could the hero use a weapon to behead it.”³⁷ During the fight “everything in their way is kicked aside”³⁸ or a similar phrase is always used, and in most cases when there is a dialog between the hero and the revenant the last one initiates the conversation. The last pattern is that she found is “the recurring idea that men later to become revenants had purposely allowed themselves to be buried alive”³⁹, idea which proves right for several *haugbúar*, but not for early Icelandic revenants in general.

Stern’s second chapter, entitled *Ghosts and Rituals of Transition*, opens discussing the reasons that Icelandic ‘ghosts’ had to walk again. She points out that among them necromancy is almost totally absent, the only case being in *Færeyinga saga*.⁴⁰ She points that the most common

³² Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 23-24.

³³ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 27.

³⁴ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 30.

³⁵ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 30.

³⁶ Cf. Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 30-31.

³⁷ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 31-32.

³⁸ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 32.

³⁹ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 38.

⁴⁰ See below, Chapter 4.4.

cause, “in various [*draugar*] manifestations, was a sense of unfinished business in life.”⁴¹ I don’t share this point of view in particular, and in this dissertation several other reasons for the apparitions of the *draugar* will be given in their respective chapters. More correctly, she states another reason, which is that a “taint of sorcery was also involved with fears that a man would walk after death.”⁴²

A second point in her analysis is that “[r]evenants, in and out of their graves are reported to recite skaldic poetry”⁴³ but, as we shall see this seems to be a particular attribute of the *haugbúar* and a few *fyrirburðir* but not of *draugar* in general. However, she links this tradition to the death-song custom. She also mentions that burial mounds were associated with prophetic and poetic gifts. Then she gives several examples of people sitting in mound looking for prophetic dreams. One important contribution is that, even though *draugar* are linked to Óðinn who actually can raise corpses to interrogate them about past and future events *draugar* come back to life of their own accord “an Óðinn-substitute wizard has not raised this corpses in order to gain knowledge from them.”⁴⁴ From there she goes to the effect of interacting with a revenant, madness being the most common. Stern also states that the people who had murderous tendencies in life become even more violent after death. This point of view does not necessarily applies to all cases, as will be seen in this study, but still remains a constant.

When it comes to the ways of ‘killing’ a *draugr* Stern states that “the only sure way to get rid of it was to burn the body”⁴⁵ but then no further analysis is made. Also “beheading it and laying the head by or between the thighs is mentioned frequently, but was not always effective.”⁴⁶ This statement seems to be product of a generalization, since the method proved ineffective in only one case.⁴⁷

In the next pages she analyzes several *draugar* occurrences, but in general does not reach conclusions much different from those of Ellis’ dissertation. She starts analyzing the non-*haugbúar draugar*, and her analysis mixes all of them as one, which leads her to find several inconsistencies and exceptional cases (derived of this mixture of creatures with different attributes). Afterwards she questions what principles allowed this people to come back and argues that the “idea of an essential animating spirit makes possible a precise definition of death:

⁴¹ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 45.

⁴² Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 46.

⁴³ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 41.

⁴⁴ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 44.

⁴⁵ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 47.

⁴⁶ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 47.

⁴⁷ See below, Chapter 4.4.

when the spirit leaves the body. But ambiguity now arises in deciding when this actually occurs.”⁴⁸ She finds an answer to the possibility of becoming a *draugr* in a triad that would explain the process of life and death: “‘life’/‘living death’/ ‘death’”⁴⁹ which is attested in other religions.

Finally she goes back to the tradition of breaking into a mound. She points out that acquisition of wealth seems to be the main purpose, but that there is one more reason. This is that “the literary use of barrow-breaking was as an initiation into manhood”⁵⁰ mainly due to the fact that most of the mound-robbers were young at the time of the events.

In conclusion, Stern’s dissertation proves to have isolated and studied successfully the *haugbúar* occurrences in saga literature. She set them apart from other creatures and established them as a separate group of *draugar*, with their own attributes. But when she studied the other kinds of *draugar* she fell into the same contradictions and found the same irregular behavior as Ellis and other *draugar* scholars have. However, her approach is the closest one to that intended in this dissertation.

Articles and Book-Chapters.

In 1946 Nora Chadwick published an extensive article entitled *Norse Ghosts (A Study in the Draugr and the Haugbúi)*. She starts her article by telling that there is a main difference between the ghosts in Norway and in Iceland, since in the first case they “are rarely found far from their burial places [...] In Iceland, however, a ghost knows no territorial rights and limitations.”⁵¹ She points that these wandering ghosts seem to be particularly Icelandic. She then retells several stories about kings entering their mounds while alive, and which sometimes are related to acts of suttee. She argues that this “is perhaps the true death of a Scandinavian aristocrat of the old school, who gives himself to Óthinn rather than ‘die on a straw.’”⁵² By this she marks a difference between the *draugr* and the *haugbúi*, from where the article’s title comes from. She says that one characteristic of both of them is that they come back from the grave, “sometimes seen by the living in what appears to be a kind of dream or trance; but it generally happens even so that they leave beside the living person some gift”⁵³ which, as will be seen, is only characteristic of the *haugbúi* and the *fyrirburður*. Even though both in the title of her paper

⁴⁸ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 56.

⁴⁹ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 57.

⁵⁰ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 60.

⁵¹ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 50.

⁵² Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 51.

⁵³ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 54.

as well as in the first pages of it she asserts that there is a clear difference between the *draugr* and the *haugbúi*, she still treats them as the same, plus, fails to find out that the *haugbúi* is just one subclass of *draugr*. As a consequence in the rest of the article the terms appear as interchangeable.

She continues by mentioning the ways in which the living can prevent the ghost from leaving its barrow. They are, namely, two: “enter the barrow and fight with the *draugr* and cut off his head [and] by suttee.”⁵⁴ She then retells passages related to both ways of disposing of the undead. She also indicates that both the *haugbúi* and the barrow have a “constant association with *skaldskap* and music”⁵⁵ and that in several instances the mound-dwellers recite verses. She wonders about the circumstances of the preservation and transmission of such poems, and she finds out that there may be a traditional type of poem associated to the *haugbúi* which were transmitted with slight variations or that the same verse has been attributed to several *haugbúar*. Concerning poetry she also explains that the *haug* seems to be associated with the gift of speech and prophetic visions. In general, she points that “it may be supposed, in view of certain comparatively modern poems attributed to *draugar*, that such poetry formed an early genre of which the tradition was carried on later by the composers of the sagas”⁵⁶ and that the fragments that were recorded belong to some longer and now lost poems. She presents in detail several episodes in which poetry and the dead, or the instant of death, appear both in sagas and eddas. Her exposition is very clear and convincing, and she finds that there seemed to have been a strong tradition of death-song.⁵⁷ However, she fails to analyze why poetry and speech are associated with *draugar* and death. She states that there might be a connection between the death-song and that “it was at one period regarded as proper for a hero to die chanting his death song.”⁵⁸ She poses the possibility “that originally the chanting of the death-song is the hero’s passport to Valhöll, enumerating his credentials as a hero worthy of admission among the *einherjar*, even when he has failed to die in battle.”⁵⁹ After analyzing several supernatural visits to Óláfr Tryggvason in *Flateyjarbók* she concludes that “originally the *draugar* or *haugbúar* were those who had ‘not died’, but had entered the barrow alive as an act of voluntary death or euthanasia”⁶⁰ maybe in the hope to reincarnate. As we will see in this paper, this assumption

⁵⁴ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 55-56.

⁵⁵ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 61.

⁵⁶ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 108.

⁵⁷ Cf. Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 112-113.

⁵⁸ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 115.

⁵⁹ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 116.

⁶⁰ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 123.

appears to be erroneous, since most of our *draugr*, both in early and late sources, seem to have been quite dead before they return among the living. Later on she traces the possible origins of the idea of the *draugr* to Sweden, having its point of origin in the cult around Freyr, as exposed in *Ynglinga saga*, as well as in the Swedish law of suttee of the queen when the king died.⁶¹

In 1981, after several publications on Norse Mythology Hilda Ellis Davidson put out a second paper, under the title *The Restless Dead: An Icelandic Ghost Story*, dedicated to the study of *draugar*. Her intention was to bring some light to the hauntings in Froða, narrated in *Eyrbyggja saga*, since “there is no adequate commentary on this tale of a haunting.”⁶² In the few parts not devoted to retell the incidents, Ellis Davidson reaches the following conclusions. She explains that the blood-rain that precedes the haunting appears in more than one saga and, in fact such events are reported in several places of Europe, always causing panic.. She traces the possible origins of the tradition to the appearance of an Aurora Borealis or to the fall of volcanic dust. Among the other possible causes of the hauntings she mentions that the Þórgunna’s last wishes were not followed, which is a common motif in several *draugr* stories. Froða’s haunting start after Þórgunna’s corpse raise to cook some food for her bearers, and Ellis Davidson proposes that, due to the similar circumstances in which a corpse stands up in its way to the burial site, the event is a “humorous parody”⁶³ of that “of the funeral journey of the old chieftain Víga-Styr⁶⁴ [...] to which indeed there is a reference in *Eyrbyggja saga*.”⁶⁵ There follows a conflict between drowned and buried *draugar*, she points that this event has no parallel in saga literature. She also mentions “that those evil and violent in life might cause trouble after death”⁶⁶ but she does not examine why, or why did also the good and non-violent also came back from the dead to haunt the living, as it occurs with the same Þórgunna that she ‘analyzes’. Þórgunna’s return was basically to ensure a proper treatment for her bearers, but that does not justify the haunting of a whole district by dozens of *draugar*. At least it is not justified in her paper, but it is in the text of the saga.⁶⁷ One of her most important conclusions is that “[o]ne result of the introduction of Christian teaching and classical learning, however, may have been a gradual change from the idea of the restless corpse to that of the wandering disembodied spirit. But if we

⁶¹ Cf. Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 124.

⁶² Ellis Davidson, Hilda R. 1981: 155.

⁶³ Ellis Davidson, Hilda R. 1981: 160.

⁶⁴ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 233-35. See below Chapter 4.3.

⁶⁵ Ellis Davidson, Hilda R. 1981: 160.

⁶⁶ Ellis Davidson, Hilda R. 1981: 173.

⁶⁷ See below chapter 4.3.

search deeply enough, it seems probable that we shall find both conceptions present in men's beliefs in any period."⁶⁸

Another case-oriented article is *Færeyinga saga, chapter forty*. In it, Peter Foote tries to bring out some light to the necromantic rite performed in *Færeyinga saga*, where the 'ghosts' of three people are summoned by Þránd in order to find out the way of their death. The whole scene takes place in less than a page, and the ritual is vaguely described in a single paragraph. The article focuses mainly in two aspects. One is the setting and the elements of the rite and their possible uses in calling the dead and protecting the living from them. The second one is the analysis of the linguistic markers around the *grindr* and the *reitar*, elements that seem to be essential to recall the dead, and their connection with the ritual. From them he concludes: "the dead were thought to be summoned by Þránd's psychic exertion [...] coupled with the big fires"⁶⁹ in the scenario, and that the fore mentioned elements of the rite were intended to protect the living. However, and what can be considered as his main contribution is his second conclusion "that the author of the description was himself not clear about the function of the *grindr* and the *reitar*, even though he understood that they were appropriate in a necromantic context."⁷⁰

In his *Þorsteins þáttur skelks and the Verisimilitude of Supernatural Experience in Saga Literature* Lindow tries to find out how did the narrator and audience of the *Þáttur* approached Þorsteinn's contact with a *draugr*. As he says, the modern scholars tend to find the contact with the supernatural as something close to the reality of the medieval Icelandic mentality. Revenants and other supernatural creatures in mediaeval Iceland were 'non the less real for being marvelous and none the less marvelous for being real.'⁷¹ His main approach is to find out the procedures that the author used in order to gain some verisimilitude in the story. He detected that the *þáttur* does not strictly follow the structure of *þættir* in general, but for its elements and length resembles a legend. Furthermore it is a legend that portrays the conflict between pagan and Christian beliefs during the reign of Óláfr Tryggvason. Accordingly it presents motifs that belong to both sets of beliefs, and it does so recurring to some of the precise motifs that are essential to them. So, the church bells are the ones who actually defeat the *draugr*, as Stith Thompson finds out for other innumerable tales of demons. Also the heroes of the Viking past are portrayed as being in hell and the hero protects himself with a cloak, which Lindow somehow connects with the one that Þorgeirr the law-speaker used to cover himself in the *Alþing* while deciding the

⁶⁸ Ellis Davidson, Hilda R. 1981: 173.

⁶⁹ Foote, Peter 1984: 218.

⁷⁰ Foote, Peter 1984: 219.

⁷¹ Lindow, John 1986: 265.

religious future of Iceland. From these elements he discerns that the story is a Christian import to the Old Norse corpus. He argues that “[t]he incident possessed verisimilitude for its audience because that audience will have heard many similar anecdotes”⁷² and also by “following what would have been a well-known if unconscious and unarticulated pattern. Inclusion of the elements of the memorate makes the supernatural experience believable.”⁷³ The main pattern that precedes an encounter with the supernatural is the violation of a prohibition, after which, anything may be expected. Another element that adds to the verisimilitude of the *þáttur*, according to Lindow, is the fact that the hero is portrayed as an ordinary person. He also argues that both in the Heroic sagas and the romances “the marvelous seems taken for granted and the supernatural attaches to it rather than to reality.”⁷⁴

In *The Alien and Alienated as Unquiet Dead in the Sagas of Icelanders* Sayers analyzes the narrative ends and the ideology behind some *draugr* occurrences in sagas. His main purpose is to trace xenophobia and/or rejection of the ‘Other’ as a motive to consider the dead ‘Other’ as a malicious revenant. In order to do this he states that he will analyze only the cases in which the revenants are both active and malevolent. In this context, he points that “the dead resemble the living in valuing their rest and their property [...] In general, their crossing of the boundary back into life is accompanied by only elemental human functioning, that is, recognition of human interests and artifacts.”⁷⁵ Among the ones suspected to become a revenant are the “sorcerers and the uncanny people”⁷⁶, and in contrast with the cases in which some more ‘respectable’ people die in situations that make them *draugr* candidates, “[m]ore aggressive and less honorable solutions were practiced on [these] socially inferior or otherwise marginalized”⁷⁷ potential *draugar*. Drowning, burning and decapitation were the ways in which they were dealt with. In the cases of decapitation the head was usually placed between the thighs, and he finds this similar to “medieval Norse acts of public shaming [since it] brought under the social control of the loss of honor, it was hoped that the *draugr* would shun human company.”⁷⁸ Before going to the recount of three *draugr* episodes he states, “the family sagas are selective in their use of supernatural effects such as revenants. It is in realistic environments that the circumscribed and generally

⁷² Lindow, John 1986: 270.

⁷³ Lindow, John 1986: 271.

⁷⁴ Lindow, John 1986: 280.

⁷⁵ Sayers, William 1996: 243-44.

⁷⁶ Sayers, William 1996: 244.

⁷⁷ Sayers, William 1996: 244.

⁷⁸ Sayers, William 1996: 245.

believable actions of the *draugar* occur.”⁷⁹ He then proceeds to re-tell the stories of Hrappr⁸⁰ (from *Laxdæla saga*), Þorgunna and the haunting at Fróðá⁸¹ (from *Eyrbyggja saga*), and Glámr⁸² (from *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*), which depict *draugar* of Hebridean origin, in the first two cases, and Swedish in the last. He states that these episodes show that

psychological imbalance, especially as evidenced in ethical behavior, will leave anger and malice in the existence beyond life. In the vindictiveness of the active dead, their sense of unfinished business and maintenance of blood feuding past life’s limit, there is an almost juridical conception of incomplete process.⁸³

Just as in Sterns case, he maintains that ‘unfinished business’ is an incentive to become a *draugar*, opinion valid only in some cases, and not supported in the terms of this dissertation. He also states that in “*Grettis saga*, the *draugr* episode, despite high craftsmanship apparent in the description of the struggle and in Glámr’s speech, is from a compositional point of view indistinguishable from many others”⁸⁴ but in Chapter 4.4 it is proven how this particular episode actually differs from any other *aptrgangr* episode precisely due to Glámr’s ability to speak, as is also noted by the saga writer. These erroneous assumptions, just as the ones in the other publications, seem to be due to the fact that they analyze just a few sources, which impair them from a global overview of the different kinds of *draugar* and *draugar* behavior. Sayers’ major contribution consists in his ideological analysis of these episodes. First he points out that both the saga corpus and *Landnámabók* “reflect a very conscious Icelandic concern with ethnogenesis, and with the recognition and maintenance of distinct identity”⁸⁵ and in that context the foreign origin of the *draugar* he analyzed is quite notorious. “The point that the sagas are making, although the equation is never explicit, is essentially defensive and slightly xenophobic.”⁸⁶ I will apply this perception in Chapter 4.2. He also takes into account that these stories were written in the Age of the Sturlungs and that these creatures do not exist in the Contemporary Sagas. Thus, he concludes that the *draugar*, with their aggression and their devastating effects on peace and the economical life are in a certain way a metaphor of the struggle for power and the killings without compensation that took place in the time in which they were written.

⁷⁹ Sayers, William 1996: 245.

⁸⁰ See below, Chapter 4.2.

⁸¹ See below, Chapters 4.3 and 4.4.

⁸² See below, Chapter 4.2.

⁸³ Sayers, William 1996: 254-55.

⁸⁴ Sayers, William 1996: 255.

⁸⁵ Sayers, William 1996: 256-257.

⁸⁶ Sayers, William 1996: 257.

In 1998 Jón H. Aðalsteinsson's essay collection *A Piece of Horse Liver: Myth, Ritual and Folklore in Old Icelandic Sources* was published in English. It includes an article entitled *Wrestling with a Ghost in Icelandic Popular Belief*, in which the author pretends to "estimate to what extent the narrators and recorders believed in the incident"⁸⁷ as well as "to establish their age and the features they have in common."⁸⁸ In spite of his good intentions, he spends most of his article retelling stories about fights with ghosts, both in the saga literature and in 19th century folk tales, and forgets completely about the analysis. In the seven pages devoted to Old Norse sources he retells the *draugr* incidents in *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*, *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar eða Hólmverja saga* and one incident in *Gesta Danorum*. He tells that Saxo's is the earliest recorded incident of a *draugr*. Regarding the quotation of *Hrómundar saga* in the text of *Þorgils saga*, when King Sverri calls the Heroic Sagas "*lygisögur*"⁸⁹ he tells us that there are several positions around it but does not mention the debate, only refers the reader to further articles. Based on his retelling of Old Norse texts he concludes that "tales were current in the twelfth, thirteen and fourteen centuries about a hero wrestling with ghosts"⁹⁰ and that the mound-dweller stories are the oldest ones. His second conclusion is that "*Grettis saga* was one of the best-loved of the Icelandic sagas, and the story of the struggle between Glámr and Grettir has lived on in Iceland throughout the ages."⁹¹

In the dissertations, articles and book-chapters mentioned in this chapter it becomes noticeable that there has not been a comparative study of the different kinds of *draugar*. The closest to it is Stern's dissertation, where she managed to isolate the *haugbúar* and analyze their typology. Apart from this case, the rest of the authors tend to study the *draugar* as if they all belonged to the same group and therefore were supposed to show the same behavior. Also, in most sources, only a few *draugar* instances are used in the analysis, which leads to a generalization and oversimplification when it comes to analyze their aims and the reasons that they have to return from the death. It is also perceivable that no one has analyzed the mythological background that may support the existence of such creatures. As much the *draugar* have been connected with Óðinn, but the mythological idea of mankind and its substance has never been taken into consideration to find out the religious/mythological basis that allowed them to exist in the Old Norse folklore.

⁸⁷ Jón H. Aðalsteinsson 1998: 143.

⁸⁸ Jón H. Aðalsteinsson 1998: 143.

⁸⁹ *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* 10: 27.

⁹⁰ Jón H. Aðalsteinsson 1998: 161.

⁹¹ Jón H. Aðalsteinsson 1998: 161.

Chapter 3

What is life? What is death? What is a *draugr*?

Af .iiii. hofþ scepnom. oc callasc hann af þui enn minne hiemr. Þuiat hann hafþe hold af iorþo enn bloþ af vatne blost af lofste enn hita af elde.
(The Old Norse Elucidarius: 1.59)

Dauþer menn kenna hann þuiat þeir risa up at raþe hans. Heluite kenner hann. Þuiat þat geldr sem hann byþr þa es þat glévpþe.
(The Old Norse Elucidarius: 1.21)

Whenever there are cases of *revenants* in the corpus of Old Norse literature that we analyzed, there are four terms that appear constantly with them: *draugr*, *haugbúi*, *aptr ganga* (and its related noun *aptrgangr*), and *fyrirburðr*. The last three don't pose any etymological challenge, since they could be easily translated as 'mound-dweller', 'walk after (death)', and 'vision' respectively. But there seems to be a great discussion about the different meanings or origins of the Old Norse '*draugr*'.

Lexicon Poeticum provides the following definitions of the word: "1.- *draugr*, m, genfœrd, spøgelse, höjbo" and "2.- *draugr*, m, træstamme, træ, hyppig, kenninger for mænd."⁹² Fritzner states that *draugr* is a "dødning = *dauðr maðr*; dels om dem, som efter Døden have sin Bolig i Graven: *þeir er freista drauga upp at vekja eða haugbúa*."⁹³ And Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie translate it as "*Draugr*, m (Lat. *truncus* is perhaps akin): 1. - a dry log, this sense, however, only occurs in old poets. 2. - metaph. In prose (as it is now used), a ghost, spirit, especially the dead inhabitant of a cairn was called *draugr*."⁹⁴ So, traditionally there have been two different ways of approaching the *draugar* in the written sources, namely, those who study the *draugr* as revenants and, on the other hand the ones who study them linguistically, as a kenning for 'man' or 'warrior'. Therefore *Medieval Scandinavia*'s entry about *Supernatural Beings*, has to say about them that "[t]he skaldic *draugr* ('tree, tree trunk,' viz. 'companion comitatus') has nothing to do with revenants."⁹⁵

The scholars seem to be happy about these two different meanings of "*draugr*" and accept them as completely unrelated. The only problem in the topic seems to be related the etymologies

⁹² *Lexicon Poeticum* 1931: '*Draugr*'.

⁹³ Fritzner, Johan 1954: '*Draugr*'.

⁹⁴ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: '*Draugr*'.

⁹⁵ *Medieval Scandinavia* 1993: '*Supernatural Beings*'.

of the words. So, just as an example, Schmitt says that it “is a word that comes from the same root as dream or Traum, in modern German.”⁹⁶ Crozier says that it “is cognate with a verb ‘to deceive’ (OHG *triogan*) which does not survive in the ON”,⁹⁷ Sayers traces it to “the Indo-European *dhreugh* (harm, deceive)”⁹⁸ and John Tanke finds a strong connection between the Old Norse ‘*draugr*’ and the Old English ‘*draco*’, supported somehow by Ellis Davidson who finds a strong connection between the idea of the dragon and that of the mound-dweller.⁹⁹ Anyway, so far the *status quo* is that ‘*draugr*’ in prose is a corporeal ghost and that no one is sure about what it may mean in poetry but it is used as a kenning for ‘man’.

Crozier points that there seem to be three different possibilities for the meaning “skaldic *draugr*”:

1.-*Draugr* could be the otherwise unattested name of a tree, as Codex Wormianus says. To accept this meaning need not involve acceptance of the unlikely association of the word with the West Gmc “dry” root.

2.- *Draugr* could simply be the common ON word for “ghost” or “mound-dweller”, used in a figurative sense typical of skaldic diction. “Battle-ghost” would be an exceptional kenning for a warrior, but not wholly inappropriate.

3.- *Draugr* could be a nomen agentis related to the root *drygja*, although not with the sense which Neckel assigns to it. *Draugr* is an old formation, from a root for which I have postulated the meaning “to follow, accompany”[...] The meaning of ON *draugr* may have been close to that of its Baltic and Slavonic cognates: “friend, companion”. The kenning *ørlygis draugr* would therefore mean “friend of battle”, hence “man”. This would also be an unusual meaning for a *stofnorð* in a man-kenning.¹⁰⁰

Taking into consideration the different descriptions and qualities of the *draugar* (as revenants) in the Sagas of Icelanders and in the Heroic Sagas it becomes obvious that Crozier is skipping a possibility, which might be too obvious to notice it or too risky to be considered. My point of view differs from that of Crozier in that I consider that there is only one meaning for “*draugr*”, which is the second one given in *Lexicon Poeticum*: “2. - *draugr*, m, trøestamme, trøe, hyppig, kenninger for mœnd.”¹⁰¹ ‘Tree trunk’ as *draugr*’s main meaning is what we will discuss in the following pages. My point of view would not necessarily disagree with Crozier’s second possibility. Crozier states that “ ‘Battle-ghost’ would be an exceptional kenning for warrior”¹⁰² and though very poetical, especially in its oldest registered context, which is that of *Ragnarsdrapa*.¹⁰³ I can

⁹⁶ Schmitt, Jean-Claude 1998: 231.

⁹⁷ Crozier, Alan 1987: 5.

⁹⁸ Sayers, William 1996: 242.

⁹⁹ Cf. Ellis Davidson, Hilda R. 1950: 179 ff.

¹⁰⁰ Crozier, Alan 1987: 11-12.

¹⁰¹ *Lexicon Poeticum* 1931: ‘*Draugr*’.

¹⁰² Crozier, Alan 1987: 11.

do nothing else but agree with him since it would be a highly unusual kenning, for being a ‘ghost’ is not a characteristic of mankind, and therefore it can be disqualified as a *stofnorð*. On the other hand, ‘battle-tree’, though fitting with the traditional translation for *draugr*-related kennings, would make sense with Snorri’s *Skaldskaparmál*, (our most important source to understanding not only *kenningar*, but skaldic poetry in general) when he discusses the different ways of referring to ‘woman’ and ‘man’ in poetry. For a woman Snorri says that “*Kona er selja gullz þess, er hon gefr, ok samheti við selju er tré.*”¹⁰⁴ Then he provides us with a list of tree-names for women, and some of their uses in poetry. Among them he quotes: *Mqrk, Tróða, Skorða, Bjqrk, Eik* and *Lind*.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, for men he says that: “*Maðr er kendr til viðar*”¹⁰⁶ and the given examples are: *Viðr, Askr, Hlynf, Bqrr, Stafr* and *Þorn*.¹⁰⁷

Now, taking into account the fact that “Skaldic kennings characterize man by his uniquely human activities and properties,”¹⁰⁸ then these quotes from *Skaldskaparmál* tell us something about mankind. That is the fact that, according to the Old Norse conception of the world, mankind is made out of trees or at least that that is considered as one of mankind’s characteristics. At least we are partly trees in our nature, and this religious belief was used as a kenning to refer to ‘man’, naming them after their primeval constituent. This would be just in the same way in which according to Judeo-Christian religions the primary substance of mankind is mud, to which the God-gift of life was conferred through a blow of life through the nose.¹⁰⁹ Lets analyze now what was added to this primordial trees in order to convey life to mankind.

In our Eddic sources the anthropogonic myth is referred in four instances. Before continuing, lets revise them. *Hauksbók*’s version of *Vqluspá* tells anthropogonic myth in the following words:

*Vndz þriar komu þvssa [brúðir] aastkir ok qflgir æser at hvisi fyndu aa landi litt megandi Ask ok Emblv orluglausa qnd þau ne attu oð þau ne hqfðu laa ne læti ne litv goða. qnd gaf Oðinn oð gaf Henir laa gaf LoðuR ok litu goða.*¹¹⁰

Codex Regius’ version of *Vqluspá* reports the myth as follows:

¹⁰³ In *Ragnarsdrapa* slain warriors are brought back to life daily, so they will fight and be slain daily, and so on until *Ragnarqk*. So, “ghost-warrior” would be a really appropriate kenning for this dead people who will fight and be killed just to be brought back to life every night until the end of time.

¹⁰⁴ *Skaldskaparmál* 44(47).

¹⁰⁵ *Skaldskaparmál* 44(47).

¹⁰⁶ *Skaldskaparmál* 44(47).

¹⁰⁷ *Skaldskaparmál* 44(47).

¹⁰⁸ Crozier, Alan 1987: 1.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Genesis* 2,7.

¹¹⁰ *Vqluspá*, in *Hauksbók* 1892-96: 189.

17
 Unz þrír kvómo
 ór því liði
 qflgir ok ástgir
 æsir at húsi,
 fundo á landi
 lítt megandi
 Ask ok Emblo
 ørlqglausa.

18
 Qnd þau ne áttó,
 óð þau ne hqfðo,
 lá né læti
 né lito góða;
 qnd gaf Óðinn,
 óð gaf Hæmir,
 lá gaf Lóður
 ok lito góða.¹¹¹

In general, both versions coincide in the fact that Ask and Embla, the original couple, were lying on a beach, being ‘capable of little’ (*lítt megandi*) and ‘lacking a destiny’ (*ørlqglausa*). Three of the Æsir appear, and each god makes a gift to them: Óðinn gives them ‘breath, life’ (*qnd*), Hæmir gives them the ability of ‘reason’ (*óð*), a ‘spirit’, and finally Lóður makes the gift of ‘blood’ (*lá*) and ‘godlike appearance’ (*lito góða*).¹¹² Even though nothing is told about their material nature, *Codex Regius’ Vqluspá* 10 states that the dwarfs “*manlíkon/ mqrq um gørðo,/ dvergar, ór iqrdø,/ sem Durinn safði.*”^{113 114} Up to here, the only clue for guessing the material nature of mankind is the fact that the dwarfs made ‘manlike figures out of the earth’. But then, too close to be a mere coincidence, the word ‘askr’ appears again; this time as the first word in *Codex Regius’ Vqluspá* stanza 19: “*Ask veit ek standa,/ heitit Yggdrasil*”¹¹⁵ and in *Hauksbók’s* version it reads: “*Ask ueit ek standa heitir Yggdrasil.*”¹¹⁶ The proximity is too conspicuous to be casual, but still, apart from the allusion to the fact that ‘Ask’ might be made out of an ‘ask’ tree, we still know nothing about the nature of *Embla*. Steinsland says that “*Embla er det imidlertid vanskeligere å tyde. Det kan bety ‘alm’, i så tilfelle har også urkvinnen navn etter et treslag.*”¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ *Vqluspá* 17-18. See also Steinsland G. and Meulengracht Sørensen P. 1999: 111-112.

¹¹² Following Steinsland and Meulengracht Sørensen’s translation. Cf. Steinsland G and Meulengracht Sørensen P. 1999.

¹¹³ *Vqluspá* 10. See also Steinsland G. and Meulengracht Sørensen 1999: 111.

¹¹⁴ *Hauksbók’s* version is: “*þeir manlíkan mqrq of giorðv duerga i iqrdø sem Durinn sagði.*” *Vqluspá*, in *Hauksbók* 1892-96: 188.

¹¹⁵ *Vqluspá* 19. See also Steinsland G. and Meulengracht Sørensen 1999: 112.

¹¹⁶ *Hauksbók* 1892-96: 189.

¹¹⁷ Steinsland G and Meulengracht Sørensen, P. 1999: 48.

This idea of *Embla* being, as well as *Ask*, originally a tree is reinforced by the fore mentioned skaldic tradition of calling women after a tree, quoted from *Skaldskaparmál* 44(47). Concerning the original couple's shape and matter, Steinsland poses an explanation which seems highly fitting to the Old Norse sources: "Først skaper dvergene uferdige menneskekropper av jord, kanskje i form av trestokker som er vokst opp av jorden."¹¹⁸

The other two occasions in which the creation of mankind is mentioned occur in Snorri's *Edda*. Both of them differ little but significantly from the two versions of *Vqluspá*. The first occasion is in *Gylfaginning* 2, where the anthropogonic myth is portrayed in similar terms to the Christian one:

Hitt er þó mest, er hann gerði manninn ok gaf honum qnd þá, er lifa skal ok aldri tynask, þótt líkamr fúni at moldu eða brenni at qsku; ok skolu allir menn lifa, þeir er rétt eru siðaðir, ok vera með honum sjálfum, þar sem heitir Gimlé eða Vingólf, en vándir men fara til heljar ok þaðan í Niflhel; þat er niðr í enn níunda heim.¹¹⁹

Here the humanity is the creation of a single god (*hann gerði manninn*) and he gives to men only one attribute (*qnd*). It is interesting to note that this one attribute is the same that Óðinn gave according to *Vqluspá*. This *qnd* shares several qualities with the Christian soul since it 'er lifa skal ok aldri tynask'. We know of the existence of an afterlife according to the Old Norse Mythology, but this is the only occasion in which the 'breath' or 'life' (*qnd*) is explicitly stated to be immortal. Also 'breath' was the only attribute given to mankind by the Christian God, since Adam came to life after this God breathed into his nose.¹²⁰ Another notorious difference with the Old Norse sources is that, according to the pre-Christian religion, the dwellings of the dead are not so strictly related with the fact that the person's acts might be "rétt" or "vándir". Righteousness and wickedness do not seem to be decisive, in Old Norse mythology, when it comes to choose an afterlife dwelling. We know, for example, that regardless of the dead's ethical behavior "Óðinn á iarla,/ þá er í val falla,/ en Þórr á þræla kyn."¹²¹ Later on, Snorri states that the access to *Gimlé* or *Vingólf* doesn't depend on the righteousness of the people, since "því að hans óskasynir eru allir þeir er í val falla. Þeim skipar han Valhöll og Vingólf, og heita þeir þá einheriar."¹²²

¹¹⁸ Steinsland G and Meulengracht Sørensen P. 1999: 48.

¹¹⁹ *Gylfaginning* 2.

¹²⁰ Cf. *Genesis* 2,7.

¹²¹ *Hárbarðslióð* 24.

¹²² *Gylfaginning* 20.

In the other anthropogonic myths, unlike the one in *Gylfaginning* 2, it is not stated which one of the elements, *qnd*, *oð*, *lá*, or *lito góða* (if any of them) is the one that remains after death. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, the creation of mankind as referred in *Gylfaginning* 2 will be counted on as a Christian interpolation made by Snorri. This is due to its similarity with the Christian tradition as well as to the fact that it differs considerably from what is stated in other sources.

The fourth and last anthropogonic myth is Snorri's second reference to the creation of mankind in *Gylfaginning* 8. It reads like this:

*Þá er þeir gengu með sævar-ströndu Bors-synir, fundu þeir tré tvau ok tóku upp tréin ok sköpuðu af menn; gaf enn fyrsti qnd ok lif, annar vit ok hræring, iii ásjónu, mál ok heyrn ok sjón; gáfu þeim klæði ok nafn; hét karlmaðrinn Askr, en konan Embla, ok ólsk þaðan af mannkindin, sú er byggðin var gefin undir Miðgarði.*¹²³

Despite the fact that *Gylfaginning* 8, just as *Gylfaginning* 2, differs from both versions of *Völuspá*, it does differ in a way in which it does not contradict but complement the information given in both versions of *Völuspá*.

Qnd, the Óðinnic contribution in *Völuspá* is the only gift of the gods that the four sources have in common, and therefore might be interpreted as the most important one. The first of Bor's sons is the one that makes this particular gift and, if we follow *Völuspá*, this same god, who also gives life, corresponds to Óðinn. *Qnd* may well be translated as: 'breath', 'life' and/or 'soul'. Steinsland translates it as 'ánde', 'sinn'¹²⁴ and tells us that "[o]rdet kan også bety skapende energi."¹²⁵ On the other hand, *Vit*, *hræring*, *ásjónu*, *mál*, *heyrn*, *sjón*, *klæði* and *nafn* were not mentioned before within the gods' gifts to mankind. Here mankind is also assigned a living place. But for the purposes of this analysis Snorri makes a contribution that helps us to clear out the primeval substance of mankind: he clears up the fact that these figures were actually 'tré tvau'. *Ask* and *Embla* become in *Gylfaginning* 8, as implied by the proximity of 'ask veit ek standa, / heitir Yggdrasill' in *Völuspá* 19, two trees. It is impossible to know clearly what does *Embla* mean, but now there are enough clues as to assume that, according to Old Norse mythology, mankind is made out of wood.¹²⁶ The gift of a name might be also highly significant to clear out

¹²³ *Gylfaginning* 8.

¹²⁴ Cf. Steinsland G. and Meulengracht Sørensen P. 1999: 48.

¹²⁵ Steinsland G. and Meulengracht Sørensen P. 1999: 48.

¹²⁶ This does not seem to be exceptional in anthropogonic myths, since wood is also the primeval material of mankind in other cultures. "For eksempel i den iranske antropogoni-myten heter det at urmennskene Mashya og Mashyanag oppsto av to trestammer. Hesiod forteller i *Verk og dager* 1.143-145, at Zevs skapte menneskene av asketrær. Tacitus nevner i *Germania* kap. 39 at semnonene trodde menneskene var opstått av trær." (Steinsland, G, 2001; pp 254).

this, since in *Vǫluspá* the gods ‘find Ask and Embla’, while in *Gylfaginning* 8 they find two tree trunks, and then comes the act/gift of naming. It would be the same as saying that in the poem they found an ash and, maybe, an elm, while in Snorri they are two nameless trees, which later are called/identified as an *Ask* and an *Embla*.

The subject matter of this paper is, however, not the living, but the ‘undead’. And in order to understand the origin and the mythological basis that allowed *draugar* to exist in the pre-Christian folklore, it becomes necessary to understand first the nature of life according to the same sources. However, since they are something in-between life and death, it becomes also necessary to understand what death might have consisted in. Lets, then, try to understand the concept of death before returning to the *draugar*.

It is interesting to note that in the sources the act of dying is referred to, among other different ways, as ‘*andast*’ and ‘*láta*’, which are related to *qnd* and *lá* and their lost are related to death. Also ‘loosing/giving-up the *qnd*’ is used, this time in poetry, to signify death, like in *Fóstbrædra saga* XXIV

Þollr, vák eg Þórgrím trola
-þar laut harðr til jarðar-
áðr réðk, odda hríðar,
ótrauðr Loðins dauða;
þar namk Þórkel fjǫrvi,
Þórðr lét qnd enn fjórði,
felldr vas frægr til moldar
*Falgeirr, skǫrungr þeira.*¹²⁷

and in *Þórðar saga hreðu* IX:

Enn hefi ek sex, in svinna
-svellr móðr af því- þella,
goldit gálga valdi,
gullbaugs, jöru drauga;
grund, lét ek Özur öndu,
arms sýnar, þar týna;
lundr var hann lóns inn sjaundi
*logs, pells, veginn, þella.*¹²⁸

However, death is never referred to as loosing *oð*, or *lito góða*. So, we have *qnd*, Óðinn’s gift to mankind, and *lá* as the essences of life; but they are never mentioned together in the act of dying. That is, the ones who die loose either blood or breath, but the form and the ability to reason do not change. Death seems to be a more complicate topic when it comes to the Old Norse set of beliefs than when it comes to a dualistic religion, in which it is believed that the body dies and

¹²⁷ *Fóstbrædra saga* XXIV: 258-59; stanza 29. (The underlining is mine.)

¹²⁸ *Þórðar saga hreðu* IX: 211; stanza 9. (The underlining is mine.)

the soul is immortal. Here we have an anthropogonic myth that has at least five elements as the constituents of life¹²⁹ and the solutions to ‘what is death?’ could be several and lead to as much different kinds of death. Lets study a possible ‘abnormal’ death, like the one that could justify the existence of a *draugr*. So, what happens to those who lose their *lá*, *óð* and *lito góða* but the *qnd* remains in their bodies (in case that could be possible)?

As mentioned before, *qnd* may be translated as ‘breath’, ‘life’, or ‘soul’. Breath is related with the ability to speak or at least produce guttural noises, and this are abilities that the *draugar* preserve after death. This happens to be the gift of the God of Poetry, who, at the same time happens to be the *draugadrottinn*.¹³⁰ It seems that *draugar*, as Óðinn’s protégés are able to keep his gift. This does make sense in the light that those who die and are destined to become *draugar* seem to lose the other gifts that differentiate a mere dry tree from a human being. *Draugar* seem to lose the *lito góða*, since in the instances in which there is a physical description of them, they appear as having lost their human appearances.¹³¹ For example, in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, when Grettir wants to take a look at Glámr, an *aptrgangr*, the farmer warns him: “*Bóndi sagði, at þat var eigi bati, at sjá hann,- "því at hann er ólíkr nqkkurri mannligri mynd."*¹³² This ‘unlikeness’ from mankind may be confirmed, at least, through the description of his face, when “*sá Grettir, at þrællinn rétti inn hqfuðit, ok sýndisk honum afskræmiliga mikit og undarliga stórskorit.*”¹³³ Here it is possible to perceive that *draugr* don’t seem to keep their human form. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, when Þórodd and Arnkell break into the grave of Þórólfr, another *aptrgangr*, in order to bury him somewhere else, they “*finna Þórólfr þar ófúinn, ok var hann nú inn illiligsti.*”¹³⁴ The body, as all of the *draugar*’s bodies, was well preserved, but just the same it resulted repulsive and this can also be due to a loss of human appearance. Even though it might be due to the fact that “[w]hen a human being dies [...] the body that gave comfort to many people while it was alive, provokes horror in the same people after death”¹³⁵ it is a fact that not every single dead body in the sagas causes such a repulsion. The bodies of those who will become a *draugr* loose human appearance from the mere moment of their death. Such, for example, is the case of Þórólfr, who from the same moment of his death (and before becoming an *aptrgangr*) managed to

¹²⁹ That is, namely, a lifeless tree trunk to which the four gifts of the gods are conferred.

¹³⁰ *Ynglinga saga* VII: 18.

¹³¹ Lets just remember that the gods of the Old Norse Pantheon were anthropomorphic.

¹³² *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* XXXV: 119.

¹³³ *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* XXXV: 119.

¹³⁴ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 94-95.

¹³⁵ Caciola, Nancy 1996: 3. (Quoting: *Fasciculus morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher’s Handbook*, i.13, (ed.) Siegfried Wenzel. University Park, 1989: 98.)

scare the people who “*allt var óttafullt, því at qllum þótti óþokki á andláti hans.*”¹³⁶ This reaction may well be due to the loss of ‘something’ human in the corpse, something that ‘normal’ dead do not lose and, therefore its absence triggers panic among the living.

Accordingly, whenever there are adjectives to describe the *draugar*, the following seem to be the most common. When it comes to the description of a *haugbúi* inside their mound they are said to be: “*ógóligir at sjá*”,¹³⁷ “*illiligr at sjá.*”¹³⁸ The description of the *aptrgǫngur* is usually the one quoted above, but apart from that they are usually “*mikinn ok illiligan*”,¹³⁹ their bodies are “*ófuinn*”¹⁴⁰, and they were extremely strong.¹⁴¹ These *draugar* do not seem to have human appearance, they became repulsive due most surely due to the loss of the *lito góða* after death.

When it comes to preserving or losing the *lá* there don’t seem to be lots of evidence as when it comes to evidence for the preservation of the *qnd*. However there is a strong argument that points to *draugar* not preserving it, but it will be exposed later, together with the arguments to prove the absence of *óðr*. First let’s just point out that whenever a *draugr* is decapitated the sagas do not give a picture of a bloody scene, as it usually occurs in regular fights. In the sagas there is not a single description of a bleeding *draugr*. Absence of evidence does not necessarily imply the evidence of absence, but let’s meanwhile analyze one death scene. In *Ljósvetninga saga* XXI, Guðmundr dies while sitting at the table, but continues on moving for a while, and the only symptom of him being dead is his inability to feel warmth: “*Ok kaldr hefir hann nú verit innan, er hann kenndi sín eigi.*”¹⁴² The interpretation of this death scene would depend in what ‘*lá*’ actually means. It is translated as ‘blood’, but it may be metaphoric, and there is still no analysis of the subject. If *lá* can be interpreted as the ability to feel or the ‘blood that confers warmth to the body’, then this incident from *Ljósvetninga saga* would help us to back our theory that *draugar* lose it also.¹⁴³ Steinsland tells us that “*Lodur gir mennesket blod, som må bety livsevne.*”¹⁴⁴ If her interpretation is correct this analysis would be highly simplified, since those who would become a *draugr* would automatically, by the mere act of dying, lose their *lá*.

¹³⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIII: 92.

¹³⁷ *Harðar saga* XV: 41.

¹³⁸ *Bárðar saga* XX: 167.

¹³⁹ *Flóamanna saga* XIII: 255.

¹⁴⁰ *Laxdæla saga* XXIV: 69.

¹⁴¹ The ‘*uppsitjendr*’ and *fyrirburðir* don’t share any of these characteristics due to the reasons that will be explained in their respective chapters. See below, Chapters 4.3 and 4.4.

¹⁴² *Ljósvetninga saga* XXI: 61.

¹⁴³ Though Guðmundr never became a *haugbúar* or an *aptrgangr* he was still moving and talking for a little while after his death.

¹⁴⁴ Steinsland G and Meulengracht Sørensen, P. 1999: 48.

Finally, when it comes to *óðr*, *draugar* do not seem to preserve it. Fritzner renders it as “forstand”,¹⁴⁵ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie as “mind, wit, soul, sense”,¹⁴⁶ and Steinsland as ‘sinn’¹⁴⁷. The loss of mind, reason, can be perceived through the fact that, even though most *draugar* were already troublemakers in life, as revenants they seem to be more difficult to deal with. This loss of *lá* seems to be reflected not only in a change in their psyche but also in their increased strength, maybe due to their rage, after they come back to ‘life’.¹⁴⁸ *Draugar* seem to become more evil and unable to dwell in peace with mankind. So we have, for example, that: “*Eptir þetta deyr Hrappur. Svá var með qllu farit, sem hann hafði fyrir sagt, því að hon treystisk eigi qðru. En svá illr sem hann var viðreignar, þá er hann lifði, þá jók nú miklu við, er hann var dauður, því að hann gekk mjök aprtr.*”¹⁴⁹ Some also act irrationally, maybe driven by some sexual impulse, since they sometimes crawl into someone else’s bed, like Sigríðr did, as reported by Þorsteinn Eiríkson: “*þar væri varla kyrrt, ok húsfreyja vildi færask á fætr og vildi undir klæðin hjá honum; ok er hann kom inn, var hon komin upp á rekkjustokkinn. Þá tók hann hana hqndum ok lagði bolæxi fyrir brjóst henni.*”¹⁵⁰ Or when Klaufi was just killed by his brothers in law, “*Þegar kom Klaufi til sængr Yngvildar, er þeir váru brottu. Hon lét þá kalla á þá bræðr ok hjuggu þeir þá af honum hqfuð ok lqgðu neðan við iljarnar.*”¹⁵¹ Some *draugar* are sexually violent, and during their haunting “*sýndisk Þórólfr oft heima á bænum ok sótti mest að húsfreyju; varð ok mqrqum manni at þessu mein, en henni sjálfri hélt við vitfirring. Svá lauk þessu, at húsfreyja lézk af þessum sq kum.*”¹⁵²

However, *draugar*’s sexual escapades will be dealt with separately, in the chapter devoted to the sexual reasons to come back from the death.¹⁵³ Right now it should be enough to notice the ‘abnormal’ behavior of *draugar*, as well as their violent tendencies. I could say, without fear of generalizing, that *aptrqngur* are irrationally violent and unable to recognize or honour kin or vows. But this behavior can also be extended to some *haugbúar*. One case is narrated in a Heroic Saga, *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*. Here Ásmundr and Aran, two sworn brothers, make a pact in which the one of them who manages to live longer shall be buried with

¹⁴⁵ Fritzner, Johan 1954: ‘óðr’.

¹⁴⁶ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘óðr’.

¹⁴⁷ Steinsland, G. and Meulengracht Sørensen 1999: 14.

¹⁴⁸ The loss of *lá*, reflected in irrational and violent acts added to the gain of a great strength due to the rage could be also the origin of the *berserkir*’s behavior. Both a *berserkr* and a *draugr* were considered to be ‘wild’ and to have a superhuman strength that made them undefeatable.

¹⁴⁹ *Laxdæla saga* XVII: 39.

¹⁵⁰ *Eiríks saga Rauða* VI: 215.

¹⁵¹ *Svarfdæla saga* XVIII: 174.

¹⁵² *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

¹⁵³ See below, Chapter 5.

the corpse of the other for three days. Aran dies and “*Ásmundr lét verpa haug eptir hann, ok setti hjá honum hest hans með söðli ok beizli, merki ok öll hreklæði, hauk ok hund.*”¹⁵⁴ Then Ásmundr had himself buried, and once inside the *haug* this is what he saw:

*En hinu fyrstu nótt reis Aran af stólinum, ok drap haukinn ok hundinn, ok át hvortveggja. Aðra nótt stóð Aran upp, ok drap hestinn, ok sunðraði, ok tók á tannagangi miklum, ok át hestinn, svá blóð fëll um kjapta honum; bauð hann Ásmundi til matar með sër. Hinu þriðju nótt tók Ásmund at syfja, varð hann þá eigi fyrr var við, enn Aran greip í eyrun á honum, ok sleit þau af honum bæði.*¹⁵⁵

The *haugbúi* gets, of course, the usual *haugbúar* treatment and is decapitated and robbed. What is noticeable is the gradual change in Aran’s behavior. The first night he acted almost normally, if eating a hawk and a hound after death could be considered normal, since the description is just that of someone who provides himself with food. But by the second night he begins already to lose its mind. This night he begins to behave violently, and the description made of him becomes more grotesque: “*svá blóð fëll um kjapta honum*” while eating, plus the way in which he eats the horse using big bites (*tannagangi miklum*) of flesh depict Aran far away from human conduct: savagely eating horse flesh in an brutal way. However he still remained a bit human and showed some good manners, since he offered Ásmundr a share of the rations, but he obviously remained silent. The third night Aran acted more savagely, this time becoming violent not against an animal, but against his sworn brother and, most probably, with the intention of eating him. The *draugr*’s conduct seems to gradually get away from any human behavior, and night after night he gets away from the social conventions, it just became progressively wilder. Aran lost his *óðr* as most *draugar* did.

This same story is told by Saxo Gramaticus, and his version¹⁵⁶ offers an example of the belief that *draugar* did not have blood (*lá*). In the *Liber Quintus* of *Gesta Danorum* the plot changes somehow ‘Aran’ became ‘Asuithus’ and ‘Ásmundr’ is called ‘Asmundus’. In this version Asmundus seems to have been buried permanently with his sworn brother and not for only three days. Some time after the burial Eiricus and his men decide to break into Asuithus’ mound in order to rob the treasure. Once the hole is made, to their surprise, they did not produce a treasure but found instead a man with an

inuitata facie territi defunctumque redisse rati, proiecta reste, in diversa fugere. Quippe Asmundus tætro oris habitu ac veluti funebri quodam tabo obsitus videbatur. Qui fugientes revocare conatus, vociferari cæpit falso eos formidare vivum. Quem videns

¹⁵⁴ *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* VII: 378. [VII: 338].

¹⁵⁵ *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* VII: 378. [VII: 338].

¹⁵⁶ Jón H. Aðalsteinsson points that this is “[t]he oldest written source in which a living man struggles with the dead in his mound” (Cf. Jón H. Aðalsteinsson 1998: 146).

Eiricus præcipue cruentati oris eius imaginem mirabatur: in vultu siquidem profluus || emicabat sanguis. Quippe Asuithus noctibus redivivus crebra colluctatione lævam illi aurem abruperat, fœdumque indigestæ ac crudæ cicatricis spectaculum apparebat. Igitur a circumstantibus accepti vulneris causam referre iussus sic orsus est fari.^{157 158}

So we have that the mound breakers began to flee, since they believed that Asmundus was a *draugr* due to his hideous appearance, but two things made them change their mind and recognize him as a living person. The first thing is that ‘*qui fugientes revocare conatus, vociferari cæpit falso eos formidare vivum.*’ At his calling, at least Eiricus turned to look and notices the second, and most important thing in order to acknowledge him as a living man: ‘*videns Eiricus præcipue cruentati oris eius imaginem mirabatur: in vultu siquidem profluus || emicabat sanguis.*’ Eiricus was surprised, marveled (*mirabatur*) when he saw that the man was bleeding because he expected him to be a *draugr*, and the blood proved that he was alive, but living in a mound. The *mirabatur* may be due to the fact that he was alive (bleeding) or to the fact that a man was living in a mound. The first option seems more plausible, since, at the sight of blood they ceased to be scared and asked him about the origin of his wound. If it bleeds, it is alive, or at least preserves *lá*.¹⁵⁹ This act of bleeding, then, is what distinguishes a living person from a walking dead.

However, *draugar*’s characteristics lead me to think that they are creatures whose existence becomes possible through the conservation of two of the five original component of human life. That is, namely, they keep only their *draugar* (that is the tree trunk, the body) and their *qnd* (that is the *draugardrottinn*’s gift). The preservation of the body is the most obvious since their nature is depicted as being physical, so lets analyze some incidents, apart from the ones in the anthropogonic myth, that support the idea that wood is the element into which life is conveyed.

In *Pátrr Þorleifs jarlaskalds* there is a unique occurrence which, added to the given facts, might help us to understand the ‘wooden’ or ‘*draugr*’ nature of mankind-life. In the *pátrr*,

¹⁵⁷ Saxo Gramaticus. *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*. Liber Quintus XI: 136.

¹⁵⁸ “They drew up the basket expecting a pile of money and were aghast at the extraordinary sight of the unknown man they had pulled out; thinking the dead had returned to life, they flung away the rope and shot off in all directions. Indeed Asmund was hideous in his facial appearance and seemed to be plastered with gore like some kind of corpse. He tried to call them back, shouting that he was alive and their fears unfounded. Erik gazed at him and marveled at the sight of blood spurting out and flowing over his stained features; for Asvith had returned to life in the nights, and struggling frequently with Asmund had torn off his left ear, leaving a raw, unhealed scar, loathsome to look on. The bystanders asked him how he had received the wound, and this was his reply.” (Saxo Gramaticus *The History of the Danes*. Book V: XI: 151. (trans.) Peter Fisher.)

¹⁵⁹ In the saga corpus analyzed in this paper there is only one instance of a bleeding ‘undead’, in *Færeyinga saga* XLI: 80, and that occurs in a necromancy ritual in which the ‘spirits’ of the dead are conjured to find out the way in which they died. As discussed later, this case refers to a non-corporeal revenant. See below, Chapter 4.4.

through some magical rites, Earl Hakon brought a man-like wooden figure to life. Its creation is narrated in the following words:

*en er hann fek þa frett er honum likade let hann taka æinn rekabut ok gera ór tremann. ok med frokyngi ok atkuædum jalls en tröllskap ok fitons anda þeirra systra let han drepa einn mann ok taka ór hiartat ok lata j þenna tremann. ok færdu sidan j fqt ok gafu nafnn ok kqlludu Þorgard ok mognudu hann med sua myklum fiandans krafti at hann gek ok mælti vid menn.*¹⁶⁰

In this act of bringing a *tremann* to life there are several coincidences with the moment in which the three gods gave life to mankind. The earl gives to this man-like wooden figure a heart¹⁶¹ (*hiartat*), which could be seen as giving it blood (*lá*). Just like in *Gylfaginning* 8, he was provided with a name¹⁶² (*gafu nafnn*), and finally he was given also movement and speech (*mognudu hann med sua myklum fiandans krafti at hann gek ok mælti vid menn*), which would correspond to *qnd*. Nothing is said about his mind or wit, but since it was able to recognize his mission and its victim, he might have been given some intelligence as well. This implies that through magic, a wooden figure could be brought to life by giving it the same attributes that the three gods gave to the primordial tree-trunks

He was also given shape, since before giving life to it he shaped it as a man (*gera ór tremann*) but it is not mentioned that this creature was given *lito góða*. It was given just a human shape, but not a human appearance. So, as it might be expected, its physical appearance is just like that of any *draugr*: “*sa var mikill uexsti ok jllzigr j bragde.*”¹⁶³ And just some *draugar* do, when in danger, this *tremann* dissolved into the earth: “*en er hann fek lagit hio hann til Þorgarz en hann steyptizt j jordina nidr sua at j jliarnar uar at sia.*”¹⁶⁴ This ability of melting into the ground is more common in the *draugar* of the Heroic Sagas than in the ones of the Family Sagas.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ *Þáttur Þorleifjarlaskalds*: 213.

¹⁶¹ Ellis points that the heart provided to this *tremann* was also made out of wood: “the wooden man made by Jarl Hakon in whom a wooden heart was placed” (Ellis H.R. 1943: 158), but the textual evidence “*let han drepa einn mann ok taka ór hiartat ok lata j þenna tremann*” as seen above shows that the heart actually belonged to a living man.

¹⁶² The name assigned to the *tremann*, Þorgard, is conspicuously similar to that of Þorgerd Hqlgabrúðr, a minor goddess to which the same Jarl Hakon was so devoted that she was called his wife. In *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* he is supposed to have her image in a temple, and it was later destroyed by Óláfr. (Cf. *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* 326.)

¹⁶³ *Þáttur Þorleifjarlaskalds*: 214.

¹⁶⁴ *Þáttur Þorleifjarlaskalds*: 214.

¹⁶⁵ This would be an interesting point if we compare it with the final verse of *Vq̄luspá*: *nú mun hón sökqvaz*. Many critics see in this *vq̄lva* a spirit that Óðinn raised from the dead to interrogate her. Her “sinking down” (*sökkqvaz*) could be interpreted as the action of a *draugr* whenever it finds itself in trouble. The question, then, would be ‘why in this precise moment did the *vq̄lva* sink into the ground?’

There is other occurrence of a *tremann* is in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, where one appears telling his story, which occurred in ancient times, but there is nothing said about its origin, though in his story it told its end: it was killed by Ragnarr long ago.¹⁶⁶ Regarding this *tremann* Chadwick's points that

[i]t is interesting to note that the verse recited by Ögváldr in his barrow, which is quoted in the text of *Hálfs Saga*, is found, with only slight variations, as the first verse of a poem chanted by a gigantic *trémathr* (lit. 'a wooden man'), who is discovered on the island of Samsey by the retinue of a certain Ögmundur enn Danski in the closing chapter of the *Ragnars saga Lothbrókar ok Sona Hans*.¹⁶⁷

The *tremann* is, actually, a *draugr* itself since it was killed several years before its emergence. It is not said if when it was killed it was a living person or if it was a creature like the one that Earl Hakon created. If the second possibility is the right one, then it may just have another instance of a human being, unmentioned in this case, creating life out of a wooden figure. But if when it was killed it was a living person, then it becomes a case in which '*tremann*' is used as a synonym of '*draugr*'. This would imply that my theory is right and there is an association between the wooden nature of mankind and the idea of *draugar* being some sort of 'living' pieces of wood preserving at least one of the gifts of the gods. This last assumption seems to be correct, since the verses that the *tremann* said are connected, at least in the mind of one saga-writer, with the verse said by a *draugr* inside his grave-mound.

The last occasion in which a *tremann* makes an appearance is in *Olafs Saga Tryggvasonar*. Here there are actually two tree-men, they are not and were never alive, but they were created as substitutes of dead men. This occurs after Freyr's death, when no one wanted to go with him to the *haug* as suttees. The incident is reported as follows: "*þa er Freyr var heygdr uillde æingi lifande madr vera hea (honum) ok þui gerdu Suiar tremenn .ij. ok settu þa j haug hea honum þuiat þeir hugdu at honum mundi gaman þikia at léika ser at þeim.*"¹⁶⁸ Two *tremenn* were offered to him instead of corpses, and they considered that he would not dislike the bargain. That might be due to the fact that the two corpses were considered to be, just like the *tremenn*, pieces of wood and thus they decided to play a trick on Freyr offering him some lifeless bodies different from the ones he expected.

As mentioned before, *draugar* (especially *haugbúar*) preserve Óðinn's gift through their ability to produce poetry. Gunnar and Skarphedim do so in *Brennu-Njals saga*,¹⁶⁹ and Þorleif, in

¹⁶⁶ *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* 21: 298-99. [20: 284-85].

¹⁶⁷ Chadwick. N.K. 1946: 60.

¹⁶⁸ *Olafs saga Tryggvasonar* 323: 403.

¹⁶⁹ *Brennu-Njals saga* LXXVIII and CXXX.

Pátr Þorleifs jarlaskalds can even convey the poetic gift to a shepherd.¹⁷⁰ Klaufi, in *Svarfdæla saga* produces only one verse before dying, but in his multiple years as a *draugr* he communicated mainly in verse.¹⁷¹ Something similar does Soti the *haugbúi* in *Harðar saga og Hólmverja*,¹⁷² who also communicates mainly in verse. I will not discuss here or in any other place the possibility that they communicate in verse because the stanzas they produced might have been preserved due to oral tradition. That surpasses the purpose of this discussion. What matters here is the fact that poetry seems to be the natural means of communication of *draugar*, that is whenever they decide to communicate. This faculty, again, relates them with the *draugadrottinn*'s gift of *qnd*. Nora Chadwick, when analyzing these verses, found them related to the death-song tradition and proposes that

these songs may have been chanted within the tomb in the case of those who entered the tomb alive, it would be by a natural transition that poetry and song should come to be associated with the barrow, and the power to inspire with similar gifts those who came to visit them. By a similar association of ideas the *draugr* who emerged would be regarded as a repository of the stories of the Heroic Age, to which period the custom probably dates back.¹⁷³

This would explain why the production of poetry and the ability to confer the gift of speech is associated particularly with the *haugbúar* and not with other kinds of *draugar*.

Sometimes, however, *draugar* do not communicate in verse, but just in plain prose. And when they do so it is because they will probably make some prophetic statements.

It seems that *draugar* have the ability to keep their *qnd* because they are part of Óðinn's responsibility. He himself states in *Hávamál* 157 how he has the ability to make dead men move and talk:

Þat kann ek it tólpta,
 ef ek sé á tré uppi
 váfa virgilná
 svá ek ríst
 ok í rúnom fák,
 at sá gengr gumi
 ok mælir við mik.¹⁷⁴

He has this ability because he can confer them whatever a dead body needs to talk and walk, and this might be the *qnd*, which is actually in his hands to give freely. If this is the case, and it was the belief that *qnd* gave the ability to walk, speak, and in general all the attributes related to

¹⁷⁰ *Pátr Þorleifs jarlaskalds*: 214-215.

¹⁷¹ *Svarfdæla saga* XVII ff.

¹⁷² *Harðar saga og Hólmverja* XV.

¹⁷³ Chadwick N.K. 1946: 116.

¹⁷⁴ *Hávamál* 157.

Óðinn, then it comes to no surprise that these are the only vital functions that *draugar* have. This would make sense with my theory that *draugar* are the dead men who somehow manage to preserve only their body and their *qnd*.

If our fore mentioned arguments are correct, so far we have that *draugar* seem to lose both of Lóðurr's gifts, *lá* and *lito góða* as well as *óðr*, Hœnir's gift. *Lá* may be lost through the absence of sensibility, lack of bleeding or just by the mere act of dying, which deprives a corpse of the ability to 'live'. *Lito góða* they don't have since *draugar* are hideous to look at and they also lose their human appearance (therefore they lose also the gods-like look). *Óðr* they lose together with their capability of behaving like humans and with their lack of social abilities. Though its loss becomes more obvious in their irrational acts and violence. So, *draugar* would seem to be this original tree trunks who, after dying preserve only the Óðinnic gift: *qnd*. And it is preserved in their ability to move, talk and in some cases, recite poems. They seem to be an 'ask' or an 'embla' without *lito góða*, *óðr* and *lá*, but only with a soul, a breath, an *qnd*. And this would explain why their bodies never decompose in the graves.

Before concluding with the analysis of the nature of *draugar* lets see the occurrences of the word in the text corpus that was analyzed. The term *draugr* or its derivatives appear 21 times in poetry,¹⁷⁵ while in prose the word is used 20 times in only 7 of the sources. The occurrences of the word in the prose do not pose any interpretation problems. Here *draugr* can be clearly translated as a 'revenant', a 'corporeal ghost' or 'walking corpse' (for the words set in context see Appendix 1b). In skaldic poetry it appears in the following forms (the number of occurrences appears between parentheses, for the stanzas in which they appear see Appendix 1a): **1.** - *Draugr* (3); **2.** - *Éldraug(a)r* (3); **3.** - *Draug* (2); **4.** - *Herðidraugar* (2); **5.** - *Berdraugar* (1); **6.** - *Draugi* (1); **7.** - *Draugum* (1); **8.** - *Drauga* (1); **9.** - *Gervidraugum* (1); **10.** - *Hyrdraugar* (1); **11.** - *Jódraugar* (1); **12.** - *Lyftidraugar* (1); **13.** - *Óðaldraugi* (1); **14.** - *Vættidraugr* (1); **15.** - *Draughúsa* (1).

Of these 21 cases only 4 (in stanzas 1-4 in Appendix 1a) can be literally translated as "revenant" or 'walking corpse'. These are *draugum*, *draug*, and the occurrence of 'draugr' in *Grettis saga* XVIII. Crozier grouped nine of the other occurrences of 'draugr' according to the *kenniorð* with which it is combined in the kennings for man.¹⁷⁶ He solved them as follows: 'orlygis draugr' 'éldraugar atgeira' and 'Ála éldraugr galtar'¹⁷⁷ mean 'battle-draugr'; 'hjqr

¹⁷⁵ It does appear 22, indeed, but in one occasion the same stanza is repeated in two different sources: *Hrómundar þáttur halta* V: 313 and *Landnámabók*, S168, H137: 203-04.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Crozier, Alan 1987: 2-3.

¹⁷⁷ Quoted, respectively, in stanzas 5, 6 and 7, in Appendix 1a.

*berdraugar*¹⁷⁸ is solved as ‘sword-draugr’; ‘*draugr flatvallar bauga*’¹⁷⁹ is solved as ‘shield-draugr’; ‘*draugr Heðins váða*’¹⁸⁰ is solved as ‘armour-draugr’; ‘*hirðidraugar seims*’ and ‘*fornbauga hyrdraugar heslis*’¹⁸¹ are solved as ‘gold-draugr’; and finally ‘*bands jódraugar landa*’¹⁸² is solved as ‘ship-draugr’.¹⁸³

The remaining occurrences of ‘*draugr*’ in skaldic poetry could be interpreted as follows¹⁸⁴: ‘ring-draugr’¹⁸⁵ for ‘*jöru drauga*’;¹⁸⁶ ‘sea-draugr’¹⁸⁷ both for ‘*Ála éldrauga ske vélum*’;¹⁸⁸ and for ‘*geig vann eg gervidraugum*’¹⁸⁹ ‘sword-draugr’¹⁹⁰ for ‘*Hlógu herðidraugar hvinnendr of sök minni*’;¹⁹¹ ‘shield-draugr’¹⁹² both for ‘*vættidraugr*’;¹⁹³ and ‘*óðaldraugi*’;¹⁹⁴ ‘gold-draugr’¹⁹⁵ for ‘*Laugast lyftidraugar*’;¹⁹⁶ and finally ‘*draughúsa*’¹⁹⁷ can be translated as ‘*draugr-house*’.

According to Crozier, there are have six *kenning* groups for man in which *draugr* is the *stofnorð*: Battle-draugr, Sword-draugr, Shield-draugr, Armour-draugr, Gold-draugr and Ship-draugr. And most of the cases not analyzed by him seem to fit into this grouping, the only exceptions being ‘ring-draugr’ as a kenning for woman and ‘draugr-house, which is not a *kenning* but a compound word.¹⁹⁸ Now, Crozier leaves the term ‘*draugr*’ without translation because the purpose of his paper is precisely find a definition for it when it comes to poetry. As I have already mentioned, scholars make a distinction between ‘*draugr*’ used as a kenning for ‘man’ and ‘*draugr*’ as the Old Norse corporeal ghost or revenant. This brings us to my point of departure, when Alan Crozier proposed among the several possibilities for *draugr*-kennings that:

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in stanza 8, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in stanza 9, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁸⁰ Quoted in stanza 10, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁸¹ Quoted in stanzas 11 and 12, respectively, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁸² Quoted in stanza 13, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁸³ Cf. Crozier, Alan 1987: 2-3.

¹⁸⁴ Due to my lack of experience translating skaldic poetry I preferred to render the translations of the rest of the kennings as they appear in *The Complete Sagas of the Icelanders*. I will only render the translation of the *kenniorð* that is attached to *draugr*.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *The Saga of Thord Menace* 9: 387.

¹⁸⁶ Quoted in stanza 14, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *The Saga of the People of Svarfardal* 21: 181 and *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers* 24: 391-91.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in stanza 15, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in stanza 16, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *The Saga of Havard of Isafford* 13: 335.

¹⁹¹ Quoted in stanza 17, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁹² Cf. *Njal's Saga* 78: 91 and *The Saga of the People of Eyri* 19: 149.

¹⁹³ Quoted in stanza 18, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in stanza 19, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. *The Tale of the Mountain-Dweller*: 445.

¹⁹⁶ Quoted in stanza 20, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in stanza 21, in Appendix 1a.

¹⁹⁸ The translations of *draugr* given in *The Complete Sagas of the Icelanders* vary from ‘man’, to ‘king’ to ‘dry-log’.

“*Draugr* could simply be the common Old Norse word for ‘ghost’ or ‘mound dweller’, used in a figurative sense typical of skaldic diction. ‘Battle-Ghost’ would be an exceptional kenning for warrior, but not wholly inappropriate.”¹⁹⁹ I would like to propose, in the light of the evidence given above, that the word ‘*draugr*’ both in skaldic poetry and in prose has only one meaning. That is ‘tree-trunk’, since it seems to be a proper *stafnorð* to describe one of the characteristics of the ‘man’ or ‘warrior’, which it represents in all the *kennings* that it is used in. Also, when it is used in prose, as ‘physical revenant’, ‘tree-trunk’ seems to be an accurate translation, since it is used as a term to name the ‘animated corpses’, which in according to the Old Norse anthropogonic myth were nothing but a piece of wood, empty from most of the gods-gifts that made it, while alive, a human being.

Following both *Vǫluspá*’s and Snorri’s versions of the anthropogonic myth, added to the information provided by these kennings, it seems that part of the nature of mankind is that of a tree. In Old Norse myth a living person is nothing but a dry trunk with the added properties of *qnd*, *óðr*, *lá* and *lito góða*. One property of mankind is that of being an ‘*ask*’ or an ‘*embla*’, or in other words, an ‘animated’ piece of wood. This leads me to several assumptions about the Old Norse ‘*draugr*’. First, it would seem that the ‘*draugr*’ as a ‘corporeal ghost’ would be this animated piece of wood, which at the moment of dying for some reasons kept its *qnd*. This according to the Old Norse perception of the human nature would lead it to be closer to a corpse than to a human being, and a corpse was a tree-trunk that lost its god-given attributes. Then I propose that the ‘*draugr*’ which is translated as ‘corporeal-ghost’ is a word that does really mean ‘tree-trunk. So, following this theory, in the instances in which ‘*draugr*’ (as ‘corporeal ghost’) is referred to as so, the word is actually descriptive about the nature of the creature: a tree with only *qnd*. This might be due to the fact that people needed a word to define or describe these particular Norse revenants, and they chose the descriptive solution. The most appropriate way of naming them would have been one that agreed with the Norse perception of the world, and one that defined them through naming. This theory would also agree with the traditional translation of the ‘*draugr*’ kennings for man in which the *stafnorð draugr* means ‘tree’ or ‘tree-trunk’. This last idea is reinforced by the fact that the *stafnorð* is supposed to describe a property of the thing that it is portraying.

¹⁹⁹ Crozier, Alan 1987: 11.

Chapter 4

Different Kinds of *Draugar*

If *draugar* were here analyzed all together, as belonging to the same group, the results of this study would not differ much from those of the previous papers on the subject. The conclusions would be that roles of the Old Norse ‘undead’ seem to follow some patterns when it came to their activities and their corporeality, but there would be several exceptions. *Draugar* are some times scary and ride roofs while others happily recite verses on their mounds. Others come back in large groups to attack a settlement or to just to sit silently in front of a fire. Some would be active only in their mounds, while others would never stay inside their graves or would not have been buried at all. All this dissimilar behavior could be solved, then, arguing that there are some irregular cases that escape from the general rules. And then, as the number of cases analyzed grew, the exceptions would grow as well.

My belief is that, in previous research, the realm of the ‘undead’ has been oversimplified, mainly by trying to fit all the *draugar* together in one box. However, the realm of the ‘undead’ is not as simple as previous research has shown it to be. There are several different characteristics in *draugar* episodes that reveal series of patterns that create distinctions between them. We would still need one box to fit them in, but it should have different compartments in order to avoid generalizations. ‘*Draugar*’, as I proposed in the previous chapter, refers to the ‘undead’ in general since it is used to name a lifeless body that remains animated. It makes reference to the primordial tree-trunk, and it was used to name, by extension, those creatures that lost most of the components of human life. But there is no reason to presuppose that the Old Norse imagination conceived that the ‘undead’ manifested themselves only in one way.²⁰⁰ As I will show in the following pages ‘*draugar*’ is a collective noun, used to describe several creatures with different attributes, and being physical revenants is one of the few characteristics that they share.

In order to do this study I grouped the different *draugar* episodes that occur in the sources according to the several different aspects in which the revenants differ. I paid especial attention to the way in which they are named. But I also studied their social status; their physical description; their burial site; the location, circumstances and way in which they manifest themselves; their

²⁰⁰ In modern folklore, for example, the pantheon of the ‘undead’ comprehends several different possible groups of creatures, each one with its own characteristics and behavior, as it is possible to find out in bookshops and movie theatres. Contemporary revenants vary from vampires to werewolves, to zombies and mummies among the corporeal ones; and ghosts and poltergeists among the non-corporeal ones.

attitude towards the living and the attitude of the living towards them; and the way in which the living get rid of them. Grouping them according to their previous characteristics I found out that there seem to be four different ways to ‘undie’. But my main focus was the linguistical marker attached to each one of them, since in the sources there is also a difference in the way to name the members of each group of *draugar*, and there is a great coherence and continuity in the naming, description, activities and context of each *draugar* group.

First there those revenants that stay in their mounds, referred in literature as ‘*haugbúar*’ or ‘*kumlbúar*’. In the following I will refer to them only as ‘*haugbúar*’ or ‘mound-dwellers’ in general. A second kind consists of the ones who ‘live’ only outside their graves. Their main activity is, in one way or another, to terrorize the living. In literature they are referred to as ‘*aptrgǫngur*’. The *draugar* in the third group are not connected with a noun in particular and there are not so many instances of them. They are identified basically for being the newly dead, who stood up after dead in order to make a point and then never come back. The ‘undead’ in the fourth group are referred to as ‘*fyriřburðir*’ and, in contrast with the ones in the previous groups, are of an ethereal nature. In this chapter I will study each one of these four groups separately, in order to find their typology.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen proposes “a method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender”.²⁰¹ That is precisely what I intend to in the following pages. The method being the analysis of the characteristics of each of the *draugar* groups. The purpose being to bring some light to the culture and mentality that created such revenants, studying the social and/or religious factors that lay behind their construction.

²⁰¹ Cohen, Jeffrey J 1996: 3

4.1. - *Haugbúar*: The Honorable *Draugar*

*en fyrir því at ek veit, að þat fé er illa komit, er fólgt er í jqrðu eða í hauga borit, þá mun ek ekki gefa þér hér skuld fyrir, með því at þú færðir mér.
(Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar XVIII)*

Lets begin this study of the ‘undead’ that continue their existence in Miðgarðr by analyzing those who dwell in their burial site. As mentioned before, they can be referred to both as ‘*haugbúi*’ or ‘*kumlbúi*’²⁰² and very few times ‘*jorðbúi*’. Since the nouns appear to be interchangeable,²⁰³ in the future I will refer to them simply as ‘*haugbúi*’ or ‘mound-dweller’. First I will analyze the social provenance of these creatures and the qualities attributed to the grave-mounds, and then I will proceed with the definition of the typology of the *haugbúar*.

It is quite obvious that in order to be buried in a grave-mound, which probably required several days to be built and included costly burial goods, and occasionally a ship, in the company of some sacrificed animals or even people, the deceased must have had a social status that allowed his relatives to bury him in such a sophisticated way. The ownership of a burial mound, according to saga literature, implied a high rank, and no *þræll* or freedman could afford (or deserve) one. Brøndsted mentions that ship-burials were reserved for the high-class, and that “[d]en anden form for nordisk høvdingebegravelse er det store trækammer, undertiden ligesom skibsgraven dækket af en svær jordhøj, undertiden af en lavere høj, og ofte lagt helt under flad mark.”²⁰⁴ In the Eddic poems the social differentiation after death can be perceived in *Hárbarðslióð 24* when *Hárbarðr* makes fun out of Þórr because “*Óðinn á iarla,/ þá er í val falla,/ en Þórr á þræla kyn.*”²⁰⁵ And *Rígsþula* exposes the sacral origin of the different social classes.²⁰⁶ Social differentiation was the rule of the day in the Old Norse society, and if their stratified perception of society was present even in their pantheon²⁰⁷ it should be expected to find it also in their supernatural beings. *Jarla* and *þrælla*, warriors and freedmen, poets and peasants don’t seem to

²⁰² Fritzner lists also the form ‘*kumlbúi*’ where ‘*kumbl*’ is a variant of ‘*kuml*’. (Cf. Fritzner, Johan 1954: ‘*kumlbúi*’.)

²⁰³ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie defines both ‘*haugbúi*’ and ‘*kumlbúi*’ as “cairn dweller”, while Fritzner simply defines ‘*kumlbúi*’ as ‘*haugbúi*’. (Cf. Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘*haugbúi*’ and ‘*kumlbúi*’; and Fritzner, Johan 1954: ‘*haugbúi*’ and ‘*kumlbúi*’.)

²⁰⁴ Brøndsted, Johannes 1960: 250.

²⁰⁵ *Hárbarðslióð 24*.

²⁰⁶ Cf. *Rígsþula* 1-48.

²⁰⁷ For further discussion about this topic refer to: Vestergaard, Torben A. (1991) *Marriage Exchange and Social Structure in Old Norse Mythology*, in *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*. (ed) Ross Samson. Cruithne Press, Glasgow. Pp 21-34; and Steinsland, Gro. (1992) *Die mythologische Grundlage für die nordische Königsideologie*, in *Germanische Religionsgeschichte: Quellen und Quellenprobleme*. (ed) Heinrich Beck et al. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin & New York. pp 736-751.

have the same status after dead, neither in their burials, in the Otherworld²⁰⁸ or within Miðgarðr. During their lives it is known that “the Norwegian penalties for manslaughter depend upon the social status of the victim”²⁰⁹ and at the moment of burial “the heathen graves betray class and sex differences, judging from the grave goods [...] The location of the graves in the cemetery was also determined on the basis of social status.”²¹⁰ Accordingly, if any of them were to remain ‘undead’ it shall be expected of them to behave in a way, and dwell in a place, that conforms to the status they had when alive. Therefore, in the occasions in which *haugbúar* appear in the sources they belong to the higher strata of society and, consequently, they behave as is expected from their previous life: nobly, heroically and poetically.²¹¹

Also those who stayed dwelling inside their grave-mounds instead of going to live with the gods still enjoyed the good will of the gods. For example, after the death of Þorgrím it is said that “*aldri festi snæ útan ok sunnan á haugi Þorgríms ok eigi fraus; ok gátu menn þess til, at hann myndi Frey svá ávarðr fyrir blótin, at hann myndi eigi vilja, at frøri á milli þeira.*”²¹² It is also interesting to notice in this quote that the grave-mound was not considered to be an obstacle between Þorgrím and Frey, but the snow was. Therefore, the grave-mound could have been actually a link between both worlds.

A good example of the role of the grave-mound as a link between the *haugbúi* and the gods is that of Helgi Hundingsbani. After his death a “*Haugr var gqrr eptir Helga. En er hann kom til Valhallar, þá bauð Óðinn hánom qllo at ráða með sér.*”²¹³ Helgi did accept the ‘burden’ of being a leader of men in his afterlife, which also points to the continuity of social status after death. But even though he was ruling in Valhǫll he was also seen in *Miðgarðr* sharing Óðinn’s role as a *draugardrottinn*: “*Ambótt Sigrúnar gekk um aptan hiá haugi Helga ok sá at Helgi reið haugsins með marga menn.*”²¹⁴ The point is that, for Helgi Hundingsbani, the burial mound appears as an overpass between *Miðgarðr* and Valhǫll or, as he himself called it before riding

²⁰⁸ In *Saga Gautreks konungs* it is stated that “*vill faðir minn eigi tæpiligar launa þrælnum þann góðvilja, at hann ætlaði reka þik or dyrum, enn nú njóti hann sælu með honnum, þikist han ok vist vita, at Óðinn mun eigi gánga í mót þrælnum, nema hann sé í hans föruneysi.*” (*Saga Gautreks konungs* I:8. [1: 6]. This reveals the high social status of those admitted in Valhǫll, confirming what we have learned in *Hárbarðslióð*.

²⁰⁹ *Medieval Scandinavia* 1993: ‘*Social Structure*’.

²¹⁰ *Medieval Scandinavia* 1993: ‘*Social Structure*’.

²¹¹ Following Steblin Kamenskij, the discussion of “good” or “moral” behaviour is independent from the fact that they kill or have killed or that they are morally correct from a Catholic point of view. What matters is that the *haugbúar* follow an ethical code that was considered as “noble” or “dignified” in the Old Norse society. (For further reference on the topic see Steblin Kamenskij’s (1973) “What is Good and What is Evil” in *The Saga Mind*. (trans.) Kenneth H. Ober. Odense University Press. Odense. pp. 96-122.)

²¹² *Gísla saga Súrssonar* XVIII: 57.

²¹³ *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*: 38.

²¹⁴ *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*: 39.

inside it never to come back, a “*vindhiálms brúar*.”²¹⁵ A ‘sky bridge’²¹⁶ to Helgi appears just as a mere “*draughúsa*”²¹⁷ to the living, which in this instance might have not been acquainted with the borderline, or liminal, qualities of at least this mound in particular.

In *Þorsteins þáttr bæjarmagns*²¹⁸ we find another instance of a journey to the underworld (*heiminum neðra*²¹⁹) connected with a mound. Þorsteinn went to a mound where he saw a boy talking to his mother, who was inside it. The boy asked her for his *krókastaf* and his *bandvettlinga* because he wanted to go to the underworld. They emerge from the mound and the boy began his journey, riding the *krókastaf*. Then Þorsteinn went and repeated the boy’s words on top of the mound and got the same result, and started riding after the boy. After a long journey they arrived to the underworld, where there were many people celebrating.²²⁰ Whether the mound itself was the bridge to the underworld or just a way to get the necessary instruments to get to it, the case is that in both instances there is a strong implication of the mound as being a passage to the realm of the dead.

There seems to be something preternatural in the grave-mounds since we know that they were used as sources of inspiration and of prophetic dreams, as the sources attest that people used to go and sleep on them in search of inspiration or hoping for an answer to their questions.²²¹ Maybe it was their condition as a bridge to the realm of the dead what impelled people to go and sit or sleep on them. By its proximity with the Otherworld they may be able to transmit some of the goods that are associated with it. There is an event that associates the grave-mound with some kind of religious activity when in *Guta saga* is stated “*Firir þan tima ok lengi eptir siþan troþu menn a hult ok a hauga, vi ok stafgarþa ok a haiþin gub*.”²²² But again, the tradition of sitting on a mound just as the one of being buried in one seems to be reserved to the higher class since we find that “the custom of sitting on a mound to be restricted to kings in their official capacity.”²²³

²¹⁵ *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*: 49.

²¹⁶ My Translation.

²¹⁷ *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*: 51.

²¹⁸ Not included in Rafn’s edition of the Heroic sagas, but only in Guðni Jónsson’s.

²¹⁹ *Þorsteins þáttr bæjarmagns II*: 322.

²²⁰ Cf. *Þorsteins þáttr bæjarmagns II*: 322-24.

²²¹ For a more detailed study on the tradition of sitting on a mound, see Dror Segev’s (2001) *Medieval Magic and Magicians –in Norway and Elsewhere: Based Upon 12th-15th Centuries Manuscript and Runic Evidence* ch. 6.- *Native Lore and Native Magicians*. pp 155-88.

²²² *Guta saga* 1: 4.

²²³ Ellis , Hilda R. 1943: 105.

There is only one instance of a member of the lower class sitting on a mound,²²⁴ he was not expecting inspiration, but the sole fact of being there provided it. This occurred to a shepherd, in *Páttir Þorleifs jarlaskalds*, who usually sits on Þorleif's mound to compose poetry “*en sakir þess at han var ekki skalld ok han hafde þeirrar listar æigi feingit fek han ekki kuedit.*”²²⁵ As it will be pointed out below, the *haugbúar* have a rather lazy or peaceful predisposition, and only come into action when their patience comes to a limit. And precisely this is what happened to Þorleif, he got fed up with the shepherd's mumbling and, in a semi-conscious dream, comes out of the mound and “*sidan togar hann a honum tunguna ok quad visu.*”²²⁶ He told the shepherd that if he managed to remember the stanza he would become a good poet, which indeed happened. After all, the *draugar*, as explained in Chapter 3, are associated with some of the characteristics of Óðinn, their lord, and it seems that the *haugbúar* could transmit some of the Óðinnic gifts, or at least they could convey the gift of poetry²²⁷. This would explain that

[t]he gift of poetic inspiration and eloquence associated with the *haugbúi* and the barrow is closely connected with other supernatural gifts, such as the power of prophecy and second sight, or the power to beget offspring. These Gifts, strangely enough, seem sometimes to go hand in hand with the poetry and eloquence.²²⁸

The burial mound represented a bridge between this and the Otherworld, most certainly with Ásgarðr itself. Accordingly the most appropriate inhabitant of this liminal region had to be a creature that shared both realms. Therefore the *haugbúi* should be neither alive nor dead but both, not in Ásgarðr or in Miðgarðr but in between them. “The monster polices the borders of the possible”²²⁹ says Cohen. It can be seen in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, entries 150 and 151,²³⁰ that several cultures around the world had monsters keeping safe their most important borders, and one of the best guarded is usually the border to the realm of the

²²⁴ Outside the literary world, in the Scandinavian Middle Ages this seems to have been an activity not restricted to any particular social strata of society. Its practice should have persisted so much that in the Gulathing's *Church Law* it is stated that “Heathen sacrifices are also banned for we are not permitted to worship any heathen god, or (on any) hill [...] if a man is accused and convicted of this, he has forfeited all his chattels to the last penny.” (*The Earliest Norwegian Laws. The Gulathing and Frostathing laws; The Church Law* 29: 57). This can refer both to heathen practices on burial-mounds as well as to the belief of an afterlife inside a mountain, as will be seen in Chapter 4.4.

²²⁵ *Páttir Þorleifs jarlaskalds*: 174: 214.

²²⁶ *Páttir Þorleifs jarlaskalds*: 174: 215.

²²⁷ In connection with this gift of poetry, it is interesting to note that in *Páttir Þorsteins uxafóts* a piece of gold given by a *haugbúi* has the power of give speech to a mute woman: *Oddr hefir at uarduæita gull þat er su nattura fylgir at huerr madr sem mallaus er ok leggr þat undir tungurætr ser þa tekr þegar mal sitt.* (*Þáttir Þorsteins uxafóts* 206: 254.)

²²⁸ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 64.

²²⁹ Cohen, Jeffrey J. 1996: 12.

²³⁰ Thompson, Stith: 150-151.

dead.²³¹ In their position as guardians of this ‘bridge’, the *haugbúar* are depicted as a personification of the ‘border’ metaphor. They were a border themselves, something between the living and the dead, something between the corporeal and the ethereal natures of mankind. “Cosmologically and mythologically the boundary between society and non-society is reflected in the opposition between humans and non-humans, such as trolls, giants and ghosts.”²³² But, if the border is the natural environment of the *haugbúar*, then it should be expected of them to behave or manifest in a different way in and outside the grave-mound.

I will only analyze the way in which the *haugbúar* manifest themselves within Miðgarðr, that is, outside their mounds within the living, and inside their mounds when they are visited by the living. The *haugbúar* seem to have two different natures. They appear as concrete, tangible, only when they are inside the mound. But when the *haugbúar* get out of their mounds to visit Miðgarðr, they manifest themselves in a rather insubstantial way. Their existence outside the mound, in the realm of men, is completely ethereal; they appear only in the form of visions or semiconscious dreams.

In *Brennu-Njáls saga* Gunnar Hámundarson was killed in an ambush and his corpse sat, unavenged, inside his mound. Then, one day while two servants were passing by his grave-mound “*þheim þótti Gunnar vera kátr ok kveða í hauginum.*”²³³ The word about this event got spread and ended up with Hǫgni Gunnarson and Skarpheðinn going to the mound and “[*þ*]eir sá, at Gunnar var kátligr ok með gleðimóti miklu. Hann kvað vísu ok svá hátt, at þó mátti heyra gǫrla, þó at þeir væri firr.”²³⁴ Gunnar is the happiest *draugr* that I found in the whole corpus of sagas and, the fact that he is joyful and reciting verses outside his mound does not impair the belief that he is in Valhǫll. “*Ek ætla,*” segir Hǫgni, “*at færa fǫður mínum, ok hafí hann til Valhallar ok beri þar fram á vápnþingi.*”²³⁵ On both occasions in which Gunnar is seen reciting outside his mound the witnesses were quite awake. And in both his appearance is referred to as a “*Fyrirburðr*” (*fyrirburðinn*’ and *fyrirburði*’ respectively). *Fyrirburður* relates to visions or dreams, as defined by Fritzner: “*Visjon, hvad der fremstiller sig for ens Sjæl, hvad man drømmer, synes at se eller høre.*”²³⁶ These two occurrences of the word describe the *haugbúi* outside his

²³¹ It would be interesting to study the role of St. Peter as safe keeper of the keys and the entrance to the Christian Heaven in the light of this tradition of monsters as the guardians of the gates to the realm of the dead.

²³² Hastrup, Kirsten 1986: 283.

²³³ *Brennu-Njáls saga* LXXVIII: 192.

²³⁴ *Brennu-Njáls saga* LXXVIII: 193.

²³⁵ *Brennu-Njáls saga* LXXIX: 194.

²³⁶ Fritzner, Johan 1954: *fyrirburður*’.

mound, and describe it as an immaterial being, just like in the dreams that will follow in the analysis.²³⁷

In *Þáttr Þorleifs jarlaskalds* Þorleif went out of his mound and appeared to the shepherd in a semiconscious dream. What the shepherd saw was that “*opnnazst haugrinn ok gengr þar vt madr mikill uexsti ok uel buinn.*”²³⁸ And even though this apparition was in a dream but when Þorleif was going back into the mound the shepherd “*uaknar ok þikizt sea a herdar honum.*”²³⁹ In another story Agnarr left his mound to keep some men from breaking into it. He appeared in a dream in which “*dreymdi Þóri, at maðr kom at honum, mikill, í rauðum kyrtili ok hafði hjálm á höfði ok sverd búit í hendi; hann hafði um sik digrt belti [...] var þessi maðr mikilúðligr ok virðuligr.*”²⁴⁰ This man proved to be Agnarr, and he told him that he should not break into his mound. In the dream he offered a pair of magic gloves, a knife, a belt and some gold and silver. All of them were there when the man woke up. But even though Agnarr’s apparition was in a dream another man was able to hear the conversation: “*Ketillbjörn vaknar ok hafði heyrt allt þeira viðræli ok svá sét, hvar Agnarr fór.*”²⁴¹ In *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skutu* a man decided to return a sword to the grave-mound from which it had been taken. After doing so, the mound dweller, named Skefil, appeared to this man in a dream and returned the sword: “*bar Þorkatli Skefil í drauma, ok kvad Þorkel munu vera góðan dreng ok þakkaði honum [...] Ok nú vaknar Þorkell, ok var þar komit sverðit.*”²⁴² Something very similar occurs in *Kumlbúa þáttr* when a man took a sword out of a grave-mound. The same night he got the sword “*dreymdý hann, at maðr mikill kom at honum ok hafði í hendi sér bolæxi mikla rekna. Maðrinn var vænn sýnum.*”²⁴³ The man proved to have a noble character and therefore was allowed to keep the sword. *Landnámabók* presents another instance, in which Asmundr left his mound in a dream in order to instruct the people to remove the þrall that was buried with him as a suttee: “*litlv siðar dreymði Þorv at Asmundr sagði sér meín at þrælnvm.*”²⁴⁴ Accordingly, they removed the þrall from the mound.²⁴⁵ The list continues, and in every occasion in which a *haugbúi* leaves its mound it is

²³⁷ The idea and conception of the *fyrirburðr* will be discussed below, in Chapter 4.4.

²³⁸ *Þáttr Þorleifs jarlaskalds* 174: 215.

²³⁹ *Þáttr Þorleifs jarlaskalds* 174: 215.

²⁴⁰ *Þorskfirðinga saga* III: 184.

²⁴¹ *Þorskfirðinga saga* III: 185.

²⁴² *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu* XIX: 213.

²⁴³ *Kumlbúa þáttr*: 454.

²⁴⁴ *Landnámabók* 60: 24.

²⁴⁵ This apparition of Asmundr in order to have the þrall removed from the mound would confirm the fact that the grave-mound was reserved only for high rank people. But this would not necessarily agree with the tradition of offering slaves as suttees. However, the literary evidence points towards the idea of having only high class people buried in mounds. So this might be only a literary motif.

always in the form of a vision or a semiconscious dream. They usually appear outside their mounds in order to defend their rights, as keeping people from bothering them from the outside or keeping people from breaking into their mounds. Also, even though they appear as visions or dreams they can have some physical effects, as giving swords, but they never act violently, as much they appear to be only offended. Their apparition in a rather ethereal way in the realm of the living can be due to the fact that they belong to the grave-mound, and they cannot leave it in a physical way.

In contrast, when men go into the liminal world represented by the grave-mound, the *haugbúar* acquire a physical nature that allows them even to wrestle with those who break into their mounds.²⁴⁶ Or just like in the case of Helgi Hundingsbani, they become physical enough as to be able to sleep with his lover

*vil ek þér í faðmi,
fylkir, sofna,
sem ek lofðungi
lifnom myndak!*²⁴⁷

The *haugbúar* have a dual nature, outside the grave-mound they lack corporeality but are able to alter the surroundings and carry or take concrete objects. Inside his mound they exist as physical beings.²⁴⁸ Cohen's states in his third "monster thesis" that

[the] refusal to participate in the classificatory "order of things" is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions.²⁴⁹

The *haugbúar* are described as having a hideous appearance only when they are depicted inside the grave-mound, as physical beings. When they manifest themselves in an ethereal way (i.e. outside the burial-mound), the sources don't describe them as particularly horrific; actually, in all the examples given above they are described as well dressed, imposing and even handsome. While they appear in their insubstantial form, the only scary thing about them is the contact with the dead. The monstrous features of the *haugbúi* inside his mound may be the result of the 'suspension in between forms' mentioned by Cohen. But it may be also due to the suspension-in-between-realms represented by the existence inside the mound. This place is something 'in

²⁴⁶ I won't go deeper into proving that the *haugbúar* are physical inside the mounds, because below I will analyze the wrestling matches between them and those who break into their mounds.

²⁴⁷ Helgakviða Hundingsbana II: 47.

²⁴⁸ A possibility that escapes the limits of this dissertation is that, in order to keep the equilibrium in this physical and ethereal existences, the afterlife in Valhalla should be ethereal, with the mound as the center and only place in which a physical manifestation of the deceased is possible.

²⁴⁹ Cohen, Jeffrey J 1996: 6.

between', without a precise shape or definition. The physical *haugbúar* are not all-human and not all-supernatural. Inside the mound they are monstrous because they are a hybrid.

Gro Steinsland states that

Til tross for at de litterære kildene reflekterer en klar bevissthet om en todeling i menneskets konstitusjon mellom en materiell og en immateriell side, rommer nordisk hedendom ingen dualistisk antropologi. Menneskets konstitusjon utgjør til syvende og sist en enhet av materie og sjel. Sjelselementene erfares ikke som fanget i eller besudlet av materien som tilfellet er i dualistiske religioner. Sjelen er ikke et høyere element som trenger til frelse i betydningen frigjøring fra kroppen. Dette synet på mennesket som en helhet av kropp og sinn ser vi bekreftet av gravskikker og gravgods.²⁵⁰ Omsorgen for den døde har omfattet hele mennesket, kroppen såvel som sjelen.

Accordingly, for those ones who remained physically 'undead', both the body and soul should remain 'undead'. Unlike other sets of beliefs, in which the body dies and the soul is immortal, it seems that in the Old Norse society both body and soul continued to live after death. The fear of these revenants might have induced the practice of cremation, not to free the body from the soul, but to free the living from the undead body. "[W]hatever brings revenants into folklore is apparently nullified by cremation, for it has been observed that cultures that cremate generally do not have revenants that return in corporeal form."²⁵¹ But I will study the relationship between burial customs and the belief in *draugar* in Chapter 4.2.

Going now to the analysis of the contact with the *haugbúar* inside the grave-mound, it is necessary to point out that, due to the high social status of those buried in mounds, the task of breaking into the grave-mound²⁵² and robbing it or fighting with its inhabitant is not reserved for the common folk. Only a hero or a person of high rank²⁵³ could fight against the dead heroes or nobles. In Old Norse society breaking into a grave-mound and defeating its dweller brought the same honour as one would get from fighting the mound-dweller when alive. In *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* Hrómundr was raiding in the Hebrides, and a peasant that could not stand seeing all the violence gave him some advice: "*Karlinn segir, at byggð sín væri allskamt þaðan, ok kvað meiri fremd at brjóta hauga ok ræna drauga fé.*"²⁵⁴ Hrómundr does so, and of course gains lots of honour after defeating King Þráinn inside his mound. Only a natural born hero can derive some honour from the *haugganga*, for, as we can see in *Flóamanna saga*, this was no task for slaves.

Vetri síðar varð sá atburður, að þrælur nökkurir brutu haug til fjár sér, en Þorgils kom at þeim ok kvað þat ekki vera þeirra fé ok tók af þeim þrjár merkr, en hrakti þá

²⁵⁰ Steinsland, Gro 1990: 64.

²⁵¹ Barber, Paul 1988: 62.

²⁵² Usually referred to as '*haugganga*'.

²⁵³ Usually both attributes go together.

²⁵⁴ *Saga af Hromundi Greipssyni* III: 367-68. [III: 410].

*sjálfa. Hann fékk Lopti fé þetta ok svá allt annat, þat er hann aflaði. Varð hann nú frægr mjök, þótt hann væri ungur.*²⁵⁵

Haugganga brought honour to those who already had a honorable position in society. But this honour was only acknowledged if the product of the plundering was distributed. In *Flóamanna saga* the problem does not seem to be only that the ones who break into the mound are *þrælar*. What increases the infamy of their action is the fact that they intended to keep the profit for themselves (*brutu haug til fjár sér*). What brought Þorgils a great honour was, first, bringing some justice by punishing the *þrælar* for doing something reserved for heroes. After all, it should be extremely shameful for a king, a jarl, a goði or any other powerful man to be ‘killed’ and robed in his grave-mound by some slaves. But, chronologically, we are not told that he got this great honour after his act of justice, his great honour is mentioned only after he ‘shared’ the profit of the *haugganga*. If you are a slave, there is nothing for you inside a grave mound, not even as a suttee, as was the case in *Landnámabók*. While if you are a hero, there is no honour for you unless you are willing to share what you get out of it.

The grave-goods were not considered the private property of the one who went in and fought the *haugbúi*. This is shown in the fact that Harðar must state before going into Soti’s mound that “*Nú mun ek,*” *segir hann, "ganga í hauginn, ef ek skal eiga þá þrjá gripi, er ek kys ór hauginum."*²⁵⁶ Similarly, when Hrómundr got out of the mound we are told that “*Eignaðist Hrómundr þá 3 gripi, er hann sótti í hauginn, hring, men ok Mistiltein. Allir fengu þeir of fjár."*²⁵⁷ And when Þorstein uxafóts came out of Bryniarr he starts distributing what he produced from his adventure “*skal ek nu þui launa þer at ek skal fa firir þig frelsi af Þorkatli frænda minum ok her er .xij. merkr silfurs at ek uil gefua þer."*²⁵⁸

From this it is possible to assume that the treasure was not entirely the property of the hero, nor his aim in entering the mound. His best treasure was the glory that he acquired by the mere act of going into the mound. If bounty was the objective, Hrómundr would not have left his sword when Þráinn invited him to do so because, as the “*Draugr mælti: Þat er engin fremd, at bera sverð á mik vâpnlausan, heldr vil ek reyna afl við þik ok glímu."*²⁵⁹

Another good example of the need to share, or even give up all of the profit, is found in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*. From the moment in which Grettir decided to break into Kárr’s

²⁵⁵ *Flóamanna saga* XII: 252.

²⁵⁶ *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* XV: 41.

²⁵⁷ *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* IV: 371. [IV: 413].

²⁵⁸ *Þátr Þorstein uxafóts* 206: 254.

²⁵⁹ *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* IV: 369 (411).

mound he is warned about the risk: “*Let ek þik,*” segir Auðun, “*at fásk þar við, því at ek veit, at Þorfinnr mun fjándskap á þik leggja.*”²⁶⁰ As it was to be expected, Þorfinnr Kársson did not like the idea of having a foreigner, of whom he knew nothing, killing the *draugr* of his father and taking away his grave-goods. The wisest choice for Grettir, if he wanted to keep his life and get out of the adventure with some honour, is to give up the treasure.

*Mér hefir brugðist, báru
blikryrandi, að skýru,
brátt spyrji bragnar þetta,
bauga von í haugi.*²⁶¹

He left the quest without riches, but at least he knew that the news of his deed will spread. His honour had increased.

From this and the previous examples we can see that the main goal for those who broke into the mounds was in part, to acquire riches. Just as Gull-Þórir states: “*þar er nú drengiligra at afla þar [in Agnarr’s mound] fjár en róa til fiska, ok þar skal tol hætta*”²⁶² it is possible to make money in more peaceful ways but, by breaking into a mound it was possible to gain something, which in the Old Norse mentality lasted longer than gold: honour.²⁶³

One thing that characterizes the *haugbúar* is that, both in and outside the grave-mound, they don’t show any particular inclination towards violence. Outside the mound (with the sole exceptions of Kárr inn Gamli, in *Grettis saga*, and the first appearance Raknar, in *Bárðar saga*) the *haugbúar* always tried to avoid conflict. As we have seen, they did so by leaving their mound and appearing in a dream or vision in order to dissuade the hero from breaking into the mound, and consequently avoid the battle that the hero is looking for in order to increase his glory. The second reason was to keep people from disturbing them.

But once the grave-mound was broken and the living entered to plunder it, the *haugbúi* shows itself as a really tolerant creature. Ellis tells us that “In this tales the corpse within the grave is represented with a vampire-like propensities, superhuman strength, and a fierce desire to destroy

²⁶⁰ *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar XVIII: 57.*

²⁶¹ *Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar XVIII: 59.*

²⁶² *Þorskfirðinga saga eða Gull-Þóris saga III: 183.*

²⁶³ It is interesting to note, though, that there is a constant interest in keeping the swords. In all the cases the hero chose the keep the *draugr*’s sword for themselves. And this is the only good that Grettir laments loosing from Kárr in gamli’s goods, and the first good that causes a reaction in Þorfinn. In *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu* we are given a clue about the ideas around weapons taken from burial mounds: “*Spjótit Vagnsnaut átti síðan Þorvarðr Þorgeirsson. Saxit var ok upp tekit ór kumli Nafars. Ok þóttu qll vápnin vera forkunnar góð, sem jafnan bar raun á, ef þau váru til nqkkurs hqfð.*” (*Reykðæla saga XIX: 213*) Maybe this means that these weapons were considered to really have some supernatural properties or that the bearer shared, through them, the honour of the previous owner. This topic escapes the purposes of the present paper.

any living creature which ventures to enter the mound.”²⁶⁴ Her confusion might be due to the previously mentioned generalization in between the different *draugar*, since the only case in which a *haugbúi* acts violently without being incited occurs in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, when Árán attacks his foster brother. Ellis seems to be confusing the behavior of the *haugbúar* with that of the *aptrgǫngur*,²⁶⁵ Chadwick does something similar, by misinterpreting the nature of the *haugbúar* when she states “the object of the *haugbúi* in leaving his barrow is sometimes said to be to prey on men and cattle. They seem, in fact, to be very hungry creatures.”²⁶⁶ As we have seen most of the *haugbúar* leave their mounds only in dreams, and then their intention is to keep people out of their mounds, using non-violent methods. The only instance of a *haugbúi* “preying on men and cattle” is that of Árán.²⁶⁷ A further instance, not explicitly stated is that of Þráinn possibly intending to make a meal out of Hrómundr.²⁶⁸ But both incidents happened inside a mound, and in the second case the *haugbúi* was obviously provoked. *Grettis saga* has the only instance in which a *haugbúi* is said to actually leave his mound with aggressive intentions, but as we will see, Kárr is by far an exception to all the rules and his haunting seems to be the product of some political maneuver. Maybe the original intention of the food and cattle offerings made to the people buried in a mound was to prevent them from coming back from the grave and prey on the living.²⁶⁹

Tolerance is an attribute of the *haugbúar* for whenever they engaged in battle they did so because the mound-breakers takes them to a limit situation by insulting them and robbing their most appreciated possessions. Inside the mound they fight because they are incited to. One of the most explicit cases of this occurs when Hrómundr broke into the mound of King Þráinn. Hrómundr, seeing the passivity of the king, walked up to his throne and said “*mér mun vera mál ór haugnum, fyrst engi hamlar, eða hvernin vegnar þér þú hérna, hinn gamli! sástu eigi, at ek bar saman fé þitt, en þú höktir kyrr, hundr leiðr! eðr hvat var þér í augum, er þú horfðir á, at ek tók sverðit ok menit ok fjölda þinna annarra gripa.*”²⁷⁰ Þráinn did not react at all even though he was being robbed and provoked to fight. His only reaction to being called a “*hundr leiðr*”, insult which in sagas would normally end in consecutive slayings and lawsuits for several generations, produced in here only one answer: “*Þráinn kvað sér einkis um vert þikkja, ef hann léiti sik kyrran*

²⁶⁴ Ellis, Hilda R 1943: 92.

²⁶⁵ See below, Chapter 4.2.

²⁶⁶ Chadwick, N. K. 1946: 55.

²⁶⁷ See above, Chapter 3.

²⁶⁸ Analyzed later in this Chapter.

²⁶⁹ This idea will be developed in Chapter 4.2.

²⁷⁰ *Hromundar saga Greipssonar*. III: 369. [III: 411].

*sitja á stóli sínum.*²⁷¹ For Hrómundr there is no glory in leaving the mound only with the treasure, since, as we saw before the heroes break into the grave-mound to increase their honour. He needed a fight, and the *haugbúi*'s needed to be provoked, and the best way to do so is some more insults and questioning the *haugbúi*'s courage, therefore “*mælti Hrómundr: rigaðu þér á fætr, ragr ok blauðr! ok tak þú sverðit apr af mér, ef þú þorir!*”²⁷² Even though this words effectively led Þráinn into a fighting mood, before confronting his enemy he took his time to prepare the fire and the cauldron in which he was, most probably, going to cook Hrómundr once he was defeated.

This passage is an extreme example of the *haugbúar*'s passivity, but it is possible find this same behavior in other sagas. In *Grettis saga* Kárr reacts only after he has been robed and Grettir is about to exit the grave-mound²⁷³ and in *Harðar saga* Soti reacted only when he realized that he was going to be robbed.²⁷⁴ Oddr the *haugbúi*, in *Þattr Þorstein uxafóts*, was sitting waiting for Þorsteinn to give him some tribute and it was Þorsteinn who started the violence.²⁷⁵ Going back to the stories like *Hromundar saga*, which King Sverri called “*lygisögur*”²⁷⁶ we will find that, for example, Agantýr, a great berserk, was forced, by his daughter, Hervör, to give up his sword. He replied to her threatens by calling her “*mær hin unga*”²⁷⁷ or “*Hervör dóttir*”²⁷⁸ which is a language a little bit too tender for a ‘bloodthirsty’ creature as the ones described by Ellis Davidson and Chadwick. In Eddic poetry there is even an instance of a *haugbúi* as a lover, when Sigrún goes into the mound of Helgi in order to lie down in his arms for a last time.²⁷⁹

The *haugbúar* are also connected with a great stench, which can even bring people to an instant death. “*Hörðr bað þá menn varast gust þann ok óðaun, er út legði ór hauginum; en han sjálf stóð at hurðarbaki, á meðan ódaunninn var sem mestr. Þa urðu tveir menn bráðdauðir at fylu þeiri.*”²⁸⁰ Similar references to the unpleasant smell of the *haugbúar* are to be found in *Bárðar saga* where “*menn sem hálf dauðir ok í óviti...[d]auðir váru allir varðhundar*”²⁸¹ at the mere presence of a *haugbúi*. Also happens when “*Gekk Grettir þá í hauginn; var þar myrkt ok*

²⁷¹ *Hromundar saga Greipssonar*. III: 369. [III: 411].

²⁷² *Hromundar saga Greipssonar*. III: 369. [III: 411].

²⁷³ *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* XVIII: 58.

²⁷⁴ *Harðar saga* XV: 42.

²⁷⁵ *Þattr Þorsteins uxafóts*: 206: 254.

²⁷⁶ *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* X: 27.

²⁷⁷ *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks konungs* VII: 440 [IV: 20].

²⁷⁸ *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks konungs* VII: 436 [IV: 16].

²⁷⁹ *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*: 47-49.

²⁸⁰ *Harðar saga* XV: 40.

²⁸¹ *Bárðar saga* XVIII: 160-61.

*þeygi þefgott.*²⁸² The only instance of a physical encounter with a *haugbúi* in which there is no foul smell associated is that of Ásmundr being buried alive with Árán.²⁸³ In this case the absence of stench could be due to the fact that Árán had not entered a decomposing state when he was buried. Now, according to the mentality of those who created the *haugbúar* legends, the bodies had not begun to rot when the hero breaks into the mound, which is the precondition to allow the fights with them. So, if the bodies had not decayed, the stench should have, in their mentalities, another source. The *Old Norse Elucidarius* tell us that the fourth torment in hell consists of “*leidiligvr davn*”²⁸⁴ where this disgusting stench is a punishment because “*og svo sem þeir vndv her vid synda davn. svo er makligt at þeir pinist þar j grimmvm hnyk.*”²⁸⁵ And the great stench that comes from the *haugbúar* can actually kill people or drive them crazy. This idea is also supported by the *Old Norse Elucidarius*: “*Ef þav ȝerða sivr eða davð þa gørez þat af lopz vreinendvm.*”²⁸⁶

The actual episodes of a fight with a *haugbúi* are very few. In the most cases they appear outside the grave-mound, in an ethereal form, looking for some peace inside it. And when the living do get inside the mound, the *haugbúi* is forced into action in order to defend its property from robbery, or its honour from insults. As Stern points

Encounters with hostile *haugbúar* all follow the general pattern of Hrómundr's battle with Þráinn, but episodes dealing with helpful grave-dwellers such as Ólafr Geirstaðaálfr show certain differences. [...] The hostile corpse does not initiate contact with the world of the living; the hero seeks him out and often has to goad the lazy ghost into action.²⁸⁷

However, what Stern defines as the ‘helpful *haugbúar*’ proves to apply only the *haugbúi* outside its grave. Inside their graves they had to act defensively in order to prevent being robbed or to respond to the attacks of the living. There is only one instance of a ‘helpful’ *haugbúi* in the texts analyzed in this paper. This occurs in *Þátr Þorsteins uxafóts* and the story goes like this. One summer during a trip to the mountains Þorsteinn found a grave-mound and decided to sleep on it and had a dream. In it “*mer þotti haugr sia opnazst ok gek þar vt ór madr raudklæddr. Hann var mikill madr uexsti ok ekki adaliga illiligr.*”²⁸⁸ The man introduced himself as Bryniarr, and said that he ‘lived’ in the mound. Then he invited Þorsteinn to go in. Þorsteinn accepted the invitation, and took his axe with him. Inside the grave mound he saw two different companies of people:

²⁸² *Grettis saga* XVIII: 57.

²⁸³ See above, Chapter 3.

²⁸⁴ Honorius of Autun 3.13-14: 80.

²⁸⁵ Honorius of Autun 3.15-16: 80-82.

²⁸⁶ Honorius of Autun. 2.27: 64.

²⁸⁷ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 29.

²⁸⁸ *Þátr Þorsteins uxafóts* 206: 254.

“hann sa þar til hægri handar sitia .xj. menn a bek. Þeir uoru allir raudklæddir ok heldr faligir. Qdru megin j hauginum sa hann sitia .xij. menn. Þeir voru allir blaklæddir. Sa var þeirra mestr ok miog illiligr.”²⁸⁹ Bryniarr told him that the biggest man dressed in black was his brother, named Oddr, and that every night he and the rest of the men dressed in red had to give him a “mqrk gullz edr .ij. merkr silfrs”²⁹⁰ and he and his people had no other alternative than to pay this tribute. Then he told Þorsteinn that his brother had in his possession a piece of gold, and “er su nattura fylgir at huerr madr sem mallaus er ok leggr þat undir tungurætr ser þa tekr þegar mal sit.”²⁹¹ Þorsteinn’s mother happened to be mute, so he was extremely tempted to take the piece of gold.²⁹² The night passes and Oddr asked Þorsteinn to give him some tribute. But then Þorsteinn started a fight. During the fight against the men dressed in black, the men dressed in red join Þorsteinn side. During the fight all the blows that the *haugbúar* exchange between themselves had no effect so the *haugbúar* kept on standing up again to fight; only the blows inflicted by Þorsteinn were mortal.²⁹³ Finally the men in black were defeated and Þorsteinn got the gold and the men in red got their freedom. However, it is quite noticeable that these friendly and ‘helpful’ *haugbúar* appeared as all ‘helpful’ *haugbúar* do, that is in a dream or an ethereal way.

In her doctoral dissertation Stern also points out that there are several patterns in the mound-breaking stories. She argues that sometimes these patterns are so conventionalized that “they are included even when totally unsupported by the preceding narrative.”²⁹⁴ In a ‘Vladimir-Propp’ way she lists the following elements. She includes the motif of the hero escaping from the mound using a rope, which sometimes appears mysteriously and in most of the cases is left unattended by the hero’s scared mates.²⁹⁵ Every mound shall include a treasure and the *haugbúi* is described as sitting, bloated, black, stinky and wearing some fanciful clothes and adornments. They are usually defeated without using weapons, in a fight that trashes the whole mound, maybe due to “a half-forgotten belief that a revenant was invulnerable to weapons, and therefore could only be defeated by wrestling.”²⁹⁶ Then obstacles to get into the mound are the stench and sometimes a storm.²⁹⁷ She also mentions other elements, such as that during the fight everything

²⁸⁹ *Þátr Þorsteins uxafóts* 206: 254.

²⁹⁰ *Þátr Þorsteins uxafóts* 206: 254.

²⁹¹ *Þátr Þorsteins uxafóts* 206: 254.

²⁹² This, again, relates the *haugbúar* with the ability of conferring the gift of speech, or poetry.

²⁹³ This motif has a Christian parallel in *Sörla þátr*, where only the blows inflicted by a Christian had an effect over an army of dead people. (Cf. *Sörla þátr* IX: 405-07. [IX: 380-82.]).

²⁹⁴ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 30.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 30.

²⁹⁶ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 31-32.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987:31.

is said to be kicked away and the fore mentioned stench. There may be other patterns that escaped to her, as the fore mentioned distinction between the way in which the *haugbúi* manifests itself, in or out the mound, or the motif of the mound that closes itself at night, impairing the intrusion.

But, in contrast with her analysis we consider that, even though this patterns inform us about the mound-breaking folk-lore, it is the slight differences and reinterpretations of these motifs which are most helpful if we want to understand the mentality of the society in which these sagas were created as well as the evolution in the concept of the *haugbúi*. The patterns give us a horizontal perspective of the belief; the differences within them allow us to have a vertical insight of the mentality of an age in which these stories were written down. *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* and *Hárðar saga* give us a good chance to perform such a comparison between two contrasting interpretations of the same patterns that Stern listed.

Both sagas offer us a similar story, but they show different interpretations and roles of the same motifs. Christian authors wrote both of them²⁹⁸ but one of them recounts the story of a pagan mound-breaker in a pagan context while the other tells us about a conversion story inside a grave-mound. About *Harðar saga* we know that it is "referred to in Sturla's *Landnámabók*, so its first version must have been made comparatively early in the thirteenth century"²⁹⁹ that is in AM 556 a 4to. Of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsás* we are told that it is a "late 13th-or early 14th century 'postclassical' Íslendinga saga."³⁰⁰ For the purposes of this discussion it is not important to find out if *Harðar saga* influenced *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* or not, the main objective is to find out which are the pagan and which are the Christian interpretations of the mound-breaking patterns that Stern mentioned.

Harðar saga's mound-breaking episode takes place in Gotland. During the Yule celebrations Hróarr makes a vow to break into Soti's mound. Hörðr makes the vow to go wit him and don't leave the expedition. As soon as Spring comes a party of twelve men ride to Soti's mound, and in the way Hörðr meets a stranger, named Björn who offers him help in case he needs it, and who later proves to be Óðinn.³⁰¹ The party reaches the grave-mound and dig it until they reach the burial chamber, but during the night it closes itself. This happens two nights in a

²⁹⁸ The scholars use to consider that just because a text was written after the Christianization of Iceland a Christian scribe must have written it. The conversion of a country and the beliefs of every individual are highly different. (On this topic read Schmitt, Jean-Claude (1998) *Religion, Folklore and Society in the Medieval West*, in *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*. (ed) Lester Little & Barbara Rosenwein. Blackwell Publishers; 1998. pp 376-387.)

²⁹⁹ Kristjánsson, Jónas 1997: 285.

³⁰⁰ *Medieval Scandinavia* 1993: '*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*'.

³⁰¹ Björn is one of Óðinn's names. (Cf. Orchard, Andy 1997: 188. Appendix A: Óðinn's names and Titles).

row, so Hörðr goes back and asks Björn/Óðinn for help. He gets a sword and is told to put it in the opening of the mound during the night since that will prevent the mound from closing itself. The sword works and finally, in the fifth morning they are able to enter the chamber. It stinks so much that some of his men die due to the smell. Finally, in the fifth day they can actually get into the burial chamber, and Hörðr descends using a rope, which is being held by his best friend, Geir. After exploring the burial chamber he cannot find traces of a treasure nor of a *haugbúi*, so he asks Geir to come in and bring with him “*eld ok vax.*”³⁰² They explore the mound and find a door, when they break it there is an earthquake (“*lands-skjálfti*”), the lights go out and a horrible smell arises. There is a slight shining inside there, which allows them to see a boat burial, and they realize that the light comes from all the treasure in it. Soti was sitting on the prow dreadful to look at. Soti remains seated until Hörðr insults him, in verse, and tells him that he is going to take the treasure. They wrestle and Hörðr is getting the worse, so he asks Geir to light the candle, and Soti lost his strength and fell to the ground straight away. They profit this to ransack the place. When Hörðr takes Soti’s arm ring Soti lays a curse on it. In response they decide to torture him with the light, Soti does not like the idea and sinks in the ground, escaping. They empty the place and Hörðr takes Soti’s sword and helmet. When they want to leave the mound they realize that their mates left the place, later it is cleared that they did so because they got extremely scared during the earthquake, so they have to pull themselves, and the treasure, out. They meet their friends, tell the story and split the treasure. Hörðr earns great honour and Soti’s sword, helmet and arm ring.

In *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* Gest resists to be converted, but he has been prime signed and is spending the winter with Óláfr Tryggvason. On *Yule*’s evening the king and his men are in the best of moods until a big, stinky, and fully armed man went into the hall. He offers his sword, helmet, arm ring and neckband to the one who dares to take them from him. No one does and he departs, leaving his aroma behind him. Due to his stench the king’s men are almost dead until the king read something over them.³⁰³ Gest discovers that the man was Raknarr, an ancient-times king of Helluland, and Óláfr assigns him the task of going to Raknarr’s burial-mound and claim the treasures. The king gives him everything that he needs for his expedition: forty iron shoes, two magicians, one priest, a sword, a piece of cloth, and a candle. Gest refuses to take the priest to the expedition, but the king persuades Gest to take him, and he does so, altogether, the men

³⁰² *Harðar saga* XV: 41.

³⁰³ This revival through a ‘prayer’ would support the previously exposed idea that stench comes from sin and it can actually kill. With his praying the king ‘cleans’ the air from sin.

form an expedition of twenty-three. A one-eyed man, called Rauðgrani³⁰⁴ joins the expedition and starts preaching the old-faith until the priest gets tired of it and hit him with a crucifix, throwing him overboard. He never reappears and then the men realize that Rauðgrani was Óðinn himself. The voyage continues, and so do the supernatural occurrences, one of which ends up with both magicians being swallowed by the earth. The second is confrontation with an aggressive bull that cannot be hurt by weapons, when it is about to kill Gest, the priest appears and hit it with his crucifix, that kills the beast and “*ekki bar þar fleira til tíðinda*”³⁰⁵ until they reach Helluland. There are twenty-one men left and only forty iron shoes to walk through the lava fields. The priest has to walk unprotected. They reach Raknarr’s mound and dig a hole in it, but the next morning they realize that the mound had closed itself during the night. This happens two days in a row. The third night the priest sits in the opening with his water and crucifix. At midnight “*mörg fádæmi sýndust honum*”³⁰⁶ all kinds of spirits and temptations appear to make him leave the mound, but they cannot approach him due to the water he sprinkled. Day comes and with it the visions disappear, and the mound was still open. So Gest goes into the mound using a rope, which is being held by his men and the priest. He is wrapped in the cloth and armed with the sword that the king gave him. The candle lights itself and he is able to see a ship burial, with five hundred men in it. They were about to attack Gest, but when the candlelight reached them they became paralyzed, and he profited the chance and decapitated them. He then reaches a tunnel, and at the end of it sat Raknarr, dreadful to see but very well dressed and with a treasure at his feet. They salute each other and Gest starts taking Raknarr’s possessions, but when he is about to take his sword Raknarr begins to fight. The candle is now completely consumed. Gest is getting the worst in the fight and calls his father’s spirit in help. His father’s spirit shows up but is unable to help. So he calls King Óláfr’s god and promises to convert to Óláfr’s faith if he gets help. Next King Óláfr enters the mound with a great light (*ljósi miklu*³⁰⁷) that paralyzes Raknarr and thus allows Gest to behead him. Then the king disappears. Outside the mound everybody went mad and started fighting each other, except for the priest and the dog, who are still guarding the rope and pull Gest up. The priest splashes water on the men and they recover their minds. When they are about to leave there is an earthquake and the island sinks and they cannot reach land, everybody is about to die. Then the priest takes his crucifix and water and starts splashing water, so the sea opens and they can walk to the continent. Gest goes to meet the king and gives

³⁰⁴ One of Óðinn’s names. (Cf. Orchard, Andy 1997: 188. Appendix A: Óðinn’s names and Titles).

³⁰⁵ *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* XVIII: 164.

³⁰⁶ *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* XX: 166.

³⁰⁷ *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* XX: 168.

him all the treasures and asks to be baptized. He is baptized and that same night the spirit of his father appears to him and blinds him as a punishment for abandoning his ancestors' faith. Finally Gest dies due to the pain in his eyes.

Both accounts follow the same pattern and the same motifs but assign them a different meaning. That is due to the fact that one story is set in a pure pagan environment, while the other is set in a conversion context. Therefore, they share neither the ideology nor the semiotics around the elements of the story. The only thing they share seems to be the elements of the folk tradition around mound breaking. Due to the dates of composition and to the similitude in the events and in some expressions it is possible to infer that *Bárðar saga*'s episode is an adaptation of *Harðar saga*'s account. But the influences of one saga into another (in case they do really happen) are not our main objective here. I believe that if both sagas make such a similar account of events, with different interpretations, is because in the minds of the saga readers of the thirteenth century there was a convention about 'what breaking into a mound implied during the heathen times'. The structure of the stories is the following.

The patterns could be explained like this. During Yule celebrations someone acquires the task to break into a burial mound, and the journey takes place in spring. However one is a Yule celebration in a pre-Christian context, in the house of a *goði* while the other is a Christian celebration in the court of Óláfr. Then during the journey they meet Óðinn. In both cases his role is to offer help, in form of advice, for the expedition. In both cases he disappears after giving advice. He seems to be the best prepared to give advice when it comes to dealing with the *haugbúar* since he is their lord. In *Bárðar saga* he recommends some sacrifices in order to gain victory, but since it is a conversion narrative, the sacrifices are done in a Catholic way. So, the priest does walk over lava stones with bleeding feet, and Gest undertakes the sacrifice of carrying him the rest of the way. Next, the mound can only be opened with supernatural help. The *haugbúi*, as usual, tries to prevent conflict and closes its mound every night. However, when he appears does so in a vision to the priest. The priest in *Bárðar saga* takes the role done by Óðinn in *Harðar saga* as the one who provides the real means of entering the mound. Also the means of preventing the mound to close are different. In one instance it is a sword, given by Óðinn, but in the other it is the consecrated water and the crucifix that the priest has. The role of Óðinn is basically null and almost pathetic in *Bárðar saga*. Then the hero goes inside the mound using a rope, just as described by Stern. But the role done by the best friend in *Harðar saga* belongs to the priest and the dog in *Bárðar saga*. The priest, then, proves to be the best friend of men, just as the dog, the priest is loyal and reliable is the lesson taught in here.

The next patterns that is readapted is that the light immobilizes the *haugbúi*, but there is a blackout. It might have been well known that light was a good help against the *haugbúar*. In one instance they take “*eld ok vax*”³⁰⁸ which can be interpreted as a candle or ‘light’ in general. He needs them not because he needs to see, even though inside the mound it should be dark. But the actual need of this ‘candle’ is that the candle “*hefir mikla náttúru með ser.*”³⁰⁹ In *Bárðar saga* the candle is interpreted as magic, since it lights itself. Then they meet the *haugbúi*, who happens to be a hero of the legendary past. He is sitting, ugly and bloated, surrounded by his treasure. Since they were honorable people while alive they deserve some respect, so “*Gestr gekk at Raknari ok kvaddi hann virðuligri konungskveðju*”³¹⁰ while Hörðr has a dialogue in verse with Soti.³¹¹ Light has a paralyzing effect on the *haugbúar*. But after the blackout the *haugbúi* is reactivated and he and the hero wrestle, and the hero gets the worst of the battle until he asks for help and he gets help in the form of light. In *Harðar saga* Hörðr’s friend only relights the candle, but in *Bárðar saga* Gestr vowed to convert into Christianity if he got out alive. So “*Ólaf konung koma í hauginn með ljósi miklu*”³¹² and this supernatural light managed to paralyze all the *haugbúar*. This conversion is also very suggestive, since Gestr, the hero’s name, happens to be also one of Óðinn’s multiple names. However, the *haugbúi* is defeated in a wrestling match and the mound robbed. In both instances, when the heroes escape from the mound it is said that “*þóttist hann ór helju heimt hafa*”³¹³ and “*þóttust þeir þá Geir ok Hörð ór helju heimt hafa.*”³¹⁴ There is an earthquake in both instances, and in *Bárðar saga* the priest acts in a biblical way when the island sank due to the earthquake,³¹⁵ since “*prestr gekk þá fram fyrir þá ok hafði róðukross í hendi, en vatn í annarri ok stökkti því. Þá klufðist sjórinn, svá at þeir gengu þurrum fótum á land.*”³¹⁶ Finally the treasure is shared, the hero keeps all the honour, but the impression is that the real heroes in *Bárðar saga* are the priest and King Ólaf, the symbols of Christianity.

Even if *Bárðar saga* was not influenced by *Harðar saga* it is still possible to perceive at least the re-adaptation of certain motifs related to the *haugganga*. It is my belief that they were commonplaces in such stories, and by studying the way in which they were readapted into a

³⁰⁸ *Harðar saga* XV: 41.

³⁰⁹ *Harðar saga* XV: 41.

³¹⁰ *Bárðar saga* XX: 167.

³¹¹ Cf. *Harðar saga* XV: 41-42.

³¹² *Bárðar saga* XX: 168.

³¹³ *Bárðar saga* XXI: 169.

³¹⁴ *Harðar saga* XV: 43.

³¹⁵ It is interesting to note another parallel. In *Harðar saga* the action took place in Gotland, and in *Guta saga* it is stated that “*var Gutland so eluist, et þet dagum sank ok natum var uppi*” (*Guta saga* I: 2) while the unnamed island in *Bárðar saga* sinks due to the earthquake.

³¹⁶ *Bárðar saga* XXI: 169.

conversion-story context it is possible to learn which were the most important elements. First we have that, both from the vow in *Harðar saga* and the sacred obligation conferred to Gestr by King Ólaf in *Bárðar saga*, breaking into a grave-mound was considered a matter of honor. The presence of Óðinn as a help provider in both stories is quite conspicuous. Supernatural help was sometimes required, and Óðinn, in his role of *draugardrottin* was the most appropriate one to provide it. The idea of the *haugbúi* trying to keep people out of the mound is also a constant. And, just as pointed before, the *haugbúi* does not prevent the intrusion with use of violence, but in the form of a vision. Then comes the fact that the *haugbúar* were considered respectable ‘people’ and they deserved some reverence. Inside the mound they appear elegantly dressed, but are described as horrible to see, black and bloated. They are paralyzed by light or fire; therefore they can close the hole in the mound during the night. They also react violently only when they are being robbed. Also, just as Stern pointed out, the only way to defeat them is in a wrestling match, and only after that they can be decapitated. Finally comes sharing the treasure.

Summing up the previous pages, it is perceptible that the *haugbúar* are the *draugar* who were high rank people during their life. They have the ability to communicate in verse, and sometimes they can even confer the gift of speech or poetry. Their role seems to be that of guardians of the bridges to the Otherworld, and in they have a dual nature. Outside their mounds they manifest themselves in an ethereal way and with human characteristics, while inside it they are of a physical nature and horrible to see. They are “the monster of prohibition [that] exists [...] to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot must not- be crossed.”³¹⁷ Accordingly, when they appear outside the grave-mound they do so to prevent people from getting inside. And once the people are inside they act violently because they are incited to behave in such a way. The *haugbúar* do not seem to be creatures with violent tendencies, and when they do react violently they do it just like a normal being would after several offences. It is also quite notorious that there are only two instances of a *haugbúi* in Iceland. This might point to the idea that they were an Scandinavian phenomenon, which is not surprising, since most of the *haugbúar* are heroes of the legendary past. They seem to be only creatures of summer, since that was the time in which the heroes could go in an expedition to the grave-mound. Finally, more than victimizers, the *haugbúar* seem to be the victims of men’s greed for gold and glory.

³¹⁷ Cohen, Jeffrey J. 1997: 13.

4.2. - *Aptrgǫngur*: The ‘Other’ as a *Draugar*

*Án gekk af honum dauðum; hann hjó af honum
höfuðit, ok dró hann út, ok stakk nefinu í klof honum,
at hann gengi eigi dauðr.
(Ans saga bogsveigis V)*

When we hear opinions about *draugar* such as them being “unpleasant and, on the whole, rather stupid people”³¹⁸ or that “the object of the haugbúi in leaving his barrow is sometimes said to be to prey on men and cattle”³¹⁹ or that they “all behave in a similar fashion: they destroy animals, kill or terrify the housewife or the servants”³²⁰ we are witnessing the great generalization that has persisted in *draugar* analysis. These descriptions are appropriate for *draugar*, but not for all of them. There is one variety of *draugar*, referred to as *aptrgangr*, which for some reasons has become the most known, and therefore their characteristics have been transferred to the Old Norse undead in general. In a certain way the *aptrgǫngur* in modern studies seem to have claimed the word *draugr* for them.³²¹

The term *aptrgangr* appears exclusively in the Sagas of Icelanders, where it is used 24 times in 6 different sagas. Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie make it a synonym of ‘*aptrganga*’, which is rendered into English as “a ghost, apparition, the French revenant.”³²² Fritzner translates it as “Gjengangeri, at de døde gaa igjen, vise sig for eller færdes blandt de levende.”³²³ In most sagas their actions over a farm or community are referred to by the adjective ‘*reimt*’, which basically means “haunted.”³²⁴ Fritzner defines it, from the noun ‘*reimleikr*’, as “Spøgeri af døde menneskers gjengangere.”³²⁵ This last activity is not specific of the *aptrgangr*, but as we will see, they do it in a peculiar way. It is important to note that these creatures, both by their linguistical marker and by their activities, appear only in the Sagas of Icelanders.

So far I have studied only the *haugbúar*, and in most articles they are assigned some of the characteristics of the *aptrgǫngur*. As I progress with this study the differences will become more obvious, but as a starting point let us mention that, among other, there are two main

³¹⁸ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 163.

³¹⁹ Chadwick, Nora. 1946: 55.

³²⁰ McCreesh, Bernardine. 1985: 768.

³²¹ One possible explanation for this generalization is the popularity of Glamr, an *aptrgangr*, who appears in the popular as well *Grettis saga*. He appears basically in every study dealing with *draugar*, and in a certain way has become their representative.

³²² Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘*aptrganga*’.

³²³ Vs. Fritzner, Johan 1973: ‘*aptrganga*’.

³²⁴ Vs. Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘*reimt*’.

³²⁵ Vs. Fritzner, Johan 1973: ‘*reimleikr*’.

differences between the *haugbúar* and the *aptrgǫngur*. These differences consist both in the time of the year in which they appear and in the way in which they interact with the living. The *haugbúar* are creatures of the spring and the summer, which is the time in which people could spend their time outdoors and make expeditions to break into their mounds or actually sleep on them. All the *haugbúar* stories in which there is a reference to the time of the year happen in the spring or the summer. Those who lack such a reference also point to the same periods of the year. Meanwhile, the *aptrgǫngur* belong to the dark months of autumn and winter. They appeared mostly, but not exclusively, around Yule when the living stayed mainly indoors. The *aptrgǫngur* were active also during the summer they tended to be more active during the winter. Accordingly, their activities also differed, mainly because the *aptrgǫngur* were the unwelcomed visitors while the *haugbúar* received the unwanted plunderers inside their mounds. The *haugbúar* were literally ‘haunted by the living’ and, as we have seen, they had to act defensively. Therefore they appeared in the fields and in dreams in order to try to prevent any intrusion. When the intrusions took place they had no alternative but to defend themselves inside their dwelling. On the other hand, the *aptrgǫngur* went to seek the living and haunted their houses. And they did not need any excuse to act violently; they simply did so.

But let's now take a closer look to the *aptrgǫngur*. In *Laxdæla saga* Hrappr, a Hebridean man born of a Scottish father and Hebridean mother, had to immigrate to Iceland because his violent temperament got him into some problems. In Iceland he established himself in his own farm and terrorized his neighbors until old age confined him to his bed. When he felt that he was about to die he called his wife and told her that he wanted to be buried below the fire-room's door. But he gave some special instructions: “*þá vil ek mér láta grǫf grafa í eldhúsdurum, ok skal mik niðr setja standanda þar í durunum; má ek þá enn vendiligar sjá yfir hýbýli mín.*”³²⁶ After he died he was buried just as he instructed and soon he proved what he meant by ‘watch over my house’, for he became an *aptrgangr*, and, as we are told “*En svá illr sem hann var viðreignar, þá er hann lifði, þá jók nú miklu við, er hann var dauðr, því at hann gekk mjǫk apr.*”³²⁷ He began to cause a lot of trouble in the neighboring farms. But in his own farm he was a bit more aggressive, for “*hann deyddi flest hjón sín í aprgǫngunni*”.³²⁸ As a result his farm became deserted, while the neighbors went to the local *goði* to ask him for help. The *goði* went to the farm in order to disinter and move Hrappr's body to a place “*í brott, þar er sízt væri fjárgangr í nánd eða*

³²⁶ *Laxdæla saga* XVII: 39

³²⁷ *Laxdæla saga* XVII: 39.

³²⁸ *Laxdæla saga* XVII: 39.

mannaferðir”.³²⁹ This led to a decrease in Hrappr’s haunting, which allowed Hrappr’s son to settle in the farm. But soon after he became crazy and died. Hrappr’s brother in law decided then to take care of the farm. He made ready and sailed there with his kinsmen and his livestock. During the trip they were struck by a storm and everybody, except one man, drowned. After that the farm remained deserted for several years. Then a man named Óláfr bought the land for the incredibly low price of three marks of silver, “*þat var þó ekki jafnaðarkaup*”,³³⁰ it was an extremely low price especially because the land was said to be of an excellent quality. He moved there with his household and, when winter arrived one of his shepherds went to him asking for a different job in the farm. Óláfr did not understand the reason of his inconformity and offered to go with him to the cowshed that night in order to find out what was wrong with his job. When they arrived the shepherd went into the cowshed while Óláfr stayed outside. Then the shepherd went out running and told him that “*Hrappr stendr í fjósdurunum ok vildi fálma til mín, en ek em saddr á fangbrqgðum við hann.*”³³¹ Óláfr ran to meet Hrappr, pointing his spear at him. But Hrappr broke it and kept the blade. Then Óláfr intended to wrestle with him, but Hrappr sank into the earth. The next morning they went to where Hrappr was buried (*er Hrappr hafði dysjaðr verit*³³²) and dug him out. His body was not decomposed (*ófiinn*) and he had the spear blade with him. Then they had “*Hrappr brenndr á báli, ok er aska hans flutt á sjá út.*”³³³ That was the end of his haunting.

I will use this example to illustrate the standard point of view about the *aptrgqngur*³³⁴ and afterwards, as we get more comparative material, I will show my own arguments.

Hrappr’s return exemplifies McCreesh’s point of view, which is the commonplace in articles that deal with *draugar*. She states that

The pagans who become *draugar* after death do so for one of two reasons. The first is that they had been murderously inclined –or at least an unneighbourly nuisance– while they were alive [...] The other reason why some ghosts walk is that they have connections with the world of magic.³³⁵

Even though I still don’t know of anyone becoming a *draugr* while still alive, the reasons that she exposes for those who do become one ‘after death’ fit the descriptions of all the *aptrgqngur* in

³²⁹ *Laxdæla saga* XVII: 40.

³³⁰ *Laxdæla saga* XXIV: 67.

³³¹ *Laxdæla saga* XXIV: 69.

³³² *Laxdæla saga* XXIV: 69.

³³³ *Laxdæla saga* XXIV: 69.

³³⁴ That is the *aptrgqngur* that in the secondary sources are mixed with the *haugbúar* and called *draugar* in general; and not the same *aptrgqngur* that we intend to analyze, as an independent subclass of *draugr*.

³³⁵ McCreesh, Bernardine 1985: 768.

our sources, but not necessarily of draugar in general.³³⁶ It is also stated that “the object of the *haugbúi* in leaving his barrow is sometimes said to be to prey on men and cattle.”³³⁷ As we have seen *haugbúar* don’t seem to do so but, as I will show below, this is an activity that *aptrgǫngur* seem to like. Even though in Hrappr’s case it is only stated that he killed most of his household, his attacks on cattle seem to be obvious in the fact that they re-buried him far away from cattle and men as well as in the fact that in his second return he seemed to prefer the cowshed as his place of activity. As for their physical description in and outside the grave “their bodies [are] uncorrupted, but in the cases of the physically most active and temperamentally most malevolent, they are larger, heavier, and, above all, stronger than in life, the faces darker and the eyes more terrifying.”³³⁸ Sayers also points that “contact with the earth of the burial site seems to be the source of the swelling and dark color of the *draugar*”.³³⁹ Concerning the time of their return, in Hrappr’s case as well as with most of his fellow *aptrgǫngur*, winter was the favorite (but not exclusive) season, especially around Yule. As Schmitt puts it “[i]f there was indeed a time of the year that according to our medieval tales, attracted ghosts, it was Christmas and the Twelve Days (from Christmas to Epiphany) and, more widely, winter, the dark part of the year.”³⁴⁰ As for the way to get rid of them “is by having their bodies reduced to ashes; once the corpse is destroyed, so is the ghost.”³⁴¹

All of these statements fit, so far, to Hrappr’s case and they will fit also the cases of most of the *aptrgǫngur*. But my main interest is not ‘what’ they do but ‘why’ did they had such a behavior. The explanation of the *aptrgǫngur* coming back due to their ill nature or their connection with magic is accurate but not enough when it comes to explain why did they come back from their graves. The ways in which people got rid of the *aptrgǫngur* in general is right, but basically descriptive. Of course burning is an effective way to get rid of a corpse, but we are still lacking the ‘why’. In order to go deeper into the analysis we must gather some material to analyze, and I beg my readers’ patience, for in the next pages I am going to describe, as brief as possible, one more *aptrgǫngur* occurrence in order to get enough material as to make some positive assertions.

³³⁶ For examples of this see below chapter 4.3. It is also worth noticing that in *Brennu-Njals* saga, Gunnar who is considered as a *haugbúi* (i.e. a *draugr* but not an *aptrgǫngur*) states that he does not know if he is less manly than the other men, because he does not enjoy killing. (Cf. *Brennu-Njals* saga LIV.)

³³⁷ Chadwick, N.K. 1946: 55.

³³⁸ Sayers, William 1996: 242.

³³⁹ Sayers, William 1996: 242.

³⁴⁰ Schmitt, Jean-Claude 1994: 174.

³⁴¹ McCreesh, Bernardine 1985: 768.

In *Eyrbyggja saga* a foreigner called Þórólfr bægifótr died in the midst of an anger display. He was discussing some boundary issues and went home in a rage, sat down and the next morning he was found dead in the same position. His household was terrified because “því at *qllum þótti óþokki á andláti hans.*”³⁴² They prepared to bury him, taking precautions like not walking in front of his corpse while his eyes were still open and breaking wall in the room so they could take the body out through it and not through the door. Then they put his body in a sled and the oxen had to make a lot of effort to drag him to his burial place. Finally “*dysjuðu teir Þórólfr þar rammliga.*”³⁴³ Then, as the summer passed they noticed that “*Þórólfr lá eigi kyrr,*”³⁴⁴ the oxen that had dragged his corpse were ‘troll-ridden’ and died. In general, “*allt fé, þat er nær kom dys Þórólfs, ærðisk ok æpði til bana.*”³⁴⁵ Then Þórólfr started harassing the shepherd and in the autumn he was found dead near Þórólfr’s *dys*. The shepherd was all black and all his bones were broken. They buried him right next to Þórólfr. Then all the livestock in the valley was found dead, and “*ef fuglar settusk á dys Þórólfs, fellu þeir niðr dauðir.*”³⁴⁶ Later in the autumn people heard that there was someone ridding the roofs of their houses. As soon as winter arrived Þórólfr appeared on the farm and “*sótti mest at húsfreyju*”³⁴⁷ and he pursued her so much that she went crazy and died soon after. She was buried beside Þórólfr. All the people left the farm, but then Þórólfr started haunting the whole valley, killing people. All the men that he killed were seen in Þórólfr’s company. His son decided to undig Þórólfr’s corpse and move it somewhere else. They went to dig him up and found that he was “*ófúinn, ok var hann nú inn illiligsti.*”³⁴⁸ His body was placed in a sledge but it was so heavy that the oxen, which dragged it, became exhausted and they had to replace them. Then the oxen went crazy and died. Finally they placed him in another grave and built a tall wall around his *dys*. There he lied in calm until the death of his son. His only appearance in that time is in the form of a bird, as a *fyrirburðr*, but this will be analyzed in Chapter 4.4. Several years later, as soon as his son died he became active again. He killed people and cattle and the farms in the area were deserted. People set an expedition to his *dys* and when they un-dug his body they found “*þar Þórólfr; var hann þá enn ófúinn ok in trollsligsti at sjá; hann var blár sem hel ok digr sem naut.*”³⁴⁹ They tried to move him but he was extremely heavy.

³⁴² *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIII: 92.

³⁴³ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIII: 92.

³⁴⁴ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁴⁵ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁴⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁴⁷ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁴⁸ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁴⁹ *Eyrbyggja saga* LXIII: 169-70.

Finally they set a fire and burned his body, but the wind spread the ashes all around. They collected most of them and threw them out to the sea.

Both Hrappr's and Þórólfr's cases show a great similarity. Both characters were extremely violent while alive. But if every single violent character in sagas were to become an *aptrgangr* the sources would depict an island full of dead men walking and few living confront them. Their violent life is, yes, a precondition to become an *aptrgangr*, but there is something special about their death. They both died in anger. More important there is something irregular around their death. In Hrappr's case this shows up in the fact that he was buried standing up and before he died he had the intention to stay in Miðgarðr after his death. In Þórólfr's case the irregularities in his death are more obvious to the living, up to the point that everybody was terrified because his death they thought his was a disliking death (*en fólk allt var óttafullt, því at allum þótti óþokki á andláti hans*³⁵⁰) and thus took extreme precautions in dealing with the corpse. Dying in anger may be a precondition to become an *aptrgangr*, and Þórólfr's case has a parallel in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*. There Skalla-Grímr also died in anger during the night, the next morning his son had the southern wall of the room broken up so they could take the body out. Then they took them far away and buried him in a mound (*haug*) with his horse and weapons.³⁵¹ Even though nothing is said about Skalla-Grímr becoming an *aptrgangr* I have reasons to believe that he was considered as a potential revenant due to his violent life and to his irregular death in anger. In both cases taking the corpse out through a hole in the wall is a way of preventing their return.

A question arises, by contrasting both Þórólfr's and Skalla-Grím's death, and that is why did one become an *aptrgangr* while the other didn't? Both had the same violent temperament and died in the same way, and Skalla-Grím had so many of the prerequisites to become a revenant that people expected him to come back. However, there are some elements lacking in Skalla-Grím's case, which, as we will see, are present in all of the *aptrgǫngur*'s stories.

Skalla-Grím, unlike Þórólfr (and Hrappr and basically all the *aptrgǫngur*) was a Norwegian that moved to Iceland during the Landnáma period, while the *aptrgǫngur* were basically not Norwegians who arrived to Iceland after it was fully settled or people considered to be magicians. So far we have shown only the case of Hrappr, who was Hebridean, but later I will show the cases of a Swedish named Glamr and two magicians named Þormóð and Hallbjǫrn. There is also an unnamed Norwegian whose return may be due to some magic spells, which is exactly the case of Þórólfr in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Though he was Norwegian, he arrived to Iceland

³⁵⁰ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIII: 92.

³⁵¹ Cf. *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* LIX.

after the Landnáma period and took other people's property by use of violence to increase his mother's (a late settler) property and get some land for himself. Regardless of his origin, his late arrival to Iceland may have conferred him the status of a foreigner in Iceland. However, his return from death seems to be also linked to a curse put on his son by Katla, a witch. Earlier in the story Arnkell kills Katla's son as part of her punishment for being a sorceress. Afterwards they kill her also, but before she tells him that “*en um þat vilda ek at mín ákvæði stæðisk, at þú hlytir því verra af feðr þínum en Oddr hefir af mér hlóttit, sem þú hefir meira í hættu en han; vænti ek ok, at þat sé mælt aðr lýkr, at þú eigir illan fǫður.*”³⁵² This curse of having everybody saying that he had an evil father and getting much troubles because of him proved right through Þórólfr's violence during his life, but the curse continued after his death, since he haunted for a long time, even after his son's death.

The ones who become *aptrgǫngur* are the ‘Other’, the elements strange to the society due to their status as foreigners or as sorcerers (or at least their return from death is originated by a sorcerer's curse). But these elements remain constant wherever there is an *aptrgangr*. Therefore, Þórólfr as a latecomer in Iceland was considered a foreigner, what added to his violent temperament and the way of his death, reunited the prerequisites to become an *aptrgangr*. Skalla-Grím arrived during the Landnáma, and that was the only thing he did not share with Þórólfr, and in a certain way with Hrappr. As a local he did not haunt, though people feared that he might have done it. As Sayers puts it:

the point the sagas are making, although the equation is never explicit, is essentially defensive and slightly xenophobic. Once past the settlement period, aliens fit less successfully into normative Icelandic life. This, plus certain personality preconditions, results in their often going frustrated and unfulfilled to their deaths, making them prime material to be reactivated as revenants. There is a similar tendency to locate future *draugar* among the less wellborn elements of society.³⁵³

As we have seen *haugbúar* belonged to the dominant class when alive, and the ‘*uppsitjendr*’, as we will see were not necessarily associated with the higher class, but they are linked with the Christian religion and had also a tendency to be of high status.³⁵⁴ I will assume then, that when Sayers makes reference to *draugar* he is talking about the *aptrgǫngur*, who indeed seem to have come from the lower classes. As we know, the sagas tell the stories about the dominant classes and its public may have been as well the same strata of society they tell about. This argument may then help to understand why didn't Skalla-Grím become an *aptrgangr*

³⁵² *Eyrbyggja saga* XX: 54.

³⁵³ Sayers, William 1996: 257.

³⁵⁴ See below, Chapter 4.3.

while the others did. “The monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us. In its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside [...] monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economical, sexual.”³⁵⁵ The *aptrgangr* as a foreigner is that what is not understood, is what is weird. But it seems that the ‘Other’ was not only the foreigner but also the poor and the sorcerers. And this marks the second basic difference between both Þórólfr and Hrappr in contrast with Skalla-Grím.

Their different status can be perceived in the way they were buried. As for Skalla-Grím, we are told that he was buried in a *haug* with his horse, weapons and tools.³⁵⁶ Meanwhile, both Þórólfr and Hrappr were buried in a *dys* in all the occasions they were buried and reburied. When Þórólfr just died we are told that “*dysjuðu þeir Þórólfr þar rammliga*”³⁵⁷ and his first grave is clearly referred to as “*dys Þórólfs*.”³⁵⁸ When they remove his body to a second grave it is also referred to as a *dys*.³⁵⁹ Hrappr’s first grave was in the fire room, but then he was removed to a *dys*, where he was finally ‘killed’ (*er Hrappr hafði dysjaðr verit*³⁶⁰). Later we will see that when there is reference to the burial place of an *aptrgangr* it is always a *dys*. But let us first stop to find out what a *dys* is and which are its implications.

Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie define *dys* as “a cairn, less than *haugr*” and as for the act of burying someone in a *dys* we have that *dysja* is “to bury in a cairn, heap of stones over a witch, criminal, or the like, never used of a proper burying”.³⁶¹ So both Hrappr and Þórólfr were buried in a ‘low status grave’, and we are not told if they had any grave-goods, but due to the dishonorable situation of being buried in a *dys* we shall expect none. This is, then a second and major difference between Skalla-Grím and Hrappr and Þórólfr. Barber, while analyzing the folklore of revenants in the continent, found that

[i]n general, lists of potential revenants tend to contain people who are distinguished primarily by being different from the people who make the lists. Burkhart, for example, gives the following categories of revenants-by-predisposition: ‘the godless (people of a different faith are included here, too!), evildoers, suicides, in addition sorcerers, witches and were-wolves.’³⁶²

³⁵⁵ Cohen, Jeffrey J 1996: 7.

³⁵⁶ Cf. *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* LIX.

³⁵⁷ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIII: 92.

³⁵⁸ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁵⁹ Cf. *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 95; XLIII: 115; LXIII: 170.

³⁶⁰ *Laxdæla saga* XXIV: 69.

³⁶¹ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘*dys*’ and ‘*dysja*’.

³⁶² Barber, Paul 1988: 30.

I find that it is not casual that Barber's list of potential revenants coincides partly with Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie's list of people buried in a *dys*. This leads me to the question of the relationship between the way of burial and the way in which *draugar* behaved.

As mentioned in the chapter about *haugbúar*, they were the rich people, who could afford to be buried with expensive grave-goods and they stayed 'living' inside their mounds, becoming active only when it came to protect their goods from intruders or to find tranquility in their mounds. When it comes to *haugbúar* I can say, with Sayers, that "[t]he dead resemble the living in valuing their rest and their property, so that breaking into a grave mound for treasure often results in physical combat in the grave with the deceased. Given that the grave dweller is activated by the intrusion, death seems a latent state."³⁶³

On the other hand, we have in contrast the poor, the foreigners, 'the other', buried in a second rate grave which probably lacked burial goods. These characters became restless and did not stay in the grave. We have seen that though a violent temperament is a precondition to become an *aptrgǫngur*, the most important factor was economical or related to a lower role in the society. The low and high-class revenants could not behave in the same way, and the difference is obvious in the fact that *aptrgǫngur*'s behaviour inside and outside the grave differs extensively from that of the *haugbúar*. The *haugbúar* was active only inside its grave since it had to defend its treasure. What about those who lacked a treasure in the grave? There are only two instances in which *aptrgǫngur* were confronted in their graves, and they are the fore mentioned cases of Hrappr and Þórólfr. Even though they were extremely active outside their *dysjar*, when people dug them out they did not react at all. Their bodies could be transported with the only effect of the oxen going crazy and dying, but the corpse remained defenseless. And when they were dug out in order to be burned, none of them reacted at all. They seem to have been active only out the *dysjar*, but inside they were inactive and defenseless. Maybe they did not react at all because they had nothing important to protect inside their graves.

The *aptrgǫngur* were active only outside their *dysjar*, but even though now days it is only evident that they were evildoers and foreigners in general, that alone does not provide them with a justification to go out their graves. Now, considering that the *haugbúar*'s reason to become active was to protect their goods, making a parallel we can find an explanation for the *aptrgǫngur*'s motivations if we analyze what seems to be their main interest in coming back from

³⁶³ Sayers, William 1996: 243.

the death. Lets start with Hrappr and Þórólfr, again, and then I will proceed to analyze other *aptrgǫngur*.

When Hrappr first came back he was still buried in the fire room and then, while haunting he killed most of his household (*hann deyddi flest hjón sín í aptrgǫngunni*³⁶⁴). Then after he was reburied in his *dys* they took care to place him far away from cattle and people (*í brott, þar er sízt væri fjárgangr í nánd eða mannaferðir*³⁶⁵). Placing him far from cattle may have been due to the fact that he was harming it as well, and not only men. However this is not for sure, but can be deduced from the position of his new burial. Then Hrappr started to prevent people from taking over his property. He did so by haunting and killing the ones who tried to take over them, so his property remained abandoned (*lendur þær, er Hrappr hafði átt, lágu í auðn*³⁶⁶). Then, when he appeared again several years after it was when his farm was taken over by another farmer. This time he was beating the shepherd and hanging around the cowshed every night. Then he was dug out of his grave and burnt and his ashes were scattered in the sea.

In the other case, after Þórólfr's death the first signs of him becoming an *aptrgangr* were that the oxen that hauled him were troll-ridden (*trollriða*) and that all the cattle that approached his *dys* went crazy and screamed until they died (*allt fé, þat er nær kom dys Þórólfs, ærðisk ok æpði til bana*³⁶⁷), afterwards he started killing all the cattle in the valleys. Something similar happened to the birds, since they died at the minor contact with his *dys* (*ef fuglar settusk á dys Þórólfs, fellu þeir niðr dauðir*³⁶⁸) He also killed the shepherd, and the people's reaction was to bury him by Þórólfr (*var hann dysjaðr hjá Þórólfi*³⁶⁹), which may appear illogical, since they buried him next to his victimizer. But they did the same some time later, when the housewife died due to Þórólfr's visitations they buried her with Þórólfr. When they dug his grave in order to move him to another place he was quiet as a corpse, but the oxen went crazy and died. Years later, when he became active again he started killing people and cattle (*deyddi bæði menn ok fé*³⁷⁰) so people dug him out and burned his body and scattered his ashes in the sea.

In *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* we find a very similar story. A Swedish shepherd named Glamr died, victim of a strange creature who 'reimt' a farm. When alive he was described as

³⁶⁴ *Laxdæla saga* XVII: 39.

³⁶⁵ *Laxdæla saga* XVII: 40.

³⁶⁶ *Laxdæla saga* XXIV: 66.

³⁶⁷ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁶⁸ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁶⁹ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁷⁰ *Eyrbyggja saga* LXIII: 169.

‘trúlauss’³⁷¹ accordingly he never went to church nor did he observe religious fasting. Regardless of his atheism, when he was killed and his body found, people tried to take his body to the church, but it was so heavy that they could not move it really far. So it was buried in a *dys* in the same spot where he was: *”Letu þeir þá fyrir vinnask at færa hann til kirkju ok dysjuðu hann þar, sem þá var hann kominn.”*³⁷² Glamr became an *aptrgangr* soon after, few days after Christmas, and his first activities were to ride the house’s roof at night (*riða húsum á nætr*³⁷³) and walk around night and day. But his activities decreased as the days grew longer, until the summer arrived, then he did not show up at all. Then another foreigner arrived and he took Glamr’s job as a shepherd. Everybody liked him and he was a Christian, so when the winter arrived and Glamr killed him, they had no trouble transporting him and burying him in the churchyard. He never walked after death. We are not told what Glamr did immediately after, but whatever it was, it was enough to make most people flee from the farm. Next he killed the cowherd inside the cowshed and killed all the livestock and did the same in the neighboring farms: *“en allt kvikfé þat, sem eptir var, deyddi Glamr, ok því næst fór hann um allan dalinn ok eyddi alla bæi upp frá Tungu.”*³⁷⁴ Afterwards he started killing horses and dogs, so that *“Engi maðr mátti fara upp í dalinn með hest eða hund, því at þat var þegar drepit”*,³⁷⁵ but nothing is said about him killing any more people. On summer he disappeared again, but next autumn he made another appearance and *“tóku at vaxa reimleikar.”*³⁷⁶ This time he forgot about cattle, horses and dogs for *“Var þá mest sótt at bóndadóttur, ok svá fór, at hon lézk af því.”*³⁷⁷ Then Grettir arrived to the farm and Glamr killed his horse. The next night Glamr went into the house and began to fight with Grettir and tried to drag him out, which he finally did. Grettir won the fight, cut Glamr’s head and put it between his legs, then they burned him and buried his ashes far away. But before being killed Glamr spoke and put a curse on Grettir. He could do so because, as we are told, *“því var meiri ófagnaðarkraptr með Glámi en flestum qðrum aptrgqngumqnum, at hann mælti þá á þessa leið.”*³⁷⁸

Before continuing, let me expose briefly another case. Þormóðr was an unpopular man, and most probably a sorcerer, since *“Var þat kallat at hann væri eigi einhamur”*³⁷⁹ where

³⁷¹ *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXII: 111.

³⁷² *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXII: 112-113.

³⁷³ *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXII: 113.

³⁷⁴ *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXIII: 115.

³⁷⁵ *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXIII: 115.

³⁷⁶ *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXIII: 116.

³⁷⁷ *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXIII: 116.

³⁷⁸ *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXV: 121.

³⁷⁹ *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* I: 293.

einhamur, or not with a definite shape, is used commonly to describe witches and sorcerers. However, one day he died and his widow asked for help because “*hann vitjar hverja nótt sængr sinnar*”³⁸⁰ and that was scaring the farmhands so they wanted to leave the farm. Óláfr went to help her and the first night he stayed in her farm Þormóðr entered the house. Óláfr tried to attack him with his axe but by then Þormóðr had already taken hold of him and they began to wrestle. Þormóðr dragged him out but he lost the fight. So “*Óláfr lætr þá kné fylgja kviði, leikr þar til við Þormóð, er hann sér fyrir honum slík ráð, er honum sýnisk.*”³⁸¹ We are not told exactly what he did but, whatever was the way in which Óláfr dealt with him it came to be useless because soon after, in the winter, Þormóðr was walking again. Þormóðr was in the field troubling a shepherd who was trying to gather the sheep while Þormóðr was scaring them. Óláfr happened to be passing by and began to wrestle with him and finally he broke Þormóðr’s back. Then he made to the sea, swimming and carrying the body until he found a point where the water was deep enough and then sank him. Þormóðr never haunted again but the place where he was sunk was considered dangerous.

So, what can we learn from these *aptrgǫngur* activities? First, as we mentioned before, they seem to have been foreigners, sorcerers or poor people (like a shepherd), and all of them were pagan. Second, it remains a constant that whenever there is a reference to their graves they are always a *dýs* and that when they are confronted in there they don’t defend themselves at all. But if we contrast them with the *haugbúar*, who become active when it comes to defend their property, some similarities may arise. The *aptrgǫngur* did not have any goods to defend, but in the stories that I just retold we can perceive some parallels in their activities. Basically they killed oxen, cattle, and horses and in one instance dogs or birds; or at least they were active around cattle, either in the cowshed or scaring them until they went crazy and killed themselves. They also kill or annoy the shepherds. Finally they harassed a woman, either the *husfreyja* or the *bóndadóttur*, until they died. Þoróðr’s nightly visits to his bed may have been part of this chasing a woman until death. *Aptrgǫngur*’s activities may lead us to understand why did they return, taking into consideration what we know from literature and archaeology.

We have several sources to the burial customs. And from them we can learn something about *aptrgǫngur*’s behavior. In *Svaða þáttur ok Arnórs Kerlingarnefs* a burial is said to have taken place according to the ancient custom, and it is described in the following words: “*var hann sekr heiðingi, sjálfgráfinn af sínum fylgdarmönnum, ok þar með honum hundr hans ok hestr at*

³⁸⁰ *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* II: 298.

³⁸¹ *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* II: 299.

fornum sið”.³⁸² *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* describes a more princely burial, in it the grave-goods in Árán’s mound were, apart from his weapons and treasure, a hawk, a dog, a horse and Ásmundr as a companion for three days.³⁸³ In another princely burial scene, this occasion a ship-burial, Ibn Fadlan reports that when a chieftain dies “his family asks his slave-girls and slave-boys, “Who among you will die with him?”³⁸⁴ In this case the girl who volunteered was killed some days later and set with him on the funeral pyre. But among the grave-goods they placed, apart from food and clothing they also included:

a dog, which they cut in two and which they threw onto the ship [...] then they brought two mounts, made them gallop until they began to sweat, cut them to pieces and threw the flesh onto the ship. They next fetched two cows, which they also cut into pieces and threw them on board, and a cock and a hen.³⁸⁵

In the archaeological sources we find that the Oseberg ship-burial contained, “no fewer than fifteen horses, all decapitated [...] also two oxen and four dogs, all of them killed for this burial.”³⁸⁶ We know also that in Iceland the most common grave-goods were horses and dogs.³⁸⁷ In addition, we have graphic material in some Gotland picture-stones. The stone from Lärbro (Fig. 1) shows in the third panel from the top a funeral scene in which a bird is being offered to the dead warrior. Meanwhile, the stone from Klinte shows in its top panel an image of the dead warrior entering Valhǫll in company of an animal that seems to be a dog. In short, we can see that, both in literary and archaeological sources, among other things the grave-goods of the higher classes included horses, dogs, oxen, birds and occasionally slave men or women as suttees.

It may not be just a great coincidence that the *aptrgǫngur* sought mainly the grave-goods listed above. As Sayers pointed out when discussing foreigners who arrived late to a wholly settled Iceland which offered them few opportunities of development “This, plus certain personality preconditions, results in their often going frustrated and unfulfilled to their deaths, making them prime material to be reactivated as revenants. There is a similar tendency to locate future *draugar* among the less wellborn elements of society.”³⁸⁸ The result of their aggressive temperament plus their frustration may have resulted in them seeking some ‘just’ treatment after death, and provide themselves with the burial goods that were neglected to them by a society in

³⁸² *Svaða þáttur ok Arnórs Kerlingarnefs* 3: 332.

³⁸³ Cf. *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* VII: 378 [VII: 338].

³⁸⁴ Montgomery, James E. 2000: 3.

³⁸⁵ Montgomery, James E. 2000: 4.

³⁸⁶ Ingstad, Anne Stine 1995: 144.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Eldjárn, Kristján 2000: 301.

³⁸⁸ Sayers, William 1996: 257.

which they did not fully fit. All their activities seem to be focused in getting the grave-goods that the rich did have. And when it came to weapons, another grave-good usual in burial mounds, we have that when Óláfr attacked Hrappr with a spear, Hrappr broke the shaft, keeping the blade, and in that precise moment disappeared. The next day, when they went to his *dys* and dug him up “*Þar finnr Óláfr spjót sitt.*”³⁸⁹ This could be interpreted as Hrappr taking possession of a weapon and taking it with him as a grave-good. It is also quite conspicuous that when Þórólfr killed both the shepherd and the housewife both of them were buried beside him.³⁹⁰ The members of the household may have known his intentions of providing himself with suttees and decided to bury them with Þórólfr in order to placate his aggressiveness.

In some instances the *aptrgǫngur* seem to protect the property they had while alive, in case they had some, just like the *haugbúar* defended their grave-goods, which were their earthly possessions. Þórólfr, for example was peaceful while his son was alive but as soon as he died, Þórólfr walked again, and all the surrounding farms were deserted. Maybe he was keeping his farm from going outside the family. This intention to protect their states is more obvious in Hrappr’s case, since he asked to be buried in an upright position in order to “*sjá yfir hýbýli mín*”³⁹¹. He performed his guardian role so well that when the saga was written the farm was still deserted, as reported by the saga-writer (*Sá bær hét síðan á Hrappsstöðum. Þar er nú auðn*³⁹²). It seems that, just like the *haugbúar*, the *aptrgǫngur* did not want to share their possessions with anyone, but in they extended this to their whole territory and not only to the grave-goods.

When Hilda Ellis stated that “The *draugar* may impart advice, when they appear in dreams to those whom they favor, but never wisdom”³⁹³ she might have been referring to the *haugbúar* in particular. It is true that *draugar* do not impart wisdom, but few characters in sagas actually do. Not even Njal, one of the wisest saga-characters transmitted wisdom, but people sought him for his advice. The wisdom that saga-characters impart is through their actions but few times, if ever, with words. However, the *haugbúar*, as we have seen could confer some abilities. Especially abilities connected with language, like poetry or the ability to speak. But when it comes to the use of language it is noteworthy that *aptrgǫngur* are completely mute. Unlike the *haugbúar*, who communicated in verse, they never proffer a single word. The only instance in which an *aptrgangr* talks is in *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar*, and in that occasion we

³⁸⁹ *Laxdæla saga* XXIV: 69.

³⁹⁰ Cf. *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

³⁹¹ *Laxdæla saga* XVII: 39.

³⁹² Cf. *Laxdæla saga* X.

³⁹³ Ellis, Hilda R 1943: 163.

are told that “*En því var meiri ófagnaðarkraptr med Glámi en flestum qðrum aptrgqngumqnnum, at hann mælti þá á þessa leið.*”³⁹⁴ We are not told if this ‘unheavenly’ powers (*ófagnaðarkraptr*) which Glamr had, but not other *aptrgqngur*, consisted in the ability to speak or if it was because he could curse. Most probably it was making reference to both. But it is quite relevant that this is said about him just before he speaks for the first and last time after he died. No other *aptrgangr* did ever talk.³⁹⁵ However they may have not been silent at all, since we can find a reference to the noises that they might have made. In *Bárðar saga* someone’s screams are referred to as “*gera nú miklu meira óhljóð en frá megi segja, því at svá má at kveða, at þeira hljóð væri líkari nágöllum en nökkurs kykvendis látum.*”³⁹⁶ These indescribable sounds, which seemed to come from screaming corpses rather than from a living thing, are, as a matter of fact, the only reference that we have to the *aptrgqngur* noises. But if the saga writer chose to use them to make reference to a horrible noise instead of describing it, it may have been due to the fact that he thought that his audience had a clear picture of the corpses’ screaming. People may have been thankful of the fact that *aptrgqngur* never appeared in dreams.

Unlike the *haugbúar*, the *aptrgqngur* were no poets and did not have wealth that the living may seek in their graves. By “killing” them people obtained no possessions at all, and in most cases just little fame. For example Grettir’s actions as an *aptrgqngur* killer did not help him to stop being an outlaw. And after Óláfr killed Þormóðr there are some ironical comments about his acts, such as “*Hræddr hefir þú orðit, er þú lofar glóp þenna; mun þat hans fremð mest at fásk við aptrgqngumenn.*”³⁹⁷ The most valuable thing obtained from getting rid of them was peace for the community.

Lets examine the way in which people got rid of the *aptrgqngur*, but first I will retell other three occurrences. *Flóamanna saga*, a text which, in Jónas Kristjánsson words was “re-created from an older version [and] deserved a better narrator”³⁹⁸ we have two cases one just after the other. In the first one there is man of whom we only know that “*hafði fyrir litlu andazt, ok þat með, at hann gengi aprtr.*”³⁹⁹ One night Þorgils heard that he was making noise on the roof, so he

³⁹⁴ *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXV: 121.

³⁹⁵ There is, however, another instance, in *Þorsteinn þátrr skelks*, but this seems to be more due to the fact that it seems to be more a part of a conversion narrative, in *Flatayjarbók*, in which a moral lesson had to be taught about the ancient heroes suffering in hell. In this þátrr, the *draugr* is called a *puki* and never an *aptrgangr*, and his actions escape all classification, and appeared to be more a demon, which spoke few times and the rest only screamed as loud as he could.

³⁹⁶ *Bárðar saga* XV: 154.

³⁹⁷ *Hávarðar saga ísfirðings* III: 302.

³⁹⁸ Jónas Kristjánsson 1988: 287.

³⁹⁹ *Flóamanna saga* XIII: 255.

took his axe and went out. There “*Hann sá draug fyrir dyrum standa, mikinn ok illiligan,*”⁴⁰⁰ so Þorgils prepared himself to thrust him with his axe. When the *aptrgangr* saw this he ran to his mound⁴⁰¹ and Þorgils after him. Þorgils dropped his axe and began to wrestle with the *aptrgangr*, and at the end he had control over the situation. The *aptrgangr* fell on its back and Þorgils profited this in order to take a small break and to grab his axe “*Höggr Þorgils þá af honum höfuð*”⁴⁰² and the situation was solved, everybody was happy.

The next line opens with a knock on the door, and a man asking Þorgils for help because his mother had died but things were not calm. He asked Þorgils to go with him to bury his mother, because all of his farmhands wanted to leave the place. They went to the farm and found the woman dead, prepared a coffin and Þorgils asked for strong ropes to wrap the coffin. The man’s intention was to take his mother and “*skulum vit nú draga hana í burtu, færa niðr í jörð ok bera á ofan sem mestan þunga*”⁴⁰³ but on the way the ropes broke and the woman got out of the coffin. They took hold of her and took her to a pyre, which her son had built, and “*kasta þeir henni á bálit ok váru hjá, meðan hon brann*”⁴⁰⁴ and they remained good friends.

In *Laxdæla saga* the farmers captured several sorcerers and witches in order to kill them. Most of them were stoned to death and then buried in a *dys*, but they reserve a special punishment for one of them. Hallbjörn slíkisteinsauga, the sorcerer, was drowned. However his body “*rak upp ór brimi litlu siðar en honum var drekkt. Þar heitir Knarrarnes, sem hann var kasaðr,*⁴⁰⁵ *ok gekk hann aptr mjök.*”⁴⁰⁶ One night a cow was missing in one of the surrounding farms and people went at night to look for it. One man did not find the cow but ran into Hallbjörn and started wrestling with him. When Hallbjörn felt he was getting the worst in the fight “*smýgr hann niðr í jqrðina*”⁴⁰⁷ and never came back.

⁴⁰⁰ *Flóamanna saga* XIII: 255.

⁴⁰¹ These, plus an occurrence in *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XVIII, are the only instances in which an *aptrgangr* is linked to a haug. In *Flóamanna saga* we believe that this is due to the late re-creation and narratorial defects alluded above by Jónas Kristjánsson. In *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* we believe that it was due more to a political manipulation in order to take control over an island than to an actual occurrence of *aptrgangr*, as we will see later in this chapter.

⁴⁰² *Flóamanna saga* XIII: 255.

⁴⁰³ *Flóamanna saga* XIII: 256.

⁴⁰⁴ *Flóamanna saga* XIII: 256.

⁴⁰⁵ His body was “*kasaðr*” and not “*dysjaðr*” like our previous cases. But Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie translate “*kasaðr*” as “*Kasa: to heap earth or stones upon, to earth, commonly used of witches, miscreants, carcasses of men or beasts, Grág. ii. 156 (of an outlaw)*”. So the implications of being *kasaðr* or *dysjaðr* for our purposes are the same: both are low rank and dishonorable burial practices, which most certainly included no grave-goods. (Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘*kasa*’.

⁴⁰⁶ *Laxdæla saga* XXXVIII: 109.

⁴⁰⁷ *Laxdæla saga* XXXVIII: 110.

We have seen that the sagas portray several different ways to get rid of an *aptrgangr*, some of which have no parallel in the other sources. But, before proceeding I have to make a distinction between the two different ways in which they are confronted. The first one is when the body is dug out of its grave, without a fight or any resistance by the corpse. In these cases the greatest trouble seems to be moving the corpses, due to their great weight. This occurs both in the cases of Hrappr, in *Laxdæla saga*, and Þórólfr, in *Eyrbyggja saga*; and both of them seem to be, in structural terms, exactly the same. The patten would be: first re-bury the corpse far away from the farm; then, when the haunting persists dig the body out once again in order to burn it; finally the ashes are thrown to the sea. The other kind of confronting them is when people have to ‘kill’ the *aptrgangr* out of its grave. So far we have the episodes of Hallbjörn, in *Laxdæla saga*, Glamr, in *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar*, Þormóðr, in *Hávarðar saga ísfirðings*, and the man and the woman, in *Flóamanna saga*. These five cases show, at a first glance, to have no similarities at all. We have that Hallbjörn sank in the ground during the fight and left for good, Glamr was decapitated after the fight and then his body was bunt and the ashes buried far away, the man in *Flóamanna saga* was decapitated after the fight and the woman burnt after someone held her, finally Þormóðr’s back was broken during the fight and his body sunk in the sea.

The first structural pattern that arises is the fact that in these last cases no one thought about re-burial as a way of getting rid of the problem. The second is that there was always a wrestling match against the *aptrgangr*. Only in two occasions the hero had a weapon. One is the spear used against Hrappr, which he broke and took it to his *dys* and the other is the axe used against the man in *Flóamanna saga*, which the hero dropped and went to wrestle against him. This is a circumstance that applies, as well, to the fights against *haugbúar*. Stern noted this and pointed out that

[i]t is always a hand-to-hand combat; the hero rarely brings his own weapons, and even when he steals those of the corpse [in the case of the *haugbúar*] he is persuaded to lay them aside until he is victorious in the wrestling match. [...] As Dehmer points out, this theme may originate in a half-forgotten belief that a revenant was invulnerable to weapons, and therefore could only be defeated by wrestling.⁴⁰⁸

The wrestling is a constant with the *haugbúar* and the *aptrgǫngur*. Even in the case of the woman, in *Flóamanna saga*, where there is no description of a wrestling match we are told that one held her while the other prepared a pyre, and we shall imagine that she was offering some resistance. As we have seen, the matches with a *haugbúi* always ended with it being decapitated or the corpse sinking in the ground due to the fear of light (while the *aptrgǫngur* who were dug

⁴⁰⁸ Stern, Elizabeth Jane 1987: 31.

out were never decapitated but only burnt). But in the case of the *aptrgangur* there are have several different possibilities after the fighting scene.

The first one is decapitation, which occurred only when there was a fight. This was, certainly, a way to be sure that an *aptrgangr* or *haugbúar* was deactivated.⁴⁰⁹ When it was a *haugbúar* this was the end of the procedure, but with an *aptrgangr* there were more steps following.⁴¹⁰ One question that shall be answered before proceeding is, ‘why, if the people suspected that the deceased may walk after dead, they did not decapitate the corpse in order to prevent the haunting?’ The answer may be that we have seen in sagas that in the few instances in which a man was decapitated after death it was considered quite dishonorable for the corpse and insulting for the living relatives, and the ones who did it were liable to legal persecution.⁴¹¹ Ström points out that

From a regulation in the Gulating law it appears that this kind of post-mortal mutilation of a dead adversary was regarded as a qualified crime that was referred to as *ofrán* [...] The last-mentioned crime is referred to in sagas as ‘murdering a dead man’ (*myrða dauðan mann*), an unmanly and dishonourable deed.⁴¹²

This may explain why, in Saga Literature, the bodies of those who would obviously become an *aptrgangr* were never decapitated before burial. Even if they were sorcerers they might have not wanted to dishonor the body and set a reaction on the part of relatives to avenge the action. And if the ones who buried them were the same relatives, even though the suspicion that they would return was strong, they most probably did not want to dishonor their dead kinsman. Post-mortal decapitation never seemed to be an immediate alternative. Even in one instance, in *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar*, after the hero had confronted two *draugar* and finally managed to ‘kill’ them, whenever he confronted new enemies he made sure to decapitate them during the battle and then burn them or cast their bodies in a river as a way to prevent their return.⁴¹³ In another Heroic Saga, before a battle against the Permians a similar procedure was taken to prevent the return of the dead enemies. There, we are told that “*þá segir Oddr liði sínu, at þeir skyldu fleygja hverjum útá ána, sem felli af liði þeirra, því þeir munu þegar gjöra fjölkýngi í liði voru, ef þeir (ná) nokkrum þeim, sem dauðir eru.*”⁴¹⁴ So to prevent the enemies return from the death (with use of magic, in this case) they found more reasonable to cast the bodies into the river rather than

⁴⁰⁹ This formula does not prove true for non-corporeal revenants, as will be seen in Chapter 4.4.

⁴¹⁰ However, the man in *Flóamanna saga* was only decapitated, with no further procedures, but we shall remember that he was associated with a *haug*.

⁴¹¹ See for example *Fóstbræðra saga* XVIII and following, and *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* LXXXII and following.

⁴¹² Ström, Folke 1942: 167.

⁴¹³ Cf. *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar* XVII.

⁴¹⁴ *Örvar-Odds saga* V: 178 [V: 219].

post-mortal decapitation. Even in *Eyrbyggja saga*, containing so many appearances of the dead, this is not considered as an alternative. After killing all of Þorbrand's son's the leader of the expedition ordered to decapitate the bodies of their dead enemies, and his people refused to do so (*Þá mælti Þórðr bligr, at þeir skyldi á milli bols ok hqfuðs ganga allra Þorbrandssona, en Steinþórr kvazk eigi vilja vega at liggjǫndum mǫnnum*⁴¹⁵). Maybe people did not prevent *aptrgǫngur* using decapitation because it was not considered an ethical way to treat the dead. However, it might have been considered as a first alternative when dealing with the *aptrgangr* due to the shame that it implied. Sayers says that it was used as an alternative against *draugar* because when they were “[b]rought under the social control of the loss of honor, it was hoped that the *draugr* would shun human company.”⁴¹⁶

The second way in which people dealt with *aptrgǫngur* was burning them. It was used in four of the seven cases I have analyzed, and it is quite noteworthy that it was never used as a measure against the *haugbúar*.⁴¹⁷ Maybe it was not used against them because these last *draugar* never bothered the living, so just beheading them was enough to ‘kill’ them. Since they never left their mounds with aggressive intentions it was not so necessary to be sure that the body was completely annihilated. The other possible explanation is that it may have been quite difficult to bur a body inside a burial mound. However it was a common way to deal with the *aptrgǫngur*, who were an actual burden to the living and therefore beheading was not enough to confirm that they were, this time, really dead. Folke Ström says that “[I]n both continental Germanic and Nordic law burning is the consequence of witchcraft and poisoning, which last crime is according to the medieval view most nearly identical with witchcraft.”⁴¹⁸ This can be quite symbolic, considering that among the candidates to become an *aptrgangr* it was common to find sorcerers. This may be a way of giving these people the treatment that they did not get while alive. We know that the pre-Christian Scandinavian burial practices included cremation and that “cultures that cremate tend not to have revenants in corporeal form.”⁴¹⁹ But Scandinavia was a particular case, since cremation and burial coexisted for a long period of time. However I am analyzing literature, and “[t]he burning of the dead in the sagas was only practiced in order to destroy a dangerous corpse which otherwise would do harm to the living”⁴²⁰ and was never mentioned as a

⁴¹⁵ *Eyrbyggja saga* XLV: 128.

⁴¹⁶ Sayers, William 1996: 245.

⁴¹⁷ The only exception being that of Þráinn, in *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* 4: 371 [4: 413].

⁴¹⁸ Ström, Folke 1942: 189.

⁴¹⁹ Barber, Paul 1988: 168.

⁴²⁰ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 37-38.

usual funerary rite in the literature.⁴²¹ I would ask, then, ‘why didn’t people, in a society that practiced cremation, burn the bodies of potential *aptrgǫngur*?’ In sagas cremation was reserved exclusively for the *aptrgǫngur*, and then it becomes conspicuous that they are particularly an Icelandic phenomena. “Inhumation graves, common in Viking Scandinavia, were universal in Iceland.”⁴²² Since cremation was not practiced in Iceland⁴²³ the change in burial customs (from one society in which both cremation and inhumation were an alternative) may have lead to the belief on the ‘dangerous dead’ going out of their graves. That would also justify why the sagas portray cremation as a rite used exclusively to get rid of the *aptrgǫngur*. As to ‘why they did not burn the potential revenants at the moment of their death?’ Barber gives a good clue to find the answer. They might have not been burned:

because of the high water content of the average adult human body, the energy requirements for cremation are high: “An adult body of about 160 lb. (73 kg.), cremated in a purpose-built furnace fired by gas, and with recirculation of the hot gases, is destroyed to ash in three-fourths to one our of steady burning at a temperature around 1,600 F. (870 C.)” According to Polson, in his discussion of coke-fired furnaces, “In earlier types of furnace air was admitted cold and uncontrolled; fuel consumption was then high and each cremation required from 10 to 15 cwt. of coke.” (A hundredweight is usually 112 pounds to the British.) When gas is used, the time required ranges from 79 to 96 minutes, depending on the type of furnace, and the average fuel requirements range from 1,144 cubic feet to 1,964 cubic feet. An electric furnace –again, according to Polson– uses about 180 kilowatts to reach operating temperature. If oil is used to heat the furnace, and if the furnace has to be heated for each cremation, the average oil consumption “may be as high as 24 gallons.” Without such a special furnace it becomes quite difficult to burn a body at all, because combustion can take place only in the presence of oxygen, and this means that the body will not burn on the side that it lies on or where the combustible material is actually against it.⁴²⁴

Cremation was not that easy, and in a country with scarce wood resources, as Iceland, it might have been a very expensive procedure, as to practice it with every potential *aptrgangr*. *Eyrbyggja saga* reports part of the trouble of burning Þórólfr’s body, saying that “*var þat þó lengi, at eigi orkaði eldr á Þórólfr.*”⁴²⁵ Cremation was both difficult and costly, so it was practiced only when the *aptrgangr* risk became a very concrete reality and never as a preventive measure. The fear of the ‘undead’ may have been so great that even after the complete destruction of the

⁴²¹ Cf. Ström, Folke 1942: 196.

⁴²² Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 17.

⁴²³ Personal communication with Christian Keller.

⁴²⁴ Barber, Paul 1988: 76.

⁴²⁵ *Eyrbyggja saga* LXIII: 170.

body they had to take appropriate care of the ashes.⁴²⁶ So they were usually gathered and buried far away or thrown into the sea.

This last procedure relates with drowning, the third way of disposing of the *aptrgǫngur*. In *Hávarðar saga ísfirðings* Þormóð's back was broken in the fight and then taken into the sea and drowned. This a very unusual way of defeating and disposing of an *aptrgangr*, but I believe that this is due to a satirical intention, since we are told that the hero was quite young and in his first confrontation with the *aptrgangr* he did not 'kill' it correctly so it came back a second time. In the other sources this ritual drowning came after the body was burned and the ashes were scattered into the sea, and in one occasion sank in a hot spring⁴²⁷ while, as we saw in *Örvar-Odds saga*, casting the dead bodies into the river was used as a way of preventing their return. Drowning, as well as burning, was a death penalty used mainly for witches⁴²⁸ and may be symbolic that these two procedures were the main ones used also in disposing of the *aptrgǫngur*. The idea of getting rid once and for all of an *aptrgangr* by throwing it into the water may be related to Snorri's statement in *Ynglinga saga*. There it is stated that Óðinn said “*at alla dauða menn skyldi brenna ok bera á bál með þeim eign þeira [...] En ǫskuna skyldi bera út á sjá eða grafa niðr í jǫrð.*”⁴²⁹ This is the proper way of disposing of a corpse as dictated by the *draugardrottin*. Most probably it was used with the *aptrgǫngur* since it was the sacred way of burying a body, and by giving it a proper pre-Christian burial they would be sure that it would not come back. So this also points to the origin of the *aptrgangr* stories as being due to a change in burial customs. But it might have been used because the water would disperse the ashes and take them far away, for the people's safety. This idea of casting the *aptrgangr* in the sea so it would go away and become someone else's problem (if in fact it could do any harm after being decapitated and burned to ashes) may be linked with “the old Norwegian custom of burying evil-doers on the sea-shore and monsters under stones.”⁴³⁰

We have seen that there were three different ways of disposing of an *aptrgangr* and they were some times used individually or, in most instances, combined. Of these, decapitation was the most unusual among *aptrgǫngur*, but it was the main resource to 'kill' a *haugbúar*. This may be due to a later mixture of traditions, in which the *aptrgangr* was killed as a *haugbúi*. The main

⁴²⁶ In *Eyrbyggja saga* some of Þórólfr's ashes were scattered by the wind and were eaten by a cow, and the result was that she gave birth to an enormous 'troll-calf' that ended up killing its owner. (Cf. *Eyrbyggja saga* LXIII). This could imply some sort of re-incarnation of Þórólfr in the calf.

⁴²⁷ *Svarfdæla saga* XXVIII: 207. See below, Chapter 4.4.

⁴²⁸ Cf. Ström, Folke 1942:171-89.

⁴²⁹ *Ynglinga saga* VIII: 20.

⁴³⁰ Ström, Folke 1942: 182.

difference between these procedures is that both burning and drowning were used as a death penalty to dispose of sorcerers and witches and might have been considered as a rather indecent death. On the other hand, decapitation was a heroic death. Ström points out that this “pronouncement in a Fornaldarsaga is characteristic: ‘*er þat hraustra manna dauði at vera hálshöggvir.*’”⁴³¹ This implies that the *haugbúar* were ‘killed’ in the way in which heroes or nobles considered to be a brave death. After all they were heroes and warriors while alive. Meanwhile the *aptrgǫngur* ‘died’ their second death in a dishonorable way, reserved for the despised elements of the society. After all they were such vile elements of the society while alive. The other possibility is that they were giving them the proper burial, according to the ancient custom, because if they were buried according to the divine commandments the chances of being harmed by the dead would be nullified.

The only occasions in which the *aptrgangr* is associated with a *haug* occurs in *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* and *Flóamanna saga*. I have already explained the case in *Flóamanna saga* earlier in this section. So let's analyze now the second case. In *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* Grettir arrived to Háramarsey (Haramsøya, an island in South More, Norway) where Kárr inn gamli was said to have become an *aptrgangr*. The situation in Háramarsey was quite peculiar for when Kárr first arrived to the island “*áttu þeir feðgar fyrst eitt bóndaból í eyjunni, en síðan Kárr dó, hefir hann svá aprt gengit, at hann hefir eytt á brott qllum bóndum þeim, er hér áttu jarðir, svá at nú á Þorfinnr [Kársson] einn alla eyna, ok engum verðr þeim mein at þessu, er Þorfinnr heldi hendi yfir.*”⁴³² Few time later Grettir went to Kárr's *haug*, broke into it and found horse bones, treasure and Kárr, the *haugbúi* with whom he fought and later ‘killed’ inside the mound, as described before.⁴³³ In this story there are some conspicuous discrepancies with what we know about *haugbúar* and *aptrgǫngur*. First comes the fact that the *haugbúar* were physically active inside their mounds, and whenever they appeared outside it was mainly in dreams or in an ethereal way and they did so in order to protect their mounds from intrusion or to keep some peace in the immediate surroundings of it. They never went out to harass the living. The second discrepancy is a corollary of the first one, and it consists in the fact that the *haugbúi*'s activity was limited to its mound and as much to its immediate surroundings, but never to a whole farm, district or a whole island. This kind of extended and aggressive activity is linked to the *aptrgǫngur*, whose activity was linked to a whole district and not to their burial sites. But as an

⁴³¹ Ström, Folke 1942: 162 (Quoting *Saga Hrólfs Gautrekssonar*, FAS 3, pp 171 [Reference rendered as provided by the author])

⁴³² *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XVIII: 57.

⁴³³ See above, Chapter 4.1.

aptrgangr Kárr's case shows also some discrepancies. The first is that unlike other *aptrgǫngur* he was buried in a *haug*, and not in a *dys*, with at least a horse, weapons and a treasure. His burial was quite honorable. Second comes that an *aptrgangr* did not make any difference between friends and enemies, while Kárr did not harm his son and his son's friends. His intentions in coming back were not to provide himself with burial goods but to help his son to take control over the whole island. In the cases in which an *aptrgangr* haunted a whole district it killed all the cattle and forced both friends and foes to migrate; they were taking control of the territory for themselves. Finally comes the fact that, unlike the *haugbúar*, the *aptrgǫngur*, according to our sources, seemed to be a purely Icelandic phenomenon, this being the only occurrence of one being active in Scandinavia. In contrast, the *haugbúar* seems to be specifically Scandinavian, since only two of the numerous encounters with a *haugbúi* took place in Iceland.

We have, then, two alternatives that may explain these irregularities. The first possibility is that the saga-writer mixed two different stories in one. The mixture may have been intentional in order to add an extra supernatural element to the saga or, in the case that Sagas do really contain some elements of oral tradition, the mixture may have happened at some point in the transmission of the story and then the mixture was unintentional. The puzzle grows in here, since the saga-writer detected, and pointed out, an irregularity in *aptrgangr* behaviour. This occurred with the fact that Glamr could speak and cast a curse, which he justified saying that he was not an ordinary *aptrgangr*.⁴³⁴ But if he did so in Glamr's case, why didn't he do the same, pointing out that Kárr was not an ordinary *haugbúi*? This could be due to the fact that Grettir's fight with Glamr was more relevant for the hero's story than his fight with Kárr, therefore he had to justify the discrepancy, for the curse was a central point in Grettir's story, and without it and its outcome his saga may have not been worth telling. And without explaining that Glamr was an especial *aptrgangr* this central element of the story may have lost credibility.

The second possible explanation for the discrepancies comes from within the story. Following the text we have a family that settled in the island and at the beginning had only one farm. After the death of the family head, he helped his son to take control over the whole isle and never harmed his son's friends. This can point to some stratagem to take possession of the whole territory using people's superstition. There was the belief of a continuation of 'life' within the mound, and Kárr's son may have made up the story about his father becoming an *aptrgangr*, maybe profiting on the stories brought from Iceland. It is interesting that the fight with Kárr took

⁴³⁴ Cf. *Grettis saga Ásmundarssonar* XXXV: 121.

place, unlike the other *aptrgangr* stories, inside the grave-mound. The idea of the plot may have been pointed out by the writer, and then become obvious if we take into account the emphasis he put in the way in which Kárr's son took control over the territory.

Before closing this section I will just point out that *aptrgangr*'s stories (and *draugar* stories in general) were, at the end, not invulnerable to Christian influence. Some of them retained some native elements, which were mixed with catholic ghost folklore. And this becomes more obvious with stories that set their action around the conversion period. In *Flóamanna saga*, for example, we have an *aptrgǫngur* story set in Greenland. Several people were lost in an excursion and were stranded in Greenland. Some of them were pagan, and when Christmas arrived the Christian leader of the expedition commanded his crew to remain quiet, go to bed early and keep their faith well. As it is to be expected the pagan men did a lot of noise and did not keep the Christian faith well. All the pagans ended up dead, and soon after became *aptrgǫngur* and started haunting the house. Then the leader had all the bodies burned and there was no more trouble. One year later his Christian sister died and he buried her under her bed and she never returned.⁴³⁵ There are still several pre-Christian elements in the story. But the main difference is that now the ones who become *aptrgǫngur* were the pagans and not the poor foreigners, nor the sorcerers. Now the concept of the 'Other' switched to the elements that did not fit in the new conception of the society, that is: the heathen. In contrast the Christian woman could be easily buried under her bed. *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* last chapters are set in the court of St. Óláfr, and in them Agði, a creature mixture of a *haugbúi*, an *aptrgangr* and a Christian ghost, appeared. In its first appearance St. Óláfr was able to control it by hitting it with a staff. Then it came back and was not able to haunt at will since "*Hann þorði hvergi inn í hliðin, því at kross var fyrir hverjum dyrum.*"⁴³⁶ And the final way to control him was also in a rather Christian way, since instead of fighting and decapitating him, the final solution was to "*setti kross í dyrrnar, ok laukst aftr haugrinn, ok hefðir ekki orðit vart við Agða sidan.*"⁴³⁷ Finally, in Óláfr Tryggvason's court a new creature made a unique appearance in the Old Norse corpus. The story, as related in *þáttur Þorsteins skelks*, tells of the apparition of a *puki*⁴³⁸ who was also called a *draugr*. In this instance

⁴³⁵ Ct. *Flóamanna saga* XXII: 282-86.

⁴³⁶ *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* XIII: 344.

⁴³⁷ *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* XIII: 344.

⁴³⁸ Chadwick argues "the word *puki* appears to be identical with the Lettish *puke*, formerly used in the heathen religion of Latvia of the sacred house snake. The word suggests that a possible link might be found between the cult of the *draugr*, and the Latvian and Old Prussian religion, in which sacred snakes formed the most striking feature of both the national and the family cults. (Chadwick 1946: 120) Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie translates it as "a devil, but with the notion of a wee devil." (Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: '*púki*').

there was neither fight nor a haunting. The *puki* appeared to an Icelander in the outhouse with the implicit intention of taking him. The Icelander outwit him by asking him to scream as the heroes of the pre-Christian past did while suffering the torments of hell. The *puki* did so in several occasions, so Óláfr Tryggvason woke up and rang the church-bells, which were enough to defeat the *puki* and make it disappear.⁴³⁹

As we have seen, the *aptrgǫngur* were, unlike the lazy *haugbúar*, rather active and aggressive creatures, not confined to their graves but acting in a whole farm or district. They seem to have been a purely Icelandic phenomena, linked to dead sorcerers or foreigners, and in their haunting their main objective seems to have been to provide themselves with grave-goods. They were annihilated with the same procedures used with the most unwanted members of society. The origin of their stories might have been due also to a change in burial customs, as the one that took place in Iceland. However these *draugar*'s stories were not invulnerable to Christian influences, and at the end the syncretism led to the creation of an hybrid monster, which is the one that I will analyze in the following section.

⁴³⁹ Cf. *Þáttur Þorsteins skelks* 416-417.

4.3. - ‘Uppsitjendr’: The Tamed *Draugar*.

Þorkell kvazk eigi vilja aðra trú hafa – “en þeir Þorsteinn Ingimundarson hafðu ok Þórir fóstri min; þeir trúðu á þann, er solina hefir skapat ok qllum hlutum ræðr.”

Byskup svarar: “Þá sqmu trú boða ek með þeiri grein, at trúa á einn guð fqður, son ok helgan anda, ok láta skírask í vatni í hans nafni.”

(Vatnsdæla saga XLVI)

In this section I will study the *draugar* who returned from the dead only for a very short time, just a couple of minutes, and then ‘die’ never to come again. This will be a very short section since there is recollection of only four cases in the saga corpus analyzed in this dissertation. However, for our advantage, three of them are mentioned in more than one source. This fact will allow us to gain more information about the event by contrasting different versions.

Apart from the short span of time in which these *draugar* are active they show other differences with the *haugbúar* and *aptrgongur*. The first and most obvious is that they had recently died and came back a few moments after their death. A second main difference is that these *draugar* don’t have a linguistical marker attached to them. Whenever they ‘come back’ their activity is referred to as follows. For Sigríðr/Grímhildr it is said that “*húsfreyja vildi færask á fætr*”⁴⁴⁰ and “*qrglask hon upp við qlnboga*.”⁴⁴¹ For Þorsteinn Eiríksson’s return “*settisk Þorstein Eiríksson upp*”⁴⁴² and “*settisk þá upp*”⁴⁴³ are used. Styrr “*hafði upp sezkr*”⁴⁴⁴ and “*Sýnisk þeim þá Styrr rísa við í húðinni*.”⁴⁴⁵. Finally, Þórgunna’s return from the dead is described as “*þar var Þórgunna komin*.”⁴⁴⁶

Færask can be translated as “to carry oneself”⁴⁴⁷ and *qrglask* as “to rise to one’s feet”⁴⁴⁸ which in the respective footnote in the saga is marked as “*uppréttur, setjast upp, rísa upp*.”⁴⁴⁹ Þórgunna just arrives and in one of the instances Styrr ‘rises’. In the other three instances the

⁴⁴⁰ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

⁴⁴¹ *Grænlendinga saga* V: 259.

⁴⁴² *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

⁴⁴³ *Grænlendinga saga* V: 259.

⁴⁴⁴ *Eyrbyggja saga* LVI: 153.

⁴⁴⁵ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 234.

⁴⁴⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga* LI: 144.

⁴⁴⁷ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘*Færask*’.

⁴⁴⁸ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘*qrglask*’.

⁴⁴⁹ *Grænlendinga saga* V: 259.

corpse just sits up. But they are never called *draugr* and they never have a particular noun attached to them.

Due to the lack of linguistic markers attached to these *draugar* I decided to call them ‘*uppsitjendr*’⁴⁵⁰ after their main activity, which is to raise or sit up. I hope that the philologists will forgive me one day for this barbarian act against the Old Norse Language.

Now that these *draugar* have a name let's start their analysis. The remaining differences between the ‘*uppsitjendr*’ and the other *draugar* will be pointed out as I progress with the study.

In *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænendinga saga* we have the same character, Þorsteinn svartr's wife, appearing under two different names: Sigríðr and Grímhildr, respectively. In both sagas very little information is given about her, and both of them concentrate in different parts of her story. Let's analyze first the events according to *Grænendinga saga*. She lived with her husband in the western settlement in Greenland. Both of them were heathens since “*Þá var enn ung kristni á Grænlandi*”⁴⁵¹ and also when Þorstein svartr introduced himself he stated “*annan sið hefi ek ok en þér hafð, ok ætla ek þann þó betra*.”⁴⁵² This is as much as we can get into her personality. Concerning her physical appearance it is only mentioned that “*hon var ákafliga mikil ok sterk sem karlar*.”⁴⁵³ Then the next thing we know is that she died of some kind of plague, which had already killed several of Þorsteinn Eiríksson's men. While her husband was looking for a board to put her body on she started moving again. Þorsteinn Eiríksson noticed it and said: “*Með undarligum hætti er nú um húsfreyju vára, því at nú qrglask hon upp við qlnboga ok þokkar fótum sínum frá stokki ok þreifar til skúa sinna*.”⁴⁵⁴ Her husband returned in that precise moment and when he entered the room “*lagðisk Grímhildr niðr í því, ok brakaði þá í hverju tré í stofunni. Nú gerir Þorsteinn kistu at liki Grímhildar ok færði í brott ok bjó um. Hann var bæði mikill maðr ok sterkr, ok þurfti hann þess alls, áðr han kom henni burt af bænum*.”⁴⁵⁵ End of her story, she never came back again.

There are several interesting points about this story. For example, as a contrast with other *draugar*, the only apparent reason for her return is to touch her feet and feel her shoes (*þreifar til skúa sinna*). The only other occasion in which shoes are linked to the dead is in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, at Véstein's funeral. In that occasion “*gekk Þorgrímr at Gísla ok mælti: ‘Þat er*

⁴⁵⁰ Even though ‘*uppsitjandi*’ is an adjective used to describe those who sit at the table, and its plural, ‘*uppsitjendr*’, is a word for ‘table guests’ (Cf. Fritzner, Johan 1954: ‘*uppsitjandi*’) my intention is to use it here as a noun that names those who ‘are sitting up’.

⁴⁵¹ *Grænendinga saga* V: 257-58.

⁴⁵² *Grænendinga saga* V: 258.

⁴⁵³ *Grænendinga saga* V: 258.

⁴⁵⁴ *Grænendinga saga* V: 259.

⁴⁵⁵ *Grænendinga saga* V: 259.

tízka,’ segir hann, ‘at binda mǫnnum helskó, þá er þeir skulu ganga á til Valhallar, ok mun ek þat gera við Véstein.’ Ok er hann hafði þat gǫrt, þá mælti hann: ‘Eigi kann ek helskó at binda, ef þessir losna⁴⁵⁶’. In *Grœnlendinga saga* it is stressed that she is a pagan; as a matter of fact, this is one of the only two things we get to know about her before she died. In order to emphasize her heathendon, she is portrayed as returning from death only to assure that she has everything she needs in order to walk to the Other World. This, as we will see, contrasts with Þorsteinn’s reasons for coming back. When her husband entered she collapsed, and it is not stated if she did so just because her husband entered the room, which seems to be quite illogical, or, more probably, because she had to be sure that she was wearing her shoes before leaving for good. This last explanation fits more with one of the reasons that the *aptrgangr* had, to return which gather for themselves the grave-goods that they were not provided with.⁴⁵⁷ Maybe it was in order to prevent her from returning yet another time that immediately after this, in the next sentence in the saga, her husband prepared her body for burial and made a coffin for her (*Nú gerir Þorsteinn kistu at líki Grímhildar ok færði i brott ok bjó um*⁴⁵⁸).

When she collapsed every single piece of wood in the room creaked. And when her husband took her body out it is stressed that even though he was a big and strong man, he required all his strength to do it (*Hann var bæði mikill maðr ok sterkr, ok þurfti hann þess alls, áðr han kom henni burt af bænum.*). Since the only other thing that we are told about her is that ‘*hon var ákafliga mikil ok sterk sem karlar*’, if we only follow the text in the saga, all the trouble that her husband had in moving her as well as the creaking in the room may be interpreted as being due to her big size. As a matter of fact this may be the only explanation for the events we can gather from the text. The most probable explanation is that, taking into account previous information about revenants, her body, as that of revenants was extraordinarily heavy.⁴⁵⁹

In *Eiríks saga rauða*’s version of the events we have even less information about her. In this recount her name is Sigríðr, and we can only learn that she was married to Þorsteinn svartr in the western settlement in Greenland when she and Þorsteinn Eiríksson, as well as many other men, got ill and died. The same night she died, ‘nature called her’ and she had to go out to the *náðahúss*. When she was out, she had a vision and said “*Eigi er fært at svá búnu; her er nú liðit þat allt it dauða fyrir durunum, ok Þorsteinn, bóndi þinn, ok þar kenni ek mik; ok er slíkt*

⁴⁵⁶ *Gísla saga Súrssonar* XIV: 45-46.

⁴⁵⁷ See above, Chapter 4.2.

⁴⁵⁸ *Grœnlendinga saga* V: 259.

⁴⁵⁹ See above, chapter 4.2.

*hǫrmung at sjá,*⁴⁶⁰ then the vision vanished. Due to the characteristics of this apparition, it will be analyzed in the chapter corresponding to the *fyrirburður*.⁴⁶¹ Meanwhile let's concentrate in Sigríðr's story.

The morning after she had the vision Sigríðr was dead. A coffin was made for her while her widower was away. Then Þorsteinn Eiríksson sent him a message, saying “*at þar væri varla kyrrt, ok húsfreyja vildi færask á fætr ok vildi undir klæðin hjá honum; ok er hann kom inn, var hon komin upp á rekkjustokkinn. Þá tók hann hana hǫndum ok lagði bolæxi fyrir brjóst henni.*”⁴⁶² And she never came back again.

According to this version of Sigríðr's story, rather than just collapsing to the floor, she received a treatment more suited for an *aptrgangr*; she received an axe in her breast.⁴⁶³ In the saga it is never mentioned explicitly that she was a pagan, but it is possible to assume that she was because in the previous chapter, a short time before these events, Ólafr Tryggvason had asked Leif Eiríksson to Christianize Greenland. However, the fact that she was a pagan or not does not seem to matter for the story, since both she and the Christian Guðríði had the same vision, and both the pagan woman and the Christian Þorsteinn came back after death. The difference between pagan and Christian religions seems to be, in both accounts, the central objective of the story. Both accounts of her return bear some difference from both accounts of Þorsteinn's. Both of her stories have some pagan-related motif, which make them contrast with the Christian man's return. In *Grænlandinga saga* we have already seen that she came back in order to make sure that she has the means to go to the pagan Otherworld. In this version she came back to crawl to the bed of the dying Þorsteinn Eiríksson, perhaps intending to provide herself with something that she would need in her future 'life'. This motif will be analyzed together with other 'erotic' escapades of *draugar* in chapter 5.⁴⁶⁴

In order to understand the differences between the representation of a Christian and a pagan revenant it becomes necessary to analyze first both versions of Þorsteinn Eiríksson's return. In *Grænlandinga saga* he died soon after the disposal of Grímhildr's body. Guðríðr, his widow, cannot cope with his death, and she is so sad that she just sits on a bench staring at her dead husband. Then, when Þorsteinn svartr sat with her to offer her some solace, “*Þorsteinn Eiríksson settisk þá upp ok mælti: ‘Hvar er Guðríðr?’ Þrjá tíma mælti hann þetta, en hon*

⁴⁶⁰ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

⁴⁶¹ See below, chapter 4.4.

⁴⁶² *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

⁴⁶³ Though it seems more fitting for an *aptrgangr* it is not precisely the most appropriate, since *aptrgǫngur*, as well as *haugbúar*, were never defeated using weapons.

⁴⁶⁴ See below, Chapter 5.

þagði.”⁴⁶⁵ Þorsteinn svartr answered for her, asking ‘what did he want?’ After a little while, Þorstein Eiríkson says that “*Mér er annt til þess, at segja Guðríði forlög sín, til þess at hon kunnir þá betr andlátí mínu því at ek em kominn til góðra hvíldastaða.*”⁴⁶⁶ Accordingly, he foretold several good things; he told her of a future in which she leaves Greenland and go to an Iceland (where there will be at least one church), she will then remarry with an Icelander, and afterwards live a long life as a nun. After finishing his speech he “*þá hnígr Þorsteinn aptr, ok var búit um lík hans ok fært til skips*”⁴⁶⁷ and never came back again.

Even though he is a Christian, his return confirms some of the things we know about *draugar*. Þorstein sits up, maybe as a reminiscent of burial-mounds in which the *draugr* was found sitting in its throne. Just like a *haugbúi*, he can foretell the future. And just like those *draugar* who are able to communicate in verse, he repeats his “*Hvar er Guðríði?*”⁴⁶⁸ three times, just like other revenants repeated the last line of each stanza. Maybe this repetition points to a lost verse he used to communicate with his widow, of which only the reminiscence of the repetition was kept. He has everything a *draugr* has, except the reasons to come back. He, as a Christian *draugr*, in the mentality of the Christian saga writers comes back for doing something good. Accordingly, he comes back not to ensure his way to the Otherworld (like Grímhildr) or, to look for grave goods he did not have (like an *aptrgangr*). We have already been told that he is going to a good resting place (*ek em kominn til góðra hvíldastaða*). Unlike the other *draugar* we have seen, he comes back just to comfort his widow and not to haunt a farm or a whole district nor to protect his burial goods from someone else. He comes back to bring some consolation to his widow. And when he foretells her future he has only agreeable tidings, unlike, for example, Glamr or Sóti, whose speeches only contained curses and predicted death. Also, when Þorstein Eiríkson leaves for the second time his departure contrasts with that of Grímhildr. Once she had fulfilled what she had come back for, she “dropped”⁴⁶⁹ (*leggja: lagðisk*) producing a violent noise in the hall and, most surely, leaving everybody in distress. On the other hand, once Þorsteinn Eiríksson had done what he had come back for, he “sank, fell back gently”⁴⁷⁰ (*hníg: hnígr*) just like the *vqlva* in *Vqluspá* “sank”⁴⁷¹ (*sökkvaz*) at the end of her speech,⁴⁷² and his visitation and the good tidings he foretold must have brought calm to the living.

⁴⁶⁵ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 259.

⁴⁶⁶ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 259.

⁴⁶⁷ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 260.

⁴⁶⁸ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 259.

⁴⁶⁹ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘leggja’.

⁴⁷⁰ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘hníg’.

⁴⁷¹ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘sökkvaz’.

In *Eiríks saga rauða* the events are quite similar. Þorsteinn Eiríksson died the same day Sigríðr tried to get into his bed. As mentioned before, she saw his ‘spirit’ one day before his death, and this will be analyzed in Chapter 4.4. Later, when Þorsteinn Eiríksson died “*Þorsteinn bóndi bað Guðríði leggjask niðr ok sofa, en hann kvezk vaka mundu um nóttina yfir líkinu.*”⁴⁷³ While Þorstein svartr was looking after the bodies “*settisk Þorsteinn Eiríksson upp,*”⁴⁷⁴ and as in the other version talks with to namesake. This time it is stated that he did not come back of his own will, but instead “*Guð vill, at þessi stund sé mér gefin til leyfis ok umbótar míns ráðs.*”⁴⁷⁵ He asked to talk with his widow, which she does after asking for God’s protection and stating that “*Vera kann, at þetta sé ætlat til nǫkkura þeira hluta, er síðan sé í minni hafðir, þessi inn undarligi hlutr, en ek vænti, at guðs gæzla mun yfir mér standa.*”⁴⁷⁶ When she arrived to talk with Þorsteinn Eiríksson it appeared that he had been crying (*sem han felldi tár*⁴⁷⁷). Then Þorstein Eiríksson began his speech, this time a bit longer, since this time he talked about things more urgent (in the Christian point of view) than her future. He spoke in her ear (*mælti í eyra henni*), so that only she could listen to his words, and said that he was worried about all the bodies of all the other people that have died due to the plague. He told her that “*þeir menn væri sælir, er trúna heldu, ok henni fylgði qll hjálp ok miskunn, ok sagði þó, at margir heldi hana illa. – ‘Er þat engi háttr, sem hér hefir verit á Grænlandi, síðan kristni kom hér, at setja menn niðr í óvígða mold við litla yfirsqngva.*”⁴⁷⁸ Then he ordered all the bodies should be buried in a churchyard, except the one of the man who brought the disease, since “*hann veldr qllum aprgqngum.*”⁴⁷⁹ Only then he talked about his situation and her future (*Hann sagði henni ok um sína hagi ok kvad hennar forlqg mikil mundu verða*⁴⁸⁰) and he added that his widow should give their money to the church and to the poor (*legði fé þeira til kirkju ok sumt fátækum mqqnum*⁴⁸¹). Then he fell back gently, sank (*Hníga: hné*).

One thing that immediately stands out is the fact that even though the previous night the two women had seen all the dead standing outside the door, and that the day after Sigríðr came back from the dead, afterwards, when Þorsteinn Eiríksson returned considered amiracler. His

⁴⁷² CF. *Vqluspá* 66.

⁴⁷³ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

⁴⁷⁴ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

⁴⁷⁵ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

⁴⁷⁶ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 216.

⁴⁷⁷ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 216.

⁴⁷⁸ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 216.

⁴⁷⁹ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 216.

⁴⁸⁰ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 216.

⁴⁸¹ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 216-17.

return is described, both by Þorsteinn Eiríksson and Guðríði as “*stund sé*” and “*þetta sé ætla*”, which can be rendered into English as ‘brief marvel and, “this marvel has a purpose.”⁴⁸² When Þorstein Eiríksson sat up and talked, Þorsteinn svartr listened to his words, even though, when saw that his wife had come back from the dead his first reaction was to thrust an axe in her breast. This may have been just a thing between husbands and wives, but it did not seem to be at all a normal domestic fight. However Þorstein Eiríksson was almost welcomed, and he was considered to be harmless enough as to be allowed to whisper into his widow’s ear.

As we can see in the events as retold in *Eiríks saga rauða*, Þorsteinn Eiríksson’s return may form part of a conversion narrative, in which the objective was to contrast the ‘benefits’ of Christendom with the ‘disadvantages’ of the pre-Christian religion. And it seems that the authors of both sagas intended to make this point even with the qualities of their *draugar*. The Christian *draugr* is trustworthy or at least intends to bring peace to the distressed. His apparition is respected. Meanwhile the heathen *draugr*’s return inspires fear either by crawling into a dying man’s bed or by collapsing and making the hall treble with her weight. Her return is considered so disrespectful that in one instance, without hesitation, her husband thrust an axe in her breast.

There are four conspicuous aspects to Þorsteinn Eiríksson’s words. The first is that he stated that by God’s will he was given this marvelous moment “*til leyfis ok umbótar míns ráðs.*”⁴⁸³ Second, his first words to his widow were about how those following the true faith received help and salvation, but men in general followed this faith poorly. Third, in contrast with *Grænlandinga saga*, according to which he said that he was going to a nice resting place, in *Eiríks saga rauða* he told her about his ‘condition’ (*Hann sagði henni ok um sína hagi*). Fourth, he instructed her to give their money to the Church and to the poor (*legði fé þeira til kirkju ok sumt fátækum mǫnnum*). This discourse seems familiar if taken into the context of mediaeval European Christian-ghost stories. God gave Þorstein permission to leave and repair (*umbotar*) his situation; then he delivered a speech about those who follow the faith poorly and the Greenlandic position in Christendom; then he talked about his ‘condition’ and; finally, he asked his widow to give money to the church and the poor.

In a conversion narrative this can mean only that Þorstein was a Christian version of a *draugr* returning from purgatory to save his soul. This may explain why did he appear to have been crying. And when he whispered the words into his widow’s ear he might have done so

⁴⁸² Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘ætla’.

⁴⁸³ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

either because he was ashamed (maybe he was confessing his sin) or because he did not want the others to know where he was. The story must have been retold by his widow, since no one else heard it, and she was being discreet when she mentioned his dwelling only as his ‘condition’, without elaborating further in the topic. In the mediaeval Catholic tradition most ghosts come from purgatory. “The preponderance of souls in purgatory is explained by their transitory status and by the reasons of their apparitions [...] Souls in purgatory, and they alone, are able to improve their fate with the help of prayers, almsgiving, and especially masses celebrated by the living.”⁴⁸⁴ Taking this into account it is no wonder that Þorstein placed his widow’s future as a nun, most probably praying the greatest part of the day, and most probably praying for his salvation. “Among the most common functions of medieval ghosts was this confirmation of the value of the prayers for the dead.”⁴⁸⁵ Also the money that he ordered to be donated to the church, in the mediaeval tradition, can be translated into prayers for someone’s soul.⁴⁸⁶ After all the saga is dated to the early 13th century, as well as “purgatory, thus designated as a noun at the beginning of the thirteenth century.”⁴⁸⁷

We can also see that in these cases the both *draugr* stories were Christianized almost in a parallel way. In one story it is the pagan dead who came back like Christian revenants do, in order to seek the means (shoes) to reach the Otherworld, and then leaves. In the same story the Christian comes back for some reasons that are more linked to the pre-Christian tradition of contact with the dead, he comes to foretell the future. In the other saga the pagan comes back just like pagan *draugar* do and gets a treatment similar to the one that they usually did. Meanwhile, the Christian revenant is the one who came back to save his soul and get access to the Otherworld.

There is one thing that might be objected in this argument. It consists in the fact s that the Christian imaginary also linked shoes with the dead.

The shoes of the dead were also supposed to help in their passage into the hereafter: In the thirteenth century the liturgist William Durand stated that if socks were placed on the legs of dead people and shoes on their feet, they would thus be prepared to confront their judgment.⁴⁸⁸

There is only other saga in which this tradition of the shoes of the dead is mentioned. This occurs, as mentioned above, in *Gísla saga surssonar*, which believed to be later than

⁴⁸⁴ Schmitt, Jean-Claude 1998: 128.

⁴⁸⁵ Finucane, R. C. 1996: 65.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Finucane, R. C. 1996: 66.

⁴⁸⁷ Schmitt, Jean-Claude 1998: 89.

⁴⁸⁸ Schmitt, Jean-Claude 1998: 204.

Grœnlendinga saga (but both were written by Christian scribes). Then both sagas may be referring to this catholic shoe-tradition. But on the other hand there is the fact that in the pre-Christian society not everybody could afford to be buried with a boat or a horse, and those who could not provide themselves with this transportation means still had to find a way to get to the other world. This journey might have been done walking, which made shoes an essential tool to reach the Otherworld. But this need for shoes does not seem to fit with what we know about the Christian journey to the Otherworld or its final judgement. They seem to be the result of an interpolation of another religion into the Christian one. In addition, in the saga it was the pagan and not the Christian who came back for the shoes. The Christian revenant seems to have had some more spiritual concerns, like getting out of purgatory and solacing his wife. On the other hand, the instance in which the shoes are mentioned in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* refers to an ancient custom and is set in a pre-Christian context within the saga. It becomes necessary to consider the way in which the North was Christianized, and it is precisely Schmitt who provided the answer to this riddle. He says that “the ecclesiastical culture, by slightly transforming the Germanic traditions, ‘tamed’ those traditions relative to the dead who defended their graves against intruders.”⁴⁸⁹ And, why not, also ‘tamed’ the tradition of the *aptrgangr*, as seems to be the case at least in Þorsteinn Eiríksson’s behavior.

Even though both Þorsteinn Eiríksson’s and Sigríðr’s/Grímhlöðr’s return from the dead show to be a conversion narrative, they still contain some traces of pre-Christian beliefs in their stories. They are connected with a pagan conception of Eros and Tanatos, and they will be analyzed in their respective chapter.

The third case of an ‘*uppsitjandi*’ is that of Styrr in *Heiðarvíga saga*. The day he was killed, Gestr, his slayer was sharpening his axe when he had an omen: “*varð þá sá viðburður, at blóðdropar nakkurir fellu á skaptit.*”⁴⁹⁰ He referred it to his sister, who told him that “*sér þykki líkast, at einhverjum tíðendum gegni, ok vildi hon, þat kæmi niðr í makligum stað.*”⁴⁹¹ The ‘deserved place’ in which it fell came to be Styrr’s head, which was cracked that same night by the same axe that forebode his death. Snorri, his son in law, went to the place to fetch his body, and prepared it to for the journey to home. It was a long way, and they had to spend the night with a farmer, who welcomed them and offered them whatever help they may need. Now, in the saga Styrr did not get to be named *Víga-Styrr* due to his friendly nature. So, during the journey it

⁴⁸⁹ Schmitt, Jean-Claude 1998: 30.

⁴⁹⁰ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 232.

⁴⁹¹ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 232.

happened that “*Líkit hafði dregizk nǫkkut ofan í Haffjarðará ok vǫknað til hǫfuðsins*”⁴⁹² and Snorri became suspicious. After all, as we have seen, bodies of men with a temperament such as Víga-Styrr’s and which move or fall down from their horse will most probably end up as an *aptrgangr*. Accordingly, and in order to prevent any bad surprises Snorri “*bað fólk at hafa kyrrt um sik um nóttina*.”⁴⁹³ But the farmer had two young daughters, and the oldest of them decided that she wanted to take a look at Víga-Styrr’s corpse in the middle of the night. The younger one tried to dissuade her, but at the end they both went to the room where the corpse was. When they entered the room, the oldest one got really close to Styrr, and then “*Sýnisk þeim þá Styrr rísa við í húðinni ok kveða vísu*.”⁴⁹⁴ Snorri heard the noise and went to see what was going on. He found that

*En þegar hon heyrir vísuna, bregðr henni svá við, at hon æpir hástǫfum ok hleypr í fang Snorra; koma menn a fætr ok halda henni; er hon þá svá ær, at fjórir hafa fullt í fangi at halda henni; linnti hon aldri af ópi ok umbrotum alla nóttina, þar til undir dag, þá deyr hon.*⁴⁹⁵

They continued with their journey and there was a snowstorm. And, as time went by “*tekr líkit at fara illa á hestinum ok snúask ǫfugt; gerisk þat þá svá þungt, at þeir koma því eigi lengra en at eyðihúsum nǫkkurum á melholti einu, ok þar bera þeir grjótt at því ok dysja*.”⁴⁹⁶ After they buried the body the trip went much better, and in the Spring Snorri went to fetch the body and in this occasion the transportation of the corpse was “*allt tíðendalaust*.”⁴⁹⁷ Styrr was buried in a church he had built.

Before starting the analysis it is necessary to point out that both the original and the only copy of the opening chapters, in which Styrr’s story is told, “were destroyed in the great Copenhagen fire of 1728.”⁴⁹⁸ So the recount of the events, as we now know them, was reconstructed by Jón Ólafsson, who had copied it before. For those parts that he could not reconstruct by memory he provided notes explaining what had happened.

Styrr’s corpse had all the characteristics of one who was going to become an *aptrgangr*. It moved on the horse and was difficult to carry, his body became heavy and he was a violent person when alive. He even came back once. But during the winter there were no reports of him haunting. Maybe the lack of *reimt* by his part was due to the fact that the first time he was buried

⁴⁹² *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 233.

⁴⁹³ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 233.

⁴⁹⁴ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 234.

⁴⁹⁵ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 234.

⁴⁹⁶ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 235.

⁴⁹⁷ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 235.

⁴⁹⁸ Jónas Kristjánsson 1988: 225.

it happened near some deserted dwellings (*eyðihúsum*) and there was no one to report his activities.⁴⁹⁹ But when Snorri went to undig his body in order to bury it in a church there are no reports of problems. The journey is described as *tíðendalaust*, which even if it is reconstructed it does not hint to any fight with a *draugr*, his or of his body moving or being heavy. It seems more probable that his lack of activity after he sat up is due to the fact that he was a Christian, or if he wasn't, he had at least built a church where he was to be buried (*er þat jarðat at kirkjunni undir Hrauni, er Styrr hafði sjálfr gera látit.*⁵⁰⁰). When he sat up he even communicated in verse, just like a *haugbúi* would.⁵⁰¹ Unfortunately the verse was lost in the fire, but Jón Ólafsson recalls in a note that “*Það var stirt kveðin og æði draugaleg dróttkveðin visa, alls ólik þessarri, sem menn hafa um hönd.*”⁵⁰² He had all the elements of a pre-Christian revenant, and he even spoke like one. What we have, then, is a story in which two traditions were mixed: even though there are several pre-Christian motifs in the tale they were Christianized and may even have a moral content. When it comes to his reasons for ‘coming back’ we can find that the most obvious of them was to teach the girl a lesson of respect for the dead or to adults’ commands. After all, when she got the idea of going to see the corpse, her younger sister tried several times to persuade her, saying that “*hon skuli eigi mæla soddan heimsku, at vilja sjá hann dauðan, er mǫrgum stóð mikill ótti af í lífinu.*”⁵⁰³ The girl made the corpse a mere object of curiosity, and also disobeyed an adult’s command. That is why Snorri, when apologizing for the events says that it was not his fault and it happened because his orders were not followed (*kveðr þat eigi sína skuld, þó sér hafi eigi hlýtt verit*⁵⁰⁴). In other sagas we have seen that the contact with the a *draugr* can cause a temporal madness and lost of consciousness in most people except the hero(es).⁵⁰⁵ But in this case, the only one who became mad and eventually died was the disobedient daughter, while the other, even though she was present, kept her mind and survived. Then this story can be perceived as some sort of moral tale, and most probably it was intended as an *exemplum*.

In conclusion, we can note that the fact that Styrr did not haunt, and came back only once and for a short period of time is most probably because he was, like Þorsteinn Eiríksson, a tamed

⁴⁹⁹ He might have been haunting, since he was buried in a *dys* the first time. But there are no reports. This may be explained because he was a Christian, and therefore he became a ‘tamed’ *draugr*. Other possible explanation for this lack of haunting will be given in Chapter 5.

⁵⁰⁰ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 235.

⁵⁰¹ His communication in verse may be due to the fact that, just like a *haugbúi*, he was a member of the higher stata of society.

⁵⁰² Note 1, *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 234.

⁵⁰³ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 234.

⁵⁰⁴ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 234-35.

⁵⁰⁵ See above, chapter 4.1.

draugr. He was Christianized, therefore he acted as a Christian revenant does in sagas: coming back for a short period of time in order to instruct the living.

Styrr's return from death is also mentioned, rather shortly, in *Eyrbyggja saga*. It is notorious that a saga like this, full of supernatural events and *draugar*, devotes only one line to Styrr's acts as a *draugr*. This sentence tells the following: "*Snorri goði fór eptir likinu suðr þangat, ok hann gekk í dyngjuna at Styrr í Hrossholti, þá er hann hafði upp sezkt ok helt um miðja dóttur bónda.*"⁵⁰⁶ That is all that we are told about. The settings have now changed, and the events took place in the farm where his body was kept and not in the way home. It is not stated if he got an axe in his chest or just collapsed when Snorri entered, or if the daughter died after being held by Styrr and, there is no moral lesson. We only get to know that he was sitting while holding the farmer's daughter by the waist. Due to the characteristics of this episode I will reserve its analysis for the next chapter.⁵⁰⁷

I will analyze now the last and only other occurrence of a Christian *draugr* in sagas, which happens to be, again, an '*uppsitjandi*'. This episode is reported in *Eyrbyggja saga* and it shows several similarities with that of *Heiðarvíga saga*. The story starts in the summer, when Þórgunna, a catholic Hebridean woman arrived to Iceland. The boat crew got shelter in a farm, and one of the men told the housewife that Þórgunna had many nice things with her. The housewife asked Þórgunna to show them to her, which she did. The housewife liked them a lot, especially the linnen, and wanted to buy them from Þórgunna, but she said that they were not for sale. During the summer Þórgunna did her part of the job in the farm and every morning she went to church. But she was not a very sociable person: "*en eigi var hon hóglynd eða margmælt hversdagliga.*"⁵⁰⁸ She only showed affection to Kjartan, the farmer's son, who was thirteen or fourteen years old. Time passed by and, during the autumn there was an omen. A large cloud appeared in the horizon and as soon as it reached the farm

*svá mikit regn, at heyit varð allt vátt, þat er flatt lá; flókann dró ok skjótt af, ok lýsti veðrit; sá menn, at blóði hafði rígt í skúrinni. Um kveldit gerði þeirri góðan, ok þorrnaði blóðit skjótt á heyvinu qllu qðru en því, er þórgunna þurrkaði; þat þorrnaði eigi, ok aldri þorrnaði hrífan, er hon hafði haldit á.*⁵⁰⁹

Þórgunna interpreted this blood-rain, which only occurred in this farm, as a foreboding of death for someone in the there, and that same night she got ill and stated her last wishes. Þórgunna stated that she wanted to be buried at Skálholt and told the farmer that he could dispose of her

⁵⁰⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga* LVI: 153.

⁵⁰⁷ See below, chapter 5.

⁵⁰⁸ *Eyrbyggja saga* L: 139.

⁵⁰⁹ *Eyrbyggja saga* LI: 140.

goods, except of a cloak, which should be given to the housewife, a gold ring which should be buried with her, and linnen and clothes, which should be burned. She said that she ordered her linnen and clothings to be burned not because it was useless, but because “*at mér þykkir illt, at menn hljóti svá mikil þyngsl af mér, sem ek veit at verða mun, ef af er brugðit því, sem eg segi fyrir.*”⁵¹⁰ Then she died and her body was taken to the church and prepared for the journey. But, in spite of Þórgunna’s advise, the housewife managed to get all the linen for herself. Some bearers went in the journey ‘*ok er eigi sagt af þeira ferð,*’⁵¹¹ until they reached Valbjarnarvöllu, where “*fengu þeir keldur blautar mjök, ok lá opt oftan líkit.*”⁵¹² Then, it started raining a lot. They decided to ask for shelter in a farm, but the farmer refused it, and they have to spend the night in a storage room without food. When the farmer’s household had gone to bed they heard a great noise and went to find out what it was. They found out that

*var þar sén kona mikil; hon var nǫkvið, svá at hon hafði engan hlut á sér; hon starfaði at matseld; en þeir menn, er hana sá, urðu svá hræddir, at þeir þorðu hvergi nær at koma. En er líkmenn vissu þetta, fóru þeir til ok sá, hversu háttat var; þar var þórgunna komin, ok sýndisk þat ráð öllum, at fara eigi til með henni. Ok er hon hafði þar unnit slikt er hon vildi, þa bar hon mat í stofu. Eptir þat setti hon borð ok bar þar á mat.*⁵¹³

The coffin bearers told the farmer that all of this was due to his lack of hospitality, the farmer was so scared that he made them most welcomed and offered them whatever they needed. As soon as Þórgunna heard this she left the room and never came back. This story got to be well known and wherever they went in they journey the coffin-bearers were offered shelter.

If I made such a long recount of the events it was in order to have the necessary elements for the analysis of the story and also to have enough elements to compare it with Styrr’s episode.

Þórgunna’s case also presents several elements that are common in *draugr* stories. First, the future revenant is described as a neither sociable nor a talkative person. Second, her corpse kept on falling down from the horse. Her corpse is not described as particularly heavy; as a matter of fact, the reason to stop the journey was not due to her weight but to the rain at night. But we have a new element, which was common in some Christian ghost stories: her last will was not followed.⁵¹⁴ However the fact that the housewife took hold of her bed clothing did not seem to bother Þórgunna. She did not come back to punish the housewife, after all she had warned people about the evil which would come if they were not burned. Maybe she even casted a spell

⁵¹⁰ *Eyrbyggja saga* LI: 142.

⁵¹¹ *Eyrbyggja saga* LI: 143.

⁵¹² *Eyrbyggja saga* LI: 143.

⁵¹³ *Eyrbyggja saga* LI: 144.

⁵¹⁴ Cf Ellis Davidson, Hilda R 1981: 158.

on them. When she started telling the farmer her last will she began her speech saying “*þó at yðr þykki fátt merkiligt um mik, at ek get lítt duga munu af því at bregða, sem ek segi fyrir.*”⁵¹⁵ She stated that there was something remarkable in her even if unnoticed and bad things would come if she were disobeyed. ‘There is more in him/her than what meets the eye’ was commonly used in sagas to state that someone was a sorcerer/sorceress, and maybe this was what she was stating here.⁵¹⁶ So it was not her clothes and her broken last will what brought her back, she had taken care of that, and as a matter of fact these clothes are linked to the later hauntings in Froða,⁵¹⁷ which stopped when they were finally burned. There are no further elements to link her with the hauntings, and there are no markers in the text that may point to Þórgunna as being physically active in those hauntings.

She came back to feed and provide shelter for her bearers. Once she made her point she went out peacefully. ‘Why did she appear naked (*nqkvið*)?’ may be the next question I shall answer. This may be connected with the fact that she was Christian, and the fact that in her last speech she showed some remorse about burning her clothes instead of giving them to someone who may have needed them. She makes clear that she took the decision not because she was envious but because evil things may happen if they were not burned. These things were most probably linked with the fore mentioned curse. After all, in that summer she spent in the farm some hostility grew between her and the housewife, who wanted to buy them. So Þórgunna acted enviously and did not want anyone else to have them, especially the housewife. In a Christian point of view she did the wrong thing in not giving them to the poor. We know that in the Christian tradition “in all the tales of apparitions in which the dead person is naked or dressed oddly [it is] because he or she refused to clothe a poor person, stole a habit, or neglected to give back a borrowed article of clothing.”⁵¹⁸ So we have, again, a tamed *draugr* whose tale serves as a Christian moral teaching. In this case it is a teaching about hospitality and almsgiving. Both of them can be translated into a ‘double lesson’ of charity.

Regarding her nakedness Jochens states that:

Given the reticence of the sources, it is not surprising that the entire literary corpus yields only two cases of female nakedness, both of which inspire horror. The first instance involves a corpse [...] Þórgunna herself appears in the kitchen, “stark-naked, not a stitch of clothing on her,” and starts preparing a meal. Her apparition frightens the inhospitable hosts into offering the men everything they need. Saga people were

⁵¹⁵ *Eyrbyggja saga* LI: 141.

⁵¹⁶ We have the precedent that the farmer asked her to interpret the omen and she could foresee that Skálholt was going to become a most venerated place.

⁵¹⁷ See below, Chapter 4.4.

⁵¹⁸ Schmitt, Jean-Claude 1998: 204.

accustomed to revenants; thus it was Þórgunna's nakedness, not her ghostly presence, that was fearsome.⁵¹⁹

As we have seen, her nakedness was a Christian symbol of her lack of charity. The preceding chapters have shown that even though the saga mind was full of *draugr* and, at least the saga writers, considered them as part of an everyday reality, not for that reason they were less scary. We have seen also that some better-dressed draugar were even more frightening than Þórgunna. I believe that the fear was not inspired by Þórgunnas nakedness but, just as in the other cases, by the contact with the dead.

There are not many instances of female *draugr*, and in most cases they appear as part of a group of *draugar* who haunt collectively. Since they appear collectively there are few instances in which they are physically described. Both Grímhilðr and Þórgunna are the only female *draugr* who appear individually, and even if shortly, they are physically described. Grímhilðr “*var ákafliga mikil ok sterk sem karlar.*”⁵²⁰ These are the only physical attributes attached to her, and they portray a rather manly woman. Þórgunna, is portrayed in a similar way: “*var mikil kona vexti, bæði digr ok há holdug mjǫk; svartbrún ok mjóeyg, jǫrþ á hár ok hærð mjǫk.*”⁵²¹ And “*Þat var áhugi manna, at Þórgunna myndi sótt hafa inn sétta tög, ok var hon þó kona in ernasta.*”⁵²² Both women have the same physical attributes. Both are big and strong. Þórgunna was even hairy and fleshy. This being the only thing we know about female *draugar*'s appearance while alive, I could conclude that just as a violent temperament was a precondition for a male to become a *draugr*, a manly look might have been a precondition for a woman to become one. But the female cases are few as to drag out any certain conclusions.

Finally, there are several similarities between Þórgunna's return and that of Styrr narrated in *Heiðarvíga saga*. Ellis Davidson says: “I suspect that this tale [Þórgunna's] has been modeled on that of the funeral journey of the old chieftain Víga-Styr [...] to which indeed there is a reference in *Eyrbyggja saga.*”⁵²³ She did not give any further details nor did she make further comparison, her only analysis was about the ways in which they came back in the farms. Her conclusions were that, in Þórgunna's case “we have a humorous parody of the incident of Víga-Styr.”⁵²⁴ Personally, I did not find Þórgunna's return to be that ‘humorous’. Maybe she found the ‘parody’ in the fact that she came back naked, but Ellis did not clear up where the parody or the

⁵¹⁹ Jochens, Jenny 1995: 76.

⁵²⁰ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 258.

⁵²¹ *Eyrbyggja saga* L: 139.

⁵²² *Eyrbyggja saga* L: 139.

⁵²³ Ellis Davidson, Hilda R 1981: 159-60.

⁵²⁴ Ellis Davidson, Hilda R 1981: 160.

humor are. If it is in the nakedness, I have already explained that it is a Christian element present in other Christian-ghost stories. What I agree on is in the fact that it was modeled on Styrr's story. It is, indeed, almost a perfect copy. Let's contrast both of them to find out how and why the copy was made. In both sagas the death of the future *draugr* was related to an omen, which happened to be the appearance of blood, either in rain or in an axe. The same day of the omen one got killed and the other one became suddenly ill and died a few days later. Both funerals involved a long journey, and in both journeys there was a storm: one of snow and the other of rain. During the journey both corpses got wet. Both companies of coffin-bearers had to ask for shelter: one did get it and the other did not. Then in the middle of the night the corpse came back and harassed at least a member of the farm: in one case it was a punishment/lesson for not obeying the adults' orders, and in the other case it was a punishment/lesson for disregarding the divine command of charity. Once they taught their lesson they never came back. Both were also buried in a church. We know that *Heiðarvíga saga* is considered to be the earliest Saga of Icelanders⁵²⁵ while, *Eyrbyggja saga*, even though considered an early saga, appeared later. So if there was any influence it was from *Heiðarvíga saga* to *Eyrbyggja saga*. Influences would clear up all the similarities, it is quite clear that Þórgunna's story was based on Styrr's. But what matters now are the differences between the recounts since they may provide more information than the similarities. In both sagas the corpses got wet, and in one it justifies the fact that Styrr's body was placed in the fire room, in order to dry it. Meanwhile in *Eyrbyggja*, the fact that the body got wet is stressed even more than in *Heiðarvíga saga*; Þórgunna's corpse first fell in a bog, then they had to cross a deep river, and then it started raining. But this fact has no connection with Þórgunna, but it is used to emphasize the miserable conditions of the shelterless coffin bearers. This seems to be linked not to a 'parody', but to different intentions in the narration of the episodes. Þórgunna's story, as we have seen, is a moral lesson about charity, and charity is not due to a wet corpse but to the soaked and hungry living. This would also justify the differences in both accounts regarding the hospitality of the farmers. It seems that the writer of *Eyrbyggja saga* adapted an old story in order to teach a different lesson. So the farmer in *Eyrbyggja saga* had to behave selfishly, while in *Heiðarvíga saga* the body had to be inside the house. A second striking difference is the change of characters. As we have seen, Styrr's story was narrated in *Eyrbyggja saga* some chapters after Þórgunna's. But his story was reduced to only one line. The most obvious reason for this is that it was done in order to find a justification

⁵²⁵ Cf Jónas Kristjánsson 1988: 224.

for the future hauntings at Froða. But, even though, why assign Styrr's story to Þórgunna? As we have seen this stories are embedded in a moral context, and most probably the catholic scribe wanted to show the readers that also female revenants existed. As we have seen, most of the *draugar* whose stories correspond to the pre-Christian period were male. Maybe the point was also to prove to the audience that the new religion brought a certain degree of equality, so that now also women would have access to the same realms that men did, and that they would also suffer the same punishments that men did in the afterlife.

As we have seen, the *draugr* stories analyzed here present most of the elements that were attached to *draugr* narratives that occurred in pre-Christian times. But all this stories are placed in a context of conversion. Both *Grœnlendinga saga's* and *Eirik saga rauða's* events took place during the reign of Ólavr Tryggvason (995-1000), during the conversion of Greenland; Þórgunna's story happened in the summer when Christianity was introduced to Iceland and, Styrr's story took place in the winter of 1007 or 1008. I also found out that, in contrast with our previous *draugar*, these stories seem to have a moral lesson. The Christian *draugar* are intended to teach about charity, obedience or purgatory and following the 'true faith'. So, maybe the point of the writers was to show that together with the introduction Christianity came also an almost immediate change of traditions. This new religion affected the folk beliefs and, with them, their tales of the supernatural. With the new faith *draugar* did not cease to exist, but now they were Christianized in their behavior. That would explain why these *draugar* are particular of the Sagas of Icelanders, because they cover the period of conversion and that is the best place to point out a change in the beliefs. Around year 1000 a new group of *draugar* emerged. Maybe the lack of linguistical marker for them is due to the fact that there are only few occurrences of '*uppsitjendr*'. But I believe that this is mostly due to the fact that they appear late in the saga age. That is, in other words, that they did not belong to the Old Norse world of supernatural creatures. They were not and did not behave like *aptrgongur* or *haugbúar* anymore; they were 'tamed *draugar*'. Their stories kept most of their old traditional elements attached to *draugar* stories, but they were placed in a Christian context in which they lost all the simbology that was attached to them in pre-Christian times. The story of a haunting became a moral lesson.

4.4. - *Fyrirburðir*: Non-Corporeal Revenants

Undoubtedly the spirits or ghosts of the drowned, or those who have met some other violent death, are to be seen there exhibiting themselves in human occupations. These spectres make themselves so apparent to gatherings of their acquaintances that those who are ignorant of their death receive them as though they were alive and offer their right hands; nor is the mistake detected before the shades have vanished.

(Olaus Magnus. *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*, Book Two)

We have seen that the *haugbúi* was a creature that wanted to be left in peace inside its mound, and restrained itself from all kinds of aggression until it could not resist more offences. In contrast, the *aptrgǫngur* were the ones who left their graves and began the violent acts in their search for grave-goods. In general, we have examined cases in which the living went to seek the dead and its opposite. But there is a special case of apparitions of the dead, which are named *fyrirburðir*, and they don't share any of the characteristics of the previous groups. The *fyrirburðir* are not violent, and they are not the targets of any violence. They just appear, as their name implies, and most of them don't interact at all with the living.

So far, the general idea in texts that study the Old Norse 'undead' is "that in the cases where the dead return to visit- and usually to trouble- the living it is never the disembodied spirit but always the animated corpse which is described."⁵²⁶ All the authors stick to this conception of corporeal revenants, but the *fyrirburðir* don't seem to fit within this conception. Due to the way in which they appear, their nature seems to be ethereal, or at least they are not the corpses who sat up to speak nor they show any traces of physical contact with the living. This lack of corporeality does not really fit with the definition of what a *draugr* was considered to be.⁵²⁷ This seems to be also the perception of the saga-writers, since in the sources they were not named as *draugar*. They were not considered to be animated tree-trunks or corpses; therefore I will not consider them to be within the *draugar*. Still, they can help us to understand the different ways in which the dead were supposed to return among the living.

When looking for a definition, the dictionaries don't seem to agree with what a *fyrirburðir* is supposed to be. Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie tell that: "*Fyrirburðir*, m. an appearance, vision,

⁵²⁶ Ellis, Hilda R. 1943: 148.

⁵²⁷ See above, Chapter 3.

spectre”,⁵²⁸ while Fritzner translates it as: “*Fyrirburðr*, m. Vision, hvad der fremstiller sig for en i et Syn, hvad man drømmer, synnes se eller høre”⁵²⁹ and in *Lexicon Poeticum Antiquæ Linguae Septentrionalis* it is simply defined as: “*Fyrirburðr*, m, varsel.”⁵³⁰ The most correct definition would be a mixture of the three of them, since, whenever we find a the word *fyrirburðr* attached to an event it is, in every single case, related to the vision of a dead person whose apparition, in some cases, implies that something great is about to or has already happened.⁵³¹ However, in the texts there seem to be different conceptions of what a *fyrirburðr* is, and their function varies from the mere vision at the distance of the recently drowned, to the dead appearing in different ways as a an announce that something great is about to happen and finally to the appearance of several disembodied spirits haunting a farm. In this section I will study the *fyrirburðir* in these three ways of manifesting themselves.

The word appears twelve times in the corpus of sagas analyzed in this paper and once in Snorri’s *Heimskringla*. These thirteen occasions refer to nine different instances of *fyrirburðr* in six Sagas of Icelanders, and one in Snorri’s book. In the following pages I will analyze them in order to reach a typology of the *fyrirburðr*. I will also analyze other six instances in which, even though the ‘revenants’ are not named as *fyrirburðr*, the particularities of their apparition lead me to believe that the encounters with the ‘undead’ that they depict should be considered as such.

Eyrbyggja saga, considered as a saga with a great love for the supernatural is, not surprisingly, the one in which the term “*fyrirburðr*” occurs most often. The first time in which a *fyrirburðr* is mentioned in this early saga,⁵³² is in reference to the death of Þorsteinn Þorskabítr, who drowned one autumn. His father, Þórólfr, was a great follower of Þórr and when he settled in Iceland he found a mountain: “*Þat fjall kallaði hann Helgafell ok trúði, at hann myndi þangat fara, þá er hann dæi, ok allir á nesinu hans frændr.*”⁵³³ Before anyone knew of Þorsteinn’s death, one of his shepherds happened to see how the Helgafell opened to receive Þorsteinn Þorskabítr and his company of dead men:

*ok er hann hlýddi, ef hann næmi nokkur orðaskil, heyrði hann, at þar var heilsat Þorsteini Þorskabít ok fgrunautum hans ok mælt, at hann skal sitja í qndvegi gegnt feðr sínum. Þenna fyrirburð sagði sauðamaðr Þóru, konu Þorsteins, um kveldit; hon lét sér fátt um finnask ok kallar vera mega, at þetta væri fyrirboðan stærri tíðenda.*⁵³⁴

⁵²⁸ Cleasby-Vigfusson-Craigie 1957: ‘*fyrirburðr*’.

⁵²⁹ Fritzner, Johan 1954: ‘*fyrirburðr*’.

⁵³⁰ *Lexicon Poeticum* 1966: ‘*fyrirburðr*’.

⁵³¹ This may relate the word with *fyrirboðan*.

⁵³² “Written before 1200 according to Finnur Jónsson [...] from before 1222 according to Einar Ólafur Sveinsson” (Bredsdorff Thomas 1995: 57).

⁵³³ *Eyrbyggja saga* IV: 9.

⁵³⁴ *Eyrbyggja saga* XI: 19.

So far, from this very particular instance it can be perceived that the *fyrirburðir* are expected to announce great events, they ‘*fyrirboðan stærri tíðenda*’. That is, the sight of a *fyrirburðr*, as defined in *Lexicon Poeticum*, implies an omen. Just by hearing of the *fyrirburðr* and without having the minimum interaction with the party of revenants, Þora knows that something great is going to happen. It is noteworthy that his father was waiting for him inside the mountain, where there was already some feasting, as the shepherd heard some “*mikinn glaum ok hornaskvǫl*”⁵³⁵ coming from there. According to this, the realm of the dead, at least for Þórólfr and his kinsmen, is not further away than the borders of his own farm.⁵³⁶ But it is never said who was feasting in there, since the only member of the family who had died in Iceland was Þórólfr.⁵³⁷ Maybe it was the same recently drowned who celebrating their arrival to the Otherworld. But in the same source it is implied that those who drawn go to Rán’s realm since “*því at þá hǫfðu menn þat fyrir satt, at þá væri mǫnnum vel fagnat at Ránar, ef sædauðir menn vitjuðu erfis síns.*”⁵³⁸ Snorri Sturlusson confirms that this was a traditional belief, since he wrote that “*Þá urðu æsir þess varir, at Rán átti net þat er hon veiddi í menn alla, þá er á sæ kómu.*”⁵³⁹ It is also strange that a great Þórr worshiper and his son, who was ‘dedicated’ to this god did not end up in one of the five hundred and forty apartments (*gólfa*) of Bilskirnir, Þórr’s hall.⁵⁴⁰ This seems to imply that *Hárbarðr* was right when he said that “*Óðinn á iarla,/ þá er I val falla,/ en Þórr á þræla kyn.*”⁵⁴¹ Is it only *þræla* that Þórr gets? Is it only thralls who occupy those five hundred and forty apartments of his hall and therefore Þórólfr, a *hofgoði*, had to take his kin to Helgafell and not to his favorite god?

If such were the case, then Þórólfr’s kinsmen would need to travel from wherever they died to the Helgafell, as it happened in this case. What really matters now is precisely this journey to the Otherworld. Þórstein and his men drowned in a trip to Hǫskuldsey, some twenty kilometers from Helgafell, and it is never stated if they bodies were found or not. This problem can have two answers. The first possibility is that what the shepherd saw were the actual bodies, which swam all the way to Helgafell and then were walking into the mountain. As ironical as it

⁵³⁵ Eyrbyggja saga XI: 19.

⁵³⁶ Referring to the idea of an afterlife realm being inside a mountain Ellis Davidson says that “the mountain, like the burial mound, is represented inside like a hall, and there is probably some connection between the mound and the hill in which the dead dwell.” (Ellis Davidson, Hilda R. 1943: 90).

⁵³⁷ For an analysis of a family cult linking placing the afterlife in a mountain see Ellis, Hilda R (1943): 87-90.

⁵³⁸ Eyrbyggja saga LIV: 148.

⁵³⁹ Skáldskaparmál 31(33).

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Gylfaginning 21.

⁵⁴¹ Hárbarðslióð 24.

may seem to have a group of drowned men swimming, it is still a possibility. But what seems more probable, as other cases of *fyrirburðr* will confirm, is that the shepherd's vision was that of some kind of 'soul' entering the hereafter.

Actually, the concept of the *fyrirburðr* seems to be specially associated with the drowned, since in other two sagas the word is linked with the apparition of drowned people. And in another two sagas, even though the vision of the drowned is not named as a *fyrirburðr*, their characteristics are so similar to those in which they are named, that I will consider them as such. Lets analyze them.

The second *fyrirburðr* case is narrated in *Laxdæla saga* and took place some 125 years after Þorsteinn's, and is also linked to Helgafell. Þorkell Eyjólfsson sailed to Norway to get timber in order to build the greatest church in Iceland. King Óláfr granted it to him, but disliked his ambition of building a church as big as the biggest in Norway and told him that he was sure that the timber would end up having no use at all. On his way back to Helgafell Þorkell left his timber in Hrótafjörður with the intention of fetching it later. Then he went to get his timber, and on his way back the ship sank and Þorkell and all his men drowned. As the King predicted, the timber was lost. What is noteworthy in this story is that, just like in *Eyrbyggja saga*, even before people knew about the incident something happened in Helgafell.

En þat sama kveld, er þeir Þorkell hqfðu drukknat um daginn, varð sá atburðr at Helgafelli, at Guðrún gekk til kirkju, þá er menn varu farnir í rekkjur, ok er hon gekk í kirkjugarðshliðit, þá sá hon draug standa fyrir sér. Hann laut yfir hana ok mælti: 'Mikil tíðendi, Guðrún,' sagði hann. Guðrún svarar: 'Þegi þú yfir þeim þá, armi.'⁵⁴²

After ignoring the *draugr* Guðrún went straight to church and when she was about to enter “*þá þóttisk hon sjá, at þeir Þorkell váru heim komnir ok stóðu úti fyrir kirkju. Hon sá, at sjár rann ór klæðum þeirra. Guðrún mælti ekki við þá og gekk inn í kirkju.*”⁵⁴³ When she got home Þorkell was not there and she was shocked by this incident (*atburð*).

Just as in the previous case, nothing is told about the fate of Þorkell's and the other men's bodies, but most probably they were lost at sea, since they could recover only few of the timber. And when the dead bodies appeared they did so in some sort of vision. The drowned men did not ever haunt: just like *Eyrbyggja saga* they seemed more to be disembodied 'souls' in transit from the place of their death to their final destination; most probably Helgafell as well. This episode may be based on that in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Most probably with the intention to bring a similar, but Christianized, variant of the story related to the holiness of the place. Before the conversion

⁵⁴² *Laxdæla saga* LXXVI: 222.

⁵⁴³ *Laxdæla saga* LXXVI: 223.

Helgafell was linked to a pagan afterlife, but now, four years before the fall of Saint Óláfr, it contained a different kind of sanctuary, a different entrance to the Otherworld: Helgafell had a church. In this occasion, instead of going to the mountain, the drowned went straight to the church (*Þorkell váru heim komnir ok stóðu úti fyrir kirkju*), which was the last place they were seen, and most probably their final destination. The revenants appeared in the same way in which they had died (*sjár rann ór klæðum þeira*), while as we have seen before, the *draugar* that have been analyzed did not preserve their appearance, but were black and bloated and, in general, horrible to see. The shape of Þorkell and his men seems to fit more with Christian descriptions of ghosts, in which only the ‘soul’ and not the body itself was what appeared. But, as will be discussed below, this non-corporeal representation of the ‘undead’ does not necessarily have to be the result of a Christian influence.

It is also worth noticing that the *draugr* who appeared to Guðrún was an anonymous dead. So far, in all the apparitions of a *draugr*, let him be a *haugbúi*, an *aptrgangr* or an ‘*uppsitjandi*’, they were all known to the living that they confronted. Even in the cases of a *haugbúi* being buried with dozens of men they (and we) knew at least that they were his men. But this was merely a nameless and unknown *draugr* intending to bring some news. Nothing was said about his corporeality, but certainly he did not belong to the tradition of the violent *aptrgǫngur*, and in his intention of giving advice would fit more with the incorporeal *haugbúi* out of its mound. But again, his anonymity and his good intentions point towards a ghost of Christian tradition.

There is a third event in which a drowned person is seen heading towards a mountain. This case concerns a magician called Svan. He went in a fishing expedition and got caught in a storm. Later, “*fiskemenn þeir, er váru at Kaldbak, þóttusk sjá Svan ganga inn í fjallit Kaldbakshorn, ok var honum þar vel fagnat; en sumir mæltu því í móti ok kváðuengu gegna, en þat vissu allir, at han fannsk hvárki lífs né dauðr.*”⁵⁴⁴ In this case we can know at least that his body was never found. The description of Svan’s entrance to the mountain shows the same elements as that of Þorsteinn, he was received with a great cheer, (which points to a partying afterlife). As to why he did not go to Rán but to a mountain, Ellis gave us the answer. She found out that Svan was related, if distantly, to Þórólfr and Þorsteinn þorskabítr, who also believe in an afterlife inside a mountain, and she points out that these may show traces of a family cult.⁵⁴⁵ But again, for the purposes of this research the vision of the *fyrirburðr* was too distant as to get more information about its nature.

⁵⁴⁴ *Brennu-Njáls saga* XIV: 46.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Ellis, Hilda R 1943: 87.

Fortunately *Eyrbyggja saga* offers a case in which a party of drowned men get a closer contact with the living, and unlike the previous two cases, such an apparition is called a *fyrirburðr*. The events took place in Fróðá immediately after Þórgunna's burial.⁵⁴⁶ Then a shepherd died of an illness, which was interpreted as if he was bewitched, since “*hann myndi leikinn, því at hann fór hjá sér ok talaði við sjálfan sik.*”⁵⁴⁷ When the shepherd died he was buried in the churchyard. Soon after, one man, named Þórir viðleggr, went out at night to the *náðahús* and on his way back he found that the dead shepherd was standing on his way. The man was beat by the *aptrgangr* and he got sick because of it and died. He was buried also in the churchyard, but both of them used to go out together, and then there was “*reimleikar miklir.*”⁵⁴⁸ Then several people died of an illness. Afterwards there were several noises coming out from the room where they kept the stockfish, but they could never identify the source of all the noise. Presumably they were being eaten, because Þóroddr and other five men had to sail to a nearby place to get more dried fish. The same night they left a seal emerged from the fireplace and Kjartan, a boy, started hitting it with a great iron sledge-hammer (*járndrepsleggja*) until it sank in the floor. “[*O*]k svá fór jafnan um vetrinn, at allir fyrirburðir óttuðusk mest Kjartan.”⁵⁴⁹ The next morning the men were sailing back with their stockfish cargo they all drowned, “*en líkin fundusk eigi.*”⁵⁵⁰ When the people in the farm found out about the accident they made a funeral feast for the drowned. Then while the people were gathered in the feast:

*Þá gengr Þóroddr bóndi í skálann ok fgrunautar hans allir alvátir. Menn fgrnuðu vel Þóroddi, því at þetta þótti góðr fyrirburðr, því að þá hfðu menn þat fyrir satt, at þá væri mǫnnum vel fagnat at Ránar, ef sædauðir menn vitjuðu erfis síns; en þá var enn lítt af numin forneskjan, þó at menn væri skírðir ok kristnir at kalla.*⁵⁵¹

But the happiness lasted little, since the drowned men went directly to the fire-room, ignoring everyone (*tóku einskis manns kveðju*⁵⁵²) and sat there all the night until the fire was over. Then they went away but continued coming back every night, doing the exact same thing. People thought that their visitations would end after the funeral feast was over, but they kept on returning. Then, one night things got worse. That night as soon as they lit the fire “*kom Þóroddr inn með sveit sína, ok váru allir vátir; settusk þeir niðr við eldinn ok tóku at vinda sik; ok er þeir hfðu niðr sezkt, kom inn Þórir viðleggr ok hans sveitungar sex; váru þeir allir moldugir; þeir*

⁵⁴⁶ See above, Chapter 4.1.

⁵⁴⁷ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIII: 146.

⁵⁴⁸ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIII: 146.

⁵⁴⁹ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIII: 147.

⁵⁵⁰ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIV: 148.

⁵⁵¹ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIV: 148.

⁵⁵² *Eyrbyggja saga* LIV: 148.

skóku klæðin ok hreyttu moldinni á þá Þórodd.”⁵⁵³ Everybody got scared and left the room, and Kjartan had an idea keep the revenants away: they would make every night a big fire for the ‘undead’ and a small one in a different room for the household. The idea worked and things went on like that for all the winter. Then six people died of the same illness that had killed the other, and they also joined the revenants by the fire. Kjartan went to seek help to Helgafell. The help came in the form of a priest and a company of men, who went to Fróða. The priest came out with the solution, “*hann gaf þau ráð til, at brenna skyldi ársal Þórgunnu, en sækja þá menn alla í duradómi, er aptr gengu; það prest veita þar tíðir, vigja vatn ok skripta mǫnnum.*”⁵⁵⁴ So that night, when the *fyrirburðir* were by the fire Kjartan burned all of Þórgunna’s clothing’s and then they summoned and judged them. The charges were “*at þeir gengi þar um hýbýl ólofat ok firrði menn bæði lífi ok heilsu.*”⁵⁵⁵ The sentences worked and the *fyrirburðir* left, but they seemed to be displeased and even offended, both in their attitude and in a sentence that each one of them said before leaving. Then the priest carried holy water and relics around the house, then he prayed and celebrated mass “*ok eptir þat tókusk af allar aptrgǫngur at Fróða ok reimleikar.*”⁵⁵⁶

Lets analyze first the group of drowned *fyrirburðir*. In them we have another gang of drowned people that did not go to stay with Rán but, for some or other reason, they were stranded in Miðgarðr. Every night, when the fire was out they left, but it is not stated where did they go, and nothing is stated in the text about peoples beliefs that may lead us to believe that they went to Rán’s hall when they left. However, this episode will help us to understand better the previous ones. They went to Fróða every night and, just like in the previous cases, they did not interact with the living neither to haunt them nor to make prophecies. It was not until the moment in which they were expelled that they exchanged some words with the living, but they were neither a curse nor a foretelling of the future. They said things such as “*Setit er nú, meðan sætt er*”⁵⁵⁷ and each one of them said something similar.

Even though they visited the house every night we are told that their corpses were not found (*líkin fundusk eigi*). So this *fyrirburðir* were not considered to be the bodies of the dead (as it was the case with three *draugar* categories analyzed before in this chapter) but they were something else. Also, unlike the *draugar*, they were not black and bloated but presented the same shape they had at the moment of death, represented through their drenched clothes and because

⁵⁵³ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIV: 149.

⁵⁵⁴ *Eyrbyggja saga* LV: 151.

⁵⁵⁵ *Eyrbyggja saga* LV: 151.

⁵⁵⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga* LV: 152.

⁵⁵⁷ *Eyrbyggja saga* LV: 152.

they were never described as being horrible to see. What we may be dealing here is with some concept of the ‘soul’,⁵⁵⁸ and that would explain the characteristics of the previous *fyrirburðir* analyzed in this section. They seem to have been conceived as ‘souls’ in transit to the other world. That is why they did not haunt in the previous three occurrences. The drowned were just going to their final dwelling, while the ones in Fróðá seem to have been stranded in the farm due to Þórgunna’s curse.”⁵⁵⁹ But they did not *reimt* like an *aptrgangr* would. Another thing that leads me to believe that they were considered to be the disembodied ‘souls’ is the fact that it is said that such apparitions of the drowned were considered to be a good omen, since it meant that Rán had welcomed them in her realm. Meanwhile the physical revenants were never welcomed. Also, when they arrived people went to welcome and salute them (but they ‘*tóku einskis manns kveðju*’). Even if they ignored the living they were being welcomed and, so far, in all the encounters with of *draugar* the corporeal revenants were not welcomed at all, but were greatly feared. Even Þorsteinn Eiríksson, considered so trustworthy as to whisper at his widow’s ear, was feared at the very moment he came back.⁵⁶⁰ So if they were welcomed, according to the ancient custom, it was most probably because they were considered as harmless disembodied ‘spirits’ and the only threatening revenants were the walking corpses.⁵⁶¹

This lack of corporeality may also explain the method used to get rid of them. Instead of decapitation, burning and drowning something more similar to a like a pre-Christian ‘exorcism’ was required. They were judged and forced out from the farm using the law, and only then the priest sprinkled holy water around the house and performed his mass. All the praying was not in order to expel them but to prevent their return.

Before going to the apparition of those who died from the illness I will analyze the last case of drowned men who return from the death. In *Færeyinga saga* the idea was not to reject the undead but to attract them. The story goes like this. After being chased by their enemies three men were forced to jump from a cliff and swim to save their lives. Two of them drowned and the third made it to the shore, where he was beheaded. Later, one man performed a necromantic rite in order to summon the three dead men and find out the way of their death. In order to perform the rite he made a fire and built a structure and sat in silence between them.⁵⁶² Then he saw that a

⁵⁵⁸ I was forced to use this word due to the lack of a better one to explain the concept.

⁵⁵⁹ See above Chapter 4.3.

⁵⁶⁰ See above Chapter 4.3.

⁵⁶¹ Disembodied spirits were also considered to be harmless in Ancient Greece. (Cf. *Classical Ghosts*, in Finucane, R. C. 1996: 4-28).

⁵⁶² For an analysis of the necromantic rite see Foote, Peter. (1984) *Færeyinga saga, chapter forty*. Chapter forty corresponds to chapter forty-one in the edition we used.

man entered the room and he was completely wet, “*Hann gengur að eldinum og réttir að hendur sínar, og litla hríð; og snýr út eftir það.*”⁵⁶³ Then a second man went into the room and did exactly the same. Immediately after he left a third man went into the room he “*var mikill maður og mjög blóðugur. Han hafði höfuðið í hendi sér.*”⁵⁶⁴ He just stood in a spot and then left. The people in the room recognized all of them and figured out the way in which they had died. They also concluded that they died in the same order in which they appeared. They realized that the first ones had drowned and the last was killed “*er oss sýndist hann blóðugur og höfuðlaus.*”⁵⁶⁵

The actions of the drowned men are quite noteworthy. They went into the room and stretched their hands in front of the fire, while the one who was assassinated just stood in the room. Foote says that “it seems reasonable to assume that the chief function of the big fires built up on Þránd’s orders is a hialistic one. They attract the men who were wet, cold and exhausted when they died.”⁵⁶⁶ That would explain why they seem to have gone into the room with the purpose of heating themselves. This would also explain why in *Eyrbyggja saga* the drowned men went straight to the fire and stayed there all night, leaving only when the fire was over. Meanwhile, the ones who died of the illness in *Eyrbyggja saga* did not seek immediately the fire but were just outside the house for several days, until they decided to join the drowned in the fire-room. We are also told that every night, as soon as the fire was set, the drowned men showed up into the hall at Fróðá. So, they may have looked for the fire in order to heat themselves, just like the ones in *Færeyinga saga* did.

Concerning the corporeality of the three dead men who are summoned in *Færeyinga saga* Foote states

[i]t is unlikely that the writer and his contemporaries regarded Sigmundur, Þórir and Einar in their manifestation merely as hallucinations or even as wraiths. There is abundant evidence to show that it was generally believed that the dead who visited the living had corporeal substance. They usually appear in the shape they had at the moment of death.⁵⁶⁷

It is true that there is enough evidence as to assume that the visitations of the dead were considered to be of a corporeal nature. But there are some elements in which the *fyrirburðir* don’t follow the same pattern. First, as we have seen with our drowned *fyrirburðir*, they belong to those persons whose bodies were lost in the sea. And even though they appear to the living, at least in *Eyrbyggja saga* it is stated that the corpses were never found. So, the *fyrirburðir* may have

⁵⁶³ *Færeyinga saga* XLI: 80.

⁵⁶⁴ *Færeyinga saga* XLI: 80.

⁵⁶⁵ *Færeyinga saga* XLI: 81.

⁵⁶⁶ Foote, Peter 1984: 211.

⁵⁶⁷ Foote, Peter 1984: 210-11.

not been considered as a walking corpse. The only occasion of a drowned man appears haunting is that of Hallbjörn, in *Laxdæla saga*, and in that occasion it is stressed in the saga that his body washed up on the beach, and this presence of the body allowed him to haunt in a physical form.⁵⁶⁸ Second, even though Foote states that *draugar* ‘usually appear in the shape they had at the moment of dead’, we have seen that so far the only ones apart from the *fyrirburðr* who seem to do so are the ones who have just died, that is the ‘*uppsitjendr*’. The *aptrgangr* and *haugbúar* are usually described as black, bloated and the *haugbúar* are linked with a horrible stench.⁵⁶⁹ The *haugbúar* when they manifest themselves outside the grave mound do appear with more human features, but, as we have seen, outside their mounds they appear only in dreams or in an ethereal way.⁵⁷⁰ Third, we have also seen that corporeal *draugar* fear fire, and it has a paralyzing effect on them. As a matter of fact, those who broke into burial mounds always used fire as a protection. It may, be that it only attracted the drowned, but that would not explained why those who died of the illness in *Eyrbyggja saga* and the murdered one in *Færeyinga saga* did not fear nor were paralyzed by it. So far the only examples of this immunity to fire are the *fyrirburðir* and a few *haugbúar*, and that is only when they are out of their mounds. Last comes the apparition of a bloody and headless dead in *Færeyinga saga*. As we have seen in the previous chapters, regardless of the way of their death, *draugar* do not bleed. Even when they were decapitated they did not bleed, or at least the saga-writers don’t tell us of them doing so. As a matter of fact, decapitation was one of the ways to get rid of a walking corpse. There is only one more instance of a headless dead walking, but as will be seen later, apart from being described as a *fyrirburðr*, all his characteristics point to the fact that he was not corporeal.

Now that all the cases of drowned *fyrirburðir* are analyzed lets study now the instance of the people who died of the illness in *Eyrbyggja saga*. The very beginning of the story points to a traditional case of *aptrgangr*. The shepherd died and several days later he appeared at night and beat a man. But unlike usual confrontations with an *aptrgangr*, the man died of an illness and was not killed by the dead shepherd. Even if the beating caused the illness (*Af þessu tók han sótt ok andaðisk*⁵⁷¹), it was not what directly killed him, as it happened in a regular confrontation with an *aptrgangr*.⁵⁷² As a matter of fact, no one apart from this first man died due to a direct confrontation with the shepherd. The rest of the people died of the same illness. In the first

⁵⁶⁸ This apparition was analyzed above, in Chapter 4.2.

⁵⁶⁹ See above, Chapters 4.1 and 4.2.

⁵⁷⁰ See above, Chapter 4.1.

⁵⁷¹ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIII: 146.

⁵⁷² See above, Chapter 4.2.

outbreak of this plague “*Eptir andlát Þóris tók sótt húskarl Þórodds ok lá þrjár nætr, aðr hann andaðisk; síðan dó hvern at qðrum, þar til er sex váru látinir.*”⁵⁷³ In the second outbreak six more died (*Þá endrnýjaði sóttina í annat sinn, þá er rófan hafði sýnzkt [...] létusk þá enn sex men í hriðinni*⁵⁷⁴). All of them came back from the dead, and even though their activities are described as *reimleikum* and *aptrgqngum* they don’t seem to do it as the ones analyzed in Chapter 4.2. They were not killing men and cattle, all the people who died during the haunting died of an illness. They were not ridding roofs and running after the housewife. Their main activity was to wander around, and some time later they only sat all night in front of the fire together with the drowned men all night. The only persons that they bothered were the drowned men. Also, they were not described as black and bloated, actually, they were not described at all. Most important, just like in all our previous cases of *fyrirburðir*, they were not named as *draugar*. They were described as *fyrirburðir*, just like the drowned ones: “*ok svá fór jafnan um vetrinn, at allir fyrirburðir óttuðusk mest Kjartan.*”⁵⁷⁵ So, this leads me to think that they were considered as non corporeal revenants. After all, if they were all buried in a churchyard they were most probably Christians, and they came back as Christian ghosts did. Except for the shepherd they were not aggressive. As a matter of fact, apart from the shepherd, they did not interact at all with the living. And they were dealt with not by the traditional method of decapitation, or burning but through the fore mentioned ‘exorcism’.

Some years before these events, in another farm and in another saga, several people died of another epidemic of plague. Since it occurred in Greenland the men could not be buried in a churchyard, as described in *Eiríks saga rauða*. Several people had died before Sigríðr and Þorsteinn Eiríksson got infected. The night before Sigríðr’s died she went to the outhouse and there she and Þorsteinn Eiríksson’s wife had a vision: “*hér er nú liðit þat allt it dauða fyrir durunum, ok Þorsteinn, bóndi þinn, ok þar kenni ek mik; ok er slíkt hqrmung at sjá.*’ *Ok er þetta leið af, mælti hon: Fqrú vit nú, Guðríðr; nú sé ek ekki liðit.*”⁵⁷⁶ The next morning she was dead and Þorsteinn Eiríksson died twenty-four hours later. As in the previous cases, there was no interaction between the living and the undead. But this event may help us to prove that it was possible to conceive a non-corporeal apparition of the dead. Both a Christian and a heathen woman shared the same vision, and both saw in it that the ones who were about to die were already among the dead ones. This must point to a certain conception of a disembodied ‘soul’.

⁵⁷³ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIII: 146-47.

⁵⁷⁴ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIV: 150.

⁵⁷⁵ *Eyrbyggja saga* LIII: 147.

⁵⁷⁶ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

Maybe the idea was that something had already died or left the body of those whose death was imminent.

There is a last case of such collective apparitions. In *Fóstbræðra saga* Þorgeirr Hávarsson was killed, together with his men, and his corpse was decapitated in order to make fun out of his head. Though they were Christian their bodies were buried in unconsecrated ground, and some time later Þorgeirr's head was buried somewhere else. A year after compensation was paid for their killing, and then some people saw a group of men walking across the field. “*Þeir þóttusk kenna mennina ok sýndisk þar vera Þorgeirr Hávarsson ok þeir níu menn, er þar fellu á skipinu með Þorgeiri; váru allir alblóðgir ok gengu inn eptir vellinum ok ór garðinum, ok er þeir kómu at á þeiri, er fellr fyrir innan bæinn, þá hurfu þeir.*”⁵⁷⁷

This vision is quite similar to that of the drowned men going to Helgafell both in *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Laxdæla saga*. The men were also depicted all bloody, just as they had died, which brings us to a second occurrence of dead men bleeding. But nothing is said of Þorgeirr's decapitation or if he was carrying his head in his hand. However, they were able to recognize him at the distance, which implies that his head might have been with him in his pilgrimage even though it was buried somewhere else, far from his body. This may be, as in the other cases, the depiction of the dead men's souls in transit to whatever was their final destination. But it is still quite strange that they did so one year after their death. Maybe this is linked with the fact that some justice was brought on their killing. Stern points that “[i]n no case does an early Icelandic corpse (with or without burial) walk after death in order to procure a proper burial.”⁵⁷⁸ This is right for the actual corpse, but we have seen that several dead men, typically considered as corporeal revenants by the critics, did actually walk in order to do so but they proved out to be disembodied spirits.

This idea of men's 'spirits' being able to walk to the Otherworld only after compensation had been paid for their deaths must have a certain link with the extreme importance of avenging someone's death or getting compensation for it, as shown in the sagas. Maybe the deceased were able to go to the Otherworld only after they had been avenged, and maybe cleaning their honor in that way. Therefore it became a sacred duty for the living to get some compensation for their murdered kinsmen, since that was what allowed their 'souls' to finally leave Miðgarðr.

In the previous analysis it is perceivable that there was a change in tradition linked to the conception of the *fyrirburðir*. First, we are told in *Eyrbyggja saga* that in the pre-Christian

⁵⁷⁷ *Fóstbræðra saga* XIX: 217-18.

⁵⁷⁸ Stern, Elizabeth J. 1987: 36.

tradition if men who died at sea went to their own funeral it was considered as a good sign. And we have some other cases of drowned men walking in the fields, even before anyone knew about their death. Since this last kind of visions brought news of someone who had died at sea, in a first instance they may have been considered as a ‘death omen’, confirmed by later news about the death of the men who were seen in the vision. In the pre-Christian tradition they were some kind of ‘souls’ in transit to the other world, as we have seen that they did not seem to be of a corporeal nature. Their lack of corporeality can be perceived in the fact that they were portrayed as they were at the moment of their death and not as the walking corpses that have been analyzed before. Later, maybe as the Christian tradition gained some strength and the old tradition became blurred, these stories were set in a Christian pattern, where the drowned still had to find their way to a holy ground, as we could perceive in *Laxdæla saga*’s *fyrirburðir* going also to Helgafell, but in this instance they went to the church and not to the mountain. When it comes to the fact that they announced a death, there is also a transition. At the beginning their mere apparition implied someone’s death. Later there seem to be two variants. One is, like in *Laxdæla saga*, an anonymous dead appeared and tried to inform verbally of some men’s drowning. The second one would be that the non-corporeal apparition of the dead implied someone’s imminent death. That is the dead went to meet the dying or doomed to die, like it happened in *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Fóstbræðra saga*. But one thing remained constant, and that is that the *fyrirburðr* was always the vision of a dead person, whose appearance announced a death.

Such a belief in the *fyrirburðr* as a death omen is hinted in *Víga-Glúms saga*. Here some people left a farm, and “*en er þær hurfu aptr, leit Una aptr um qxl eptir honum ok fell í óvit. En er hon vitkaðisk, spurði systir hennar, hvat hon hafði sét. ‘Ek sá dauða menn ganga á mót honum Bárði, ok mun hann feigr vera, ok munnu vit eigi sjásk síðan.’*”⁵⁷⁹ As it was to be expected, he was killed soon after. Whenever a *fyrirburðr* appears it has great semiotic implications. As a contrast between them and the *draugar*, the *fyrirburðr* is the only ‘undead’ whose appearance brings information without involving a direct interaction with the living. In only one instance a *fyrirburðr* tried to tell the news by establishing a dialog with the living, but it was ignored, most probably because people new what to expect from such an apparition, so the dialog never took place. So far, the only instance of contacts with *draugar* that involve some transmission of information occurred with the *haugbúar*, and in two instances, one in which the corpse sits up to tell his wife about the future and the other is in the form of a curse emitted by an *aptrgangr*.

⁵⁷⁹ *Víga-Glúms saga* XIX: 63.

From these characteristics of the *fyrirburðr* (i.e. they provide information without interacting with the living) I can find that, in contrast with the *draugar*, the *fyrirburðir* are related with the transmission of information; especially the kind of information related to death. So far, I would just like to point that the difference between them and the *draugar* consist in the fact that they are not corporeal and therefore they are not noted to be hideous or aggressive, they basically don't interact with the living, and their sole appearance implies great news.

The *fyrirburðir* can manifest themselves in different ways, but as we said before, it is always in the form of a dead man. Or at least only his head, as we will see in two cases. In *Eyrbyggja saga* Freysteinn is looking for some missing sheep when “*gekk Freysteinn at sauðum vestr yfir ána, ok er hann kom á skriðu þá, er Geirvqr heitir, er gengr ofan fyrir vestan ána, þá sá hann mannshqfuð laust óhulit.*”⁵⁸⁰ Now, it might not be anything extraordinary in finding an uncovered human head in the field. But this one appeared while one of Freysteinn's slaves was sent to kill at least one of his neighbors. Later in the chapter the slave was captured and confessed to his intended victims that he was sent to kill them. This confession, in a very saga-like way, led to several acts of violence between both farms. So, while the slave was in his mission a head appeared to Freysteinn, and then the marvelous thing happened:

*Hqfuðit kvað stqku þessa:
Roðin es Geirvqr
gumna blóði,
hon mun hylja
hausu manna.*

*Hann sagði Þorbrandi fyrirburðinn, ok þótti honum vera tíðenda-vænligt.*⁵⁸¹

We are not told whose head was it, but it was definitely not a personification of Geirvqr, the *skriða*, since it talked about Geirvqr in third person. Again, we have a personification of a dead person bringing great news about death. This time it appeared in the form of a head. As we have seen before, when the dead speak they tend to do so in verse, and this head was not the exception. In Old Norse literature we have another great example of a talking head, which is that of Mimir. In *Ynglinga saga* we are told that Óðinn went to it whenever he expected to find out about hidden things and other worlds.⁵⁸² In his discussion about Gaelic influences in Iceland, Gísli Sigurðsson notes that talking heads in Old Norse literature seem to be of Celtic origin, even Mimir's.⁵⁸³ Maybe the idea of the talking head is really a Celtic influence⁵⁸⁴ but so far, concerning the

⁵⁸⁰ *Eyrbyggja saga* XLIII: 116.

⁵⁸¹ *Eyrbyggja saga* XLIII: 116.

⁵⁸² *Ynglinga saga* IV and VII.

⁵⁸³ Gísli Sigurðsson 1988: 81-82.

⁵⁸⁴ For an analysis of Celtic influences in Icelandic literature cf. Gísli Sigurðsson 1988.

undead in sagas, we only have two examples of a head bringing information to the realm of the living; one is the fore mentioned head in *Eyrbyggja saga* and the other one occurs in *Ljósvetninga saga*.

The story of this second and last head-*fyrirburðr* begins when “*Guðmund dreymðy draum mikinn*”⁵⁸⁵ and then went to Draum-Finni in order to get his dream interpreted. Guðmund told Draum-Finni his dream, in which:

*ek þóttumk ríða norðr um Ljósavatnsskarð, ok er ek kom gagnvert bænum, þá sýndisk mér hqfuð Þorkels háks á aðra hqnd hjá mér, þa er at bænum vissi. Ok er ek reið norðan, sat hqfuðit á annarri qxl mér, þeiri er þá horfði við bænum. Nu stendr mér ótti af bessu.’ Finni mælti: “Sja þykkjumk ek fyrirburð þenna.”*⁵⁸⁶

Again, the talking head brings news of death, since the interpretation of the dream is that he is bothered about being surrounded by the kinsmen of a man he killed, and that this may have some effect on some of his kinsmen (*Ok ekki kemr mér þat á óvart, at nær stýrt verði nqkkurum þínum frændum*⁵⁸⁷). This leaves him worried and goes to a sorceress to find out about his future and she discovers that one of his sons will be slain, which indeed, happened soon after.

Both of these head episodes did, as the previous *fyrirburðir*, bring an omen of death. One was in a verse, and it is quite symbolic that it was precisely a head that said that the avalanche would soon hide human heads.

I have mentioned before that the *haugbúar* outside their mounds manifest themselves in a pacific and ethereal way, while inside it they are corporeal.⁵⁸⁸ I shall now analyze some cases in which such apparitions are referred to as ‘*fyrirburðr*’.

In *Brennu-Njáls saga* Gunnarr was murdered and buried in a mound. His killing was not avenged. One day two shepherds were passing by his mound and “*þeim þótti Gunnarr vera kátr ok kveða í hauginum.*”⁵⁸⁹ That this was an unusual incident can be perceived in the fact that they went immediately to Gunnarr’s mother and told her.⁵⁹⁰ Everyone was shocked by it, and they even doubted about telling Hqgni, Gunnarr’s son, about it. Since “*Hqgni var maðr vaskligr ok vel at sér gqrr ok tortryggr; þorðu þau eigi af því at segja honum fyrirburðinn*”⁵⁹¹ they decided to take him to the mound so he could see it with his own eyes. One evening he and a friend of the family were passing at some distance from the mound. Then they saw that the mound was open

⁵⁸⁵ *Ljósvetninga saga* XI (XXI): 58.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ljósvetninga saga* XI (XXI): 58.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ljósvetninga saga* XI (XXI): 58.

⁵⁸⁸ See above, Chapter 4.1.

⁵⁸⁹ *Brennu-Njáls saga* LXXVIII: 192.

⁵⁹⁰ The people of the saga can also have considered it as unusual because the *haugbúar* were not an Icelandic phenomenon. In the sources there are only two instances of a mound dweller in Iceland. The most common way in which the ‘undead’ appeared in Iceland was in the form of an *aptrgangr*.

⁵⁹¹ *Brennu-Njáls saga* LXXVIII: 192.

“ok hafði Gunnarr snúizk í hauginum ok sá í moti tunglinu; þeir þóttusk fjögur ljós sjá brenna í hauginum, ok bar hvergi skugga á. Þeir sá, at Gunnarr var kátligr ok með gleðimóti miklu. Hann kvað vísu ok svá hátt, at þó mátti heyra gǫrta, þó at þeir væri firr.”⁵⁹² Once he finished his poem the mound closed again, and the general impression was that “*Mikit er um fyrirburði slíka.*”⁵⁹³

This *fyrirburðr* appeared, like most of them, at the distance and without interacting with the living. Gunnarr did not seem even to try to talk with his son, since he was saying his poem while looking at the moon. He was not in an aggressive or revengeful mood, but in both of the occasions in which he was seen he appeared to be rather cheerful (*kátr* and *kátligr ok með gleðimóti*). However, both men found this apparition full of meaning, and what they could get from it was that they should take some revenge on Gunnarr’s death. Once again the vision of a *fyrirburðr* ended up being a death omen.

In *Eyrbyggja saga*, few time before the apparition of the head in Geirvǫr there was another omen of the killings. Once a slave was taking care of the cattle, and then “*sá hann, at qrn fló vestan yfir fjqrðinn. Dýrhundur mikill fór með Agli; qrninn lagðisk at hundinum ok tók hann í klær sér ok fló vestr aptr yfir fjqrðinn á dys Þórólfs bægifóts ok hvarf þar undir fjallit.*”⁵⁹⁴ He told it to Þorbrandr, his master, and “*Þenna fyrirburð kvað Þorbrandr vera mundu fyrir tíðendum.*”⁵⁹⁵

The fact that the eagle flew towards Þórólfr’s cairn (*dys*) may have been interpreted as if it was his ‘soul’; after all it was quite common in sagas to represent it in the form of a bird.⁵⁹⁶ But it did not go into the grave but it disappeared in the mountain. This could be related with the tradition of an afterlife inside a mountain and not in Valhǫll or within the grave, as we have seen before.

There are only two other instances of a dead person outside the grave named as a *fyrirburðr* and, both occur in dreams. In the first one Harald Sigurðarson dreamt that he was in Niðarós where he met his brother Óláfr, who said a verse. Harald’s death was foretold in it:

*Uggik enn, at, tyggi,
yðr mani feigð of byrjuð.
Trolls gefið fǫkum fyllar
fíks. Veldra guð slíku.*

*Margir aðrir draumar váru þá sagðir ok annars konar fyrirburðir ok flestir daprligr.*⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹² *Brennu-Njáls saga* LXXVIII: 193.

⁵⁹³ *Brennu-Njáls saga* LXXVIII: 194.

⁵⁹⁴ *Eyrbyggja saga* XLIII: 115.

⁵⁹⁵ *Eyrbyggja saga* XLIII: 115.

⁵⁹⁶ See Boberg, Inger M 1966. *Soul in Animal Form E730-E738.1.*

⁵⁹⁷ *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* LXXXII: 178.

The vision of his dead brother is again, an omen of death. And in here we can perceive that some other dreams were also foretelling his death. However, the last sentence of the quote makes a clear differentiation between a dream and a *fyrirburðr*. Some dreams were just prophetic dreams and they are distinguished from the *fyrirburðir*, which as we have seen must involve the apparition of a dead person and not only be prophetic, as the other dreams. So, the visitation of the dead person, even though it happened in a dream was considered as real; as a contact with a non-corporeal revenant.

The second occurrence of such a contact in a dream is quoted in *Laxdæla saga*. Here a young girl named Herdís dreamed that an ill-looking woman went to her. She then started complaining to Herdís about Guðrún, who went and moved on top of her every night, and dropped over her tears that burned her. When she awoke she told Guðrún her dream and “*Guðrúnu þótti góðr fyrirburðrinn.*”⁵⁹⁸ The next day they went to the church and dug in the exact place where Guðrún used to pray and “*Þar fundusk undir bein; þau vǫru blá ok illilig*”⁵⁹⁹ buried together with a great sorceress wand (*seiðstafr*). They decided that it must be the grave of a *vǫlva* (*vǫlleiði*) and moved the bones to another place.

This case is exceptional since it is the only instance in which a *fyrirburðr* does not imply an omen. Maybe that is why Guðrún considered it to be a good *fyrirburðr*. But again, its apparition is conceived as a real contact with a non-corporeal revenant. And it points to some kind of continuation of life within the grave, even as mere bones, for Guðrún’s praying manages to disturb the remains of the *vǫlva*.

I could find only a single contradictory case in the sources. This is an episode in *Svarfdæla saga* where there are few similarities with all the other kinds of revenants that I have analyzed in this dissertation. In it a *berserkr*, named Klaufi, went home after a night of *berserkr* activity. There, Yngvildr, his wife had set an ambush and her brothers killed him. They took the corpse out of the house and left. That night, when his wife had gone to bed the corpse came back and “*kom Klaufi til sængr Yngvildar [...] Hon lét þá kalla á þá bræðr, ok hjuggu þeir þá af honum hqfuð ok lqgðu neðan við iljarnar.*”⁶⁰⁰ The next evening Karl and other of Klaufi’s friends heard some noises in the roof of the house and then they heard Klaufi saying a verse in which he invited them to take revenge. When they went out they saw “*ekki lítinn grepp suðr við garðinn,*

⁵⁹⁸ *Laxdæla saga* LXXVI: 224.

⁵⁹⁹ *Laxdæla saga* LXXVI: 224.

⁶⁰⁰ *Svarfdæla saga* XVIII: 174.

ok var þat Klaufi ok hafði hǫfuðit í hendi ser”⁶⁰¹ he was saying a verse telling them to go southwards. They followed him and arrived to the place where his brothers-in-law were hiding and he knocked on the door using his head. But after that Klaufi seems to have disappeared, because when someone opened the door all he could see was Klaufi’s friends. The hostilities began, and when they got out of the house Klaufi was there again, reciting verses about the other world and saying “Í urð ætla ek nǫkkurum í kveld, Karl frændi.”⁶⁰² Then the battle began and Klaufi joined, swinging his head and scaring all his enemies. Some people tried to flee and they dispersed in all directions while others stayed in the battle. I will quote the scene of the fleeing and fighting in its length, since its comprehension is essential for my analysis.

*Þeir Ljótólfr héldu nú undan, ok eru nú níu eptir, en fimmtán heldu til, en sjau váru hinir, ok ætlar Ljótólfr at snúa ofan Bleikudal fyrir utan Bakkagarð, en þar var Klaufi fyrir ok bannaði þeim þar at fara. Út snúa þeir undan ok ætla ofan Nafarsdal fyrir utan teiginn, eigi var þess kostr; Klaufi var þar fyrir. Þá bar Karl at, ok tókst bardagi í annat sinn. Undan varð Ljótólfr at halda, er þeir hǫfðu skamma stund barizt, því at Klaufi var þá í bardaganum; sjau váru þeir Ljótólfr, er þeir heldu undan, en hinir fjórir. Allt fór Ljótólfr til þess, er hann kom heim at garðinum at Hofi; eigi var þá kostr at fara í hliðit, því at Klaufi var þar fyrir.*⁶⁰³

The battle continued like that until Klaufi’s friends got the victory. Nothing else was heard about Klaufi until the next spring when Gunnarr and Karl were out. Then Karl looked at the sky and became pale. Gunnarr asked him what happened and he told him that he has a vision (*fyrir bar*) of Klaufi riding a horse in the sky, and dragging a sled. And in the sled “þóttumst ek sjá yðr austmenn mína ok sjálfan mik í sledanum, ok skǫgðu út af hǫfuðin.”⁶⁰⁴ Gunnarr admitted that he saw it as well and he did not get scared, and while they were discussing who was the bravest Klaufi started to declaim two stanzas, in which the last verse was repeated. When he was done he said “Heim ætla ek þér með mér í kveld, Karl frændi.”⁶⁰⁵ Accordingly, Karl got scared and prepared to die. So he went home and told his wife about the vision (*Hann sagði henni fyrirburðinn*⁶⁰⁶), asking her to bury him near the fjord, because from there he could see all the ships sailing. Then he died in a battle with his *austmenn* and they all got a ship burial with lots of money. Several years later, at the very end of the saga Klaufi appeared again, and we are told that he became extremely violent and started killing men and animals. So they decided to go to his grave and dig him out. They found out that his body was not decomposed, so they cremated it

⁶⁰¹ *Svarfdæla saga* XIX: 175.

⁶⁰² *Svarfdæla saga* XIX: 179.

⁶⁰³ *Svarfdæla saga* XIX: 180-81.

⁶⁰⁴ *Svarfdæla saga* XXII: 189.

⁶⁰⁵ *Svarfdæla saga* XXII: 190.

⁶⁰⁶ *Svarfdæla saga* XXII: 190.

and then put the ashes in a lead container and sank it in a hot spring. This was the end of Klaufi's visitations.

Klaufi's story presents several oddities, and the characteristics of his return from death are a mixture of all the three kinds of *draugar* that we analyzed before. For example, just after his death he came back as an *aptrgangr* and he was dealt with in the traditional way. But in the sources this is the only instance in which decapitation is not effective against a *draugr*.⁶⁰⁷ His second return would be that of a *draugr's draugr*, and at the very beginning Klaufi's behavior would seem that of a normal *aptrgangr*, he goes and rides the roofs of his friends. But again, he does not do it as any of the ones I have analyzed, for Klaufi rides the roof not to terrorize his friends, but to declaim some poems and drag some attention in order to be avenged. This is a very weird occurrence for two reasons. First, as we have seen, the *aptrgǫngur* did not make a distinction between their kin and their enemies when it came to haunting. As a matter of fact they preferred to haunt their own friends and relatives. His friends were not afraid or attacked by him when they met each other, instead they followed Klaufi to where he led them and worked as a team to avenge him. Second, he is not only one of the two talking *aptrgangr* that we have, but he is also the only one who communicates in verses. As I have pointed out before, poetry seems to be an exclusive right of the *haugbúar* and some few *fyrirburðir*.

When it comes to Klaufi's corporeality we are confused again. His first return from death was so physical that he could be decapitated. This seems to be more complicated in his second return. When he came back from the death a second time he went to battle with his friends and his way of fighting was not to wrestle, like corporeal revenants did, but to swing his head and scare his enemies. His was a psychological weapon. What dragged my attention in the battle scene is Klaufi's omnipresence. He was everywhere at the same time, scaring his enemies and keeping them from fleeing. This can have only two explanations, either he was corporeal and moved really fast or he was incorporeal and appeared and disappeared at will. This hostile revenant did not fight in the battle and did not exert any physical violence, as *aptrgǫngur* did normally or as *haugbúar* did under distress. The lack of physical aggression on Klaufi's part leads me to believe that he was not a corporeal revenant. This hunch seems to be confirmed the third time he shows up. In this occasion, Klaufi acted just like a Valkyrie, riding the sky and choosing the future slain. While he was riding a horse in the sky, both Karl and Gunnarr had a vision similar to that of Guðríðr and Sigríðr in *Eiríks saga rauða*. Both of Klaufi's friends saw

⁶⁰⁷ The only other instance of a headless revenant is that of *Færeyinga saga*, but in that case the dead was summonsed and did not show up of his own accord.

the ones who were about to die and one of them recognized him/her self among the dead. As I argued before, this points to a lack of corporeality in the vision. But here Klaufi behaved doubly as a *fyrirburðr*, first he did so in the form of a vision, and just in case it was not enough, he then emitted, verbally, a death omen. In this appearance the idea of the *fyrirburðr* has been a little bit changed, since in this instance his presence and words do not merely imply death, but it is also stated that this death is due to his will of taking his friend with him (*Heim ætla ek þér með mér í kveld*). As a matter of fact he had already taken something, whatever it was, in the sledge. The nature of Klaufi and the other dead could not have been corporeal. But at the very end Klaufi became more tangible and started behaving like an *aptrgangr* of the old school, without poems, omnipresence or flying horses but only being physically aggressive. Since the beheading did not work in the first instance the other two ritual ways of disposing of *aptrgöngur* had to be used on him, so he was both burned and then his ashes symbolically drowned.⁶⁰⁸

Klaufi's story is far out from being similar to any other single story that I have analyzed in this paper. As a matter of fact, it is similar to all of them, but as if all of them were told at once. It has a mixture of all of the elements we have studied, and even more. This could be explained by the dating of the saga. After all, it is one of the younger Sagas of Icelanders, at least the version that we have left is a fifteenth century copy of the fourteenth century reinterpretation of a lost thirteenth century saga. It has "all the exaggerations typical of the postclassical sagas."⁶⁰⁹ As Jónas Kristjánsson puts it, "[t]hat early version was rewritten in the extravagant style of the fourteenth century but has otherwise disappeared without trace."⁶¹⁰ Therefore, the blend of *draugar* traditions and behaviors in one single character can be the result of this late re-creation of the story by an author who was less familiar with the mythological ideas around the Old Norse 'undead' than his predecessors were.

As we have seen in the previous pages a *fyrirburðr*, just as defined in the dictionaries is a vision, a dream or an omen. But what dictionaries do not mention is that every single time that the word *fyrirburðr* is used it refers to the apparition of a dead man in a vision or in a dream, and both of these manifestations imply news or an omen, which, in every single case, are related to death. The *fyrirburðir* are generally seen at the distance and only for a brief moment, but in the few instances in which they are reported to have a closer contact with the living their nature

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Ström, Folke 1942. *Chapter IV: Forms of Execution*.

⁶⁰⁹ *Medieval Scandinavia* 1993: 'Svarfdæla saga'.

⁶¹⁰ Jónas Kristjánsson 1988: 244.

seems to be ethereal. Their non-corporeal nature does not necessarily imply that they were a Christian cultural import. It is true that

[o]ne result of the introduction of Christian teaching and classical learning [...] may have been a gradual change from the idea of the restless corpse to that of the wandering disembodied spirit. But if we search deeply enough, it seems probable that we shall find both conceptions present in men's beliefs in any period.⁶¹¹

After all, corporeal revenants are not exclusively Scandinavian, and so far there are no grounds to believe that non-corporeal ones shall be excluded from their conception of supernatural beings.

It is also quite noteworthy that this manifestation of the dead seems to be particular to the sagas of Icelanders. There is no recollection of *fyrirburðir* appearing in the Heroic sagas, and there is only one instance in *Heimskringla*.

The idea of the *fyrirburðr* seems to have evolved. At the beginning it was related to the vision of the dead walking to the Otherworld. But they were not the ordinary dead, but the ones whose bodies were lost at sea. So their vision implied news of a death that was going to be confirmed some time later, when the news of the drowning came to the relatives. Later this idea of the vision seems to have changed, and then the apparition of the ordinary dead announced a future death. So, the *fyrirburðr* changed its conception from a way of knowing that someone had already died to the way of knowing that someone was about to die. They stopped bringing news about death and started to bring death omens. There was also some degree of Christianization, so the drowned 'souls' were seen in transit to churches instead of entering a pagan other world. Finally there was a change in their interaction with the living, since in most cases there was no interaction, but the latest the source the more they communicate with the living. But one constant is that *fyrirburðir* were not aggressive against the living. In most cases they just merely ignored them. Even Klaufi, who was hostile towards the living, did not harm directly any of his enemies while he was avenging himself. They were incorporeal, therefore they could not harm anyone.

⁶¹¹ Ellis Davidson, Hilda R. 1981: 173.

Chapter 5

Eros and Tanatos: Sexual Reasons to Become a Draugr

*Nu skulu þau njótast dauð, er þau máttu eigi lífs.
(Órvar-Odds saga XV)*

In this chapter I will analyze some of the *draugar* episodes that have been studied earlier in this dissertation. The main idea behind this is to propose a new approach to the sources and focus only in some particular points that will bring a new light to the reasons that *draugar* might have had to come back to life. Previously, while studying the different kinds of *draugar* I have pointed out that each group seemed to have its particular reasons to return, like protecting their grave-goods, acquiring grave-goods or giving a moral lesson, for example. But behind these reasons, as the title of this chapter suggests, there appears to be a sexual drive to return from the death in several stories. Love and death, Eros and Tanatos, is a motif common to the literature of all times and its presence in the saga corpus shall not be surprising. Steinsland tells that “[b]åde i edda-, skaldediktning og saga er der eksempler på at døden presenteres som en erotisk forening mellom den døende/døde og en representant for dødsriket.”⁶¹² However, she applies this idea to representatives of one of the multiple death-realms who actually dwell within the same death-realm they correspond to. In this chapter I will apply this same idea of the relationship between the dead and the dying to the cases in which the both the representative of the Otherworld and the dying person are within Miðgarðr. That is, I will analyze the stories in which the *draugar* are linked to erotic activities.

Steinsland has pointed that in several Old Norse texts “bryllup og død er de to mystiske motivkretsene som danner grunnpillarene i norrøn fyrstideologi”⁶¹³ and she found that in several events there is a symbolical link between death with marriage and erotic activities. One main difference is that in *draugar* stories only one instance, that of Helgi Hundingsbani, which is directly linked to the royal ideology that Steinsland pointed out. Sayers says that “[a]lthough contact with the earth of the burial site seems to be the source of the swelling and dark color of the *draugar*, these dead have no overt affinity with fertility, as is often the case in agrarian

⁶¹² Steinsland, Gro 1992: 321.

⁶¹³ Steinsland, Gro 1992: 321.

societies in more temperate climates.”⁶¹⁴ Fertility, he is right, is not associated with *draugar*, though all cases analyzed in this chapter aim to the conception of death as a new state of being in which the continuation of sexual activity after death was not only possible, but also an actual need.

I will start this time by the study of the ‘*uppsitjendr*’. As mentioned before, there may be other than the obvious reasons for Þorsteinn Eiríksson’s and Sigríðr’s/Grímhídr’s return from within the dead.⁶¹⁵ This reasons may be traceable more to a pre-Christian conception of Eros and Tanatos rather than to the conversion narrative I pointed before. This reasons may point to, at least, the transmission of an ideology about ‘death’ that lies within the recount of these stories.

Lets review the facts in both versions of Þorsteinn and Sigríðr/Grímhídr’s return, now from a different point of view. In *Eiríks saga rauða* Sigríðr had a vision in which she was able to see the ‘spirits’ of those who had died but, most important is the fact that she also saw the ones of the two who were about to die, which were Þorsteinn Eiríksson’ and hers. Then she died during the night, and the next thing we know is that Þorsteinn reported that “þar væri varla kyrrt, ok húsfreyja vildi færask á fætr ok vildi undir klæðin hjá honum.”⁶¹⁶ At the moment when her widower arrived and ‘killed’ her she had almost reached her objective. By then she had already crawled to Þorsteinn’s bed-edge and started to get into it (*er hann kom inn, var hon komin upp á [Þorsteinn’s] rekkjustokkin.*⁶¹⁷) My main question here is, why did she come back from the dead in order to get into a dying man’s bed? As pointed before, one of the main reasons that *draugar* had for coming back from the death was to provide themselves whatever they may need in the Otherworld. Taking this into account, plus the fact that “i flere litterære kilder gis der uttrykk for en oplevelse av døden som en form for hieros gamos, et hellig bryllup, der de seksuelle og erotiske overtonene er fremtredende”⁶¹⁸ Sigríðr’s return may find a justification. She came back to provide herself with a partner for the Otherworld. Since she new that Þorsteinn Eiríksson was about to die, she might have chosen him as a couple. It could be perceived as a kind of suttee, but a special one in which the dead come back in order to choose a partner instead of the living

⁶¹⁴ Sayers, William 1996: 242.

⁶¹⁵ In *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænlandinga saga*, respectively.

⁶¹⁶ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

⁶¹⁷ *Eiríks saga rauða* VI: 215.

⁶¹⁸ Steinsland, Gro 1992: 323.

deciding to join the dead in the pyre.⁶¹⁹ So far this idea may sound strange, but later as I analyze this behavior in other sources all the loose ends will fix together.

Continuing with the analysis of the ‘*uppsitjendr*’, it becomes obvious that both in *Grænlandinga saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða* there is a sexual-related reason for Þorsteinn Eiríksson to return from death. Apart from his pious motivations, such as solacing his wife and getting out of purgatory, there is something conspicuous in the precise moment that he choose to return and deliver his speech. In *Grænlandinga saga*, the only thing that happened after his death was that his widow was extremely sad and Þorsteinn svartr was consoling her, in that moment Þorsteinn Eiríksson sat up. Lets analyze this scene. After Þorsteinn’s death Guðríðr was sitting on a bench and weeping when

tók Þorsteinn bóndi Guðríði af stólinum í fang sér ok settisk í bekkinn annan með hana, gegnt líki Þorsteins, ok taldi um fyrir henni marga vega ok huggaði hana ok hét henni því, at hann myndi fara með henni til Eiríksfjarðar með líki Þorsteins, bónda hennar, ok fǫrunauta hans. ‘Ok svá skal ek taka hingat hjón fleiri,’ segir hann, ‘þér til hugganar ok skemmtanar.’⁶²⁰

In that precise moment Þorsteinn Eiríksson sat up. His return seems to be linked to the fact that Þorsteinn svartr’s words seem to have not been intended just as mere words of support to the widow, there are traces of some flirting in them and in the whole scene. First Þorsteinn svartr went to her, embraced her (*í fang sér*), and sat with her and consoled her. His plans were to go with her to Eiríksfjarðar taking with him several people, which after the plague should have been only a few, in order to provide her with comfort there. Maybe he was already planning go and settle in Eiríksfjarðar and marry her. After all “[b]oth divorced and bereaved people usually remarried quickly, because farm life demanded the work of a couple”⁶²¹ and in this particular situations there were two widowes of opposite sex together, and both of them needed to go on with their farm work. As a matter of fact, there seems to have been some flirting between them before, since when Þorstein svartr left after Grímhildr’s death Guðríði told him “*Vertu litla hrið í brott, Þorsteinn minn*”⁶²² which are quite affective words. Since she already knew that her husband was about to die she was may have considered the need to look for a new prospect husband. This ‘*Þorsteinn min*’ may have not been very pleasant for Þorsteinn Eiríksson to hear in his dying bed. The case is that when Þorsteinn Eiríksson had died and came back to make his

⁶¹⁹ As it occurred, for example, in the case of the slave-girl who decided to die with chieftain in Ibn Fadlan’s account (Cf. Montgomery, James E. 2000: 3-4.) and, maybe also with Nana’s death and inclusion in Baldr’s pyre (Cf. *Gylfaginning* 49.).

⁶²⁰ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 259.

⁶²¹ Vs. *Medieval Scandinavia* “Marriage and Divorce”.

⁶²² *Grænlandinga saga* V: 259.

speech the bereaved were already closer, sitting in a way that we only hear about in the flirting episodes that happened during the drinking rounds: Þorsteinn Svartr was sitting on a bench while “*Guðríðr sat i knján honum.*”⁶²³ Jealousy may have been what brought Þorsteinn Eiríksson back in this version of the story. This can be perceived in his speech, he came back from death to console her, as he says, his purpose is “*til þess at hon kunni þá betr andláti mínu.*”⁶²⁴ He came back to help her with her grief, which is precisely what the other Þorsteinn was doing.

Þorsteinn Eiríksson’s return seems to be otherwise unjustified since he said that he was going to a nice resting place (*ek em kominn til góðra hvíldastaða.*⁶²⁵), which was, most probably, Heaven (and not purgatory, like in *Eiríks saga rauða*’s account). It is known that in the Christian tradition most ghosts come from purgatory, the apparitions from hell are demons, but those who come back from Heaven are the saints. He was, and still is, not a saint. The reasons for this strange return must be then within his speech. And in his speech it is notorious that his first words after he stated his intentions of consoling her were related to marriage. He told Guðríðr “*at þú munt gipt vera íslenzkum manni.*”⁶²⁶ He obviously did not want her to marry a Greenlander, and most probably he specified this due to the flirting between his widow and Þorsteinn svartr.

In *Eiríks saga rauða*’s there is neither physical contact nor a single hint of flirting between Guðríðr and Þorsteinn svartr; as a matter of fact Guðríðr was sleeping in a different room while Þorsteinn svartr looked after the bodies. As a matter of fact in this account of the story Guðríðr and Þorsteinn svartr never crossed a single word. However there are reminiscences of jealousy or the of the fore mentioned flirting (maybe coming from a previous common source for both sagas) since Þorstein Eiríksson, apparently without justification “*bað hana varask at giptask grænlenzkum mǫnnum.*”⁶²⁷ Due to the urgency of his speech about marriage in *Grænlandinga saga* and to the fact that he stressed that she ‘shall’ marry an Icелander, added to the flirting, it is possible to conclude that, at least in the mind of the writer of the, jealousy might have been considered as one of the reasons that brought Þorsteinn Eiríkson back from the death.

Comparing the actions of both the Christian and the heathen couples in these two sources it is possible to find opposed flirting situations: the dead one seeks the dying and the living one flirt with the other living one, all in a lugubrious context. It also becomes quite notorious that in both examples it was the pagan who approached the Christian with some ‘romantic’ intentions. In

⁶²³ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 259.

⁶²⁴ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 259.

⁶²⁵ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 259-60.

⁶²⁶ *Grænlandinga saga* V: 259.

⁶²⁷ *Grænlandinga saga* VI: 216.

both instances for Guðríðr, as a Christian, the death of her husband was a time to mourn. But the pagan couple found in death some erotic context. One, as soon as she died, tried to go to bed with a man who was about to die, meanwhile the surviving one began to flirt with the widow. In general, the pagan couple saw in dead a new opportunity to re-marry and not an occasion for mourning. Steinsland has said that in the pre-Christian mentality death was considered as hieros gamos but she analyzed it only between the dying and the dead. Sigríðr's example proves her right. But while Steinsland considers death as a wedding ceremony only in the realm of the dead, this example shows that it was also an opportunity/need to remarry among the living. Death creates widows and widowers and with them single people.

As mentioned before, the tale of Styrr's return in *Heiðarvíga saga* even though it seems to have been 'Christianized' still preserves some elements that correspond to the pre-Christian *draugar* tradition. Now, clearing the story out of its Christian moral teaching, Styrr would still need to have a reason to return. Not surprisingly, it seems to be associated to sexuality. When he 'sat up' and spoke he did so in verse. Unfortunately this verse was lost in a fire⁶²⁸ and all we have left is a reconstructed stanza and some notes telling what it was about. Fortunately, we have another account of his return in *Eyrbyggja saga*. I will use them both to drag out some conclusions. So, Styrr 'sat up' and spoke in verse to "*Guðríðr; hon var sextán.*"⁶²⁹ Jón Ólafsson could remember that in the verse he: "*eigi býður hann henni þar í að kyssa sig, heldur segir, að hún munni innan skams byggja með sér moldbúaheim eða því líkit.*"⁶³⁰ The closing verses of the reconstructed stanza are the following: "*kám er á kampi vorum,/ kysstu, mæ, ef þig lystir.*"⁶³¹ There is a great difference between the two reminiscences, since in one he told the girl that she would inhabit with him and in the other he invited her to kiss him. However the results were the same, Guðríðr died the next morning. The events as narrated in *Eyrbyggja saga* can help to clarify his intentions. There Styrr's only action was that he "*hafði upp sezok ok helt um miðja dóttur bónda.*"⁶³² Here we are not told about Guðríðr's fate, but following *Heiðarvíga saga*'s account, she most probably died in this story as well. Even if the sources differ in his intentions to hug her, kiss her or take her with him to the *moldbúaheim*, the fact is that in both sagas it is quite obvious that he came after the farmer's daughter. He never returned after this occasion. In spite of the Christian retelling of the story (in *Heiðarvíga saga*) it is still perceivable that Styrr

⁶²⁸ See above, Chapter 4.3.

⁶²⁹ *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 233.

⁶³⁰ Footnote 1; *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 234.

⁶³¹ Footnote 1; *Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 234.

⁶³² *Eyrbyggja saga* LVI: 153.

came back to find in Guðriðr a partner for the other world. It is strange to find the ages of the saga characters given in the text. But here we are told the age of a secondary character, that is her only description. It must have been for some reason that her age was given. After all, a sixteen years old girl was already marriageable in the Viking Age.

There are only four cases in which *aptrgqngur* are linked to this kind of erotic behavior.⁶³³ They are only brief occurrences, but still quite meaningful. In *Hávarðar saga ísfirðings* a woman went to look for help in a nearby farm. When she arrived “*Hon segir andlát Þormóðar, bónda síns. “Erum vér þó ekki vel við komin, því at hann vitjar hverja nótt sængr sinnar. Því vilda ek þiggja, bóndi, at þér veittuð mér nǫkkut lið, því at fólki mínu þótti ódælt við Þormóð, en er svá komit, at þat ætlar allt í brott.*”⁶³⁴ The bed that Þormóðr visited every night was his own, but most probably it was also his widow’s bed. So far no other activity was known or reported in the story, which would imply that his only motivation to return every night was to go to bed with his widow. Yet this did not seem to have been her main problem. She only mentioned briefly these visitations, but when she did ask for help was because the people in the farm were intending to leave and not because she had a corpse every night in her bed. Maybe, for this couple, love was stronger than death, strong enough to bring one back from the grave and for the other to accept it. When Þormóðr’s character was introduced in the saga it was to mention that he was a shape-shifter, so probably his wife was used to all kinds of weird behavior on his side. But the people in the farm did not find it very comfortable and that seemed to be the only inconvenience that she found in his return. Or maybe she did also find it unpleasant, but her main concern was, still, to keep her farm productive. Anyway, regardless of the behavior of the living, the case is that here we have what seems to be an instance of sexual visitations by an *aptrgangr*.

Similarly, in *Svarfdæla saga* Klaufi’s first return from the dead had some sexual motivations. His wife, Yngvildr, had set up a plan to have him murdered. So, one day when he arrived home in a *berserkr* fit she made sure that he went out of it, since it was well known that after a rage the *berserkir* got extremely tired and became defenseless. When he arrived “*Þá kom Yngvildr í mót honum ok var allblið við hann, ok svá rann Klaufa þá reiðin, at hann gat þá þeim bagga eigi valdit, sem hann hafði áðr lengi borit.*”⁶³⁵ Her ‘very mild’ or ‘amiable’ (*allblið*) actions did not only manage to get his rage out but also to ‘delay’ him until he was murdered

⁶³³ These are in *Hávarðar saga ísfirðings*, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and *Svarfdæla saga*.

⁶³⁴ *Hávarðar saga ísfirðings* II: 298.

⁶³⁵ *Svarfdæla saga* XVIII: 173.

(*Hon dvaldi fyrir Klaufa, þar ti at hann var laginn í gegnum, svá at hann fekk þegar bana.*⁶³⁶)

Now the question is what kind of ‘amiable’ actions could a woman use to distract and ‘delay’ a man so he can be murdered without even noticing it? The answer can be found in Klaufis return. The first thing he did as an *aptrgangr* was to go to Yngvildr’s bed (*Þegar kom Klaufi til sængr Yngvildar*⁶³⁷) as soon as she went to sleep. The idea behind this is that he came back in order to continue something that was interrupted. Her *allblíð* was most probably in the form of caresses, which apart from getting him out of his *berserkr* fit, managed to get him ready to have sexual intercourse.⁶³⁸ So, when he was killed and came back he might have just been seeking to continue with the sexual scene that was interrupted by his death. Only later, after he was killed again, he could think about revenge.

We have, then, two *aptrgöngur* that came to the living looking for some sexual intercourse. But there are also the ones who wanted to take a mate to the grave. The last two cases I will analyze are so short and similar that I will consider them together. First comes that of Glámr, in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*. There it is told that in the second year of his haunting “*Fór allt á sama veg sem fyrr; þegar at haustaði, tóku at vaxa reimleikar. Var þá mest sótt at bóndadóttur, ok svá fór, at hon lézk af því. Margra ráða var í leitit, ok varð ekki at gqrt.*”⁶³⁹ Similarly, in *Eyrbyggja saga* during Þórólfr’s first haunting season “*er vetr kom, sýndisk Þórólfr opt heima á bænum ok sótti mest at húsfreyju; varð ok mǫrgum manni at þessu mein, en henni sjálfri helt við vitfirring. Svá lauk þessu, at húsfreyja lézk af þessum sǫkum; var hon ok færð upp í Þórsárdal ok var dysjuð hjá Þórólfi.*”⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁶ *Svarfdæla saga* XVIII: 174.

⁶³⁷ *Svarfdæla saga* XVIII: 174.

⁶³⁸ In *Gísla saga Súrssonar* XVI there is a similar incident in which Gísli provoked a sexual situation between his sister and his brother-in-law before murdering him. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen interprets it as follows:

The sexual situation which Gísli provokes in the marriage bed is a counterpart to the wedding ceremony in the same bed a few years earlier, but its symbolic meaning is the opposite. If Gísli no longer can accept Þorgrímr as his brother-in-law, then he cannot tolerate a sexual relationship between him and his sister either. When he initiates a sexual situation between the two and immediately afterwards kills Þorgrímr, then the events can be interpreted as a symbolic negation of the marriage. Gísli kills Þorgrímr in bed with Þordís as if he were an illicit lover, guilty of *leogorð* and caught in the act. (Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben 1986: 251).

Something similar to this disapproval of marriage might have happened in *Svarfdæla saga*. Yngvildr wanted to kill her husband, and her brothers did agree to do it. So this is an obvious disagreement, both by her and her brothers, on her marriage. This could be interpreted, similarly to *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and she might have started this sexual situation not only to get him out of his *berserkr* rage but also because her brothers could kill him, symbolically as well, as an illicit.

⁶³⁹ *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* XXXIII: 115-16.

⁶⁴⁰ *Eyrbyggja saga* XXXIV: 93.

In both cases the *aptrgangr* seeks (*sækja*) mostly a person of the opposite sex in particular. Then the harassment continues until she dies. In *Eyrbyggja saga* we are told that the woman was buried next to the *aptrgangr*. This seems to be an extremely cruel and illogic act in a society that believed in physical a continuation of life after death. Why did they bury her next to Þórólfr? The main reason seems to be that, after having him chasing for several days this person in particular it became obvious to the living that the *aptrgangr* wanted to take her. So, in order to prevent future visitations they decided to give her to Þórólfr.

Following now the text in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, what comes after the *bóndadóttir* had died is that they tried many different solutions to the haunting, but none of them worked (*Margra ráða var í leitit, ok varð ekki at gqrt*). What would logically follow to someone's death is burial, as was the case in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Maybe this was the case also in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, but it was expressed just as one of those different things that they tried. In here it was quite obvious as well that Glámr was coming with the intention of taking her, and it would not be strange to find out that she was also buried together with the *aptrgangr* as a way to prevent future hauntings.

I have found only one case in which it is explicitly said that the intentions of the *draugr* were to take a woman to his grave, which is that of Styrr, in *Heiðarvíga saga*. In these last two sources the intentions of the *aptrgqngur* are not stated so clearly, but seem to be implicit in their preference for one person of the opposite sex who they harass and, somehow, kill. Their intentions seemed to be the same as those of Styrr: to provide themselves partners for the Otherworld. At least the people in *Eyrbyggja saga* seem to have perceived it in this way, since they buried them together, with the hope that they would rest there, together and in peace until the end of the world.

Helgakviða Hundingsbana II offers the only instance in which a *haugbúi* has a connection with erotic motifs. There Helgi came back from the death and at a first glance his intentions seem to be, similar to those of Þorsteinn Eiríksson: to keep his widow from crying since he tells her

*Ein veldr þú, Sigrún
frá Sevafjallom,
er Helgi er
harmdagg sleginn:
grætr þú, gullvarið,
grimmom táróm,
sólbjart, suðræn,
áðr þú sofa gangir;
hvert fellr blóðugt
á brióst grami,
úrsvalt, innfálgt,*

*ekka þrungit.*⁶⁴¹

But the main difference is that he did not want to console her for her well being, but did it for his own sake since he just wanted to be left alone and in peace, since her tears were hurting him. When they met his widow was so glad that she made a bed inside the *haug* in order to lay there with him

*vil ek þér í faðmi,
fylkir, sofna,
sem ek lofðungi
lifinóm myndak!*⁶⁴²

This is a strange case in which the living is actually the one who goes to the ‘undead’ with erotic intentions. She is the one who visited the mound and intended to sleep there in Helgi’s arms ‘as they did when he was alive’. But this shall not be surprising because, as pointed in Chapter 4.1, the *haugbúar* tend to be rather lazy and have to be visited inside their mounds. On the other hand, if his widow wanted to have some sexual intercourse it would have to be inside the mound, since outside it the *haugbúar* are non-corporeal. Helgi, as a *haugbúi*, would let us down if he stopped being passive, as all *haugbúar* are. His intentions for coming back were not erotic but just to be left in peace. So after she made the bed and the invitation to sleep together Helgi let her down:

*Nú kveð ek enskis
ørvænt vera,
sið né snimma,
at Sevafiqlom,
er þú á armi
ólifðom sefr,
hvít, í haugi,
Hqgna dóttir,
ok ertu kvik,
in konungborna!*⁶⁴³

His words seem to be more a refusal to her erotic invitation than an actual approval of her intentions. He mentions how improper would it be for a king’s daughter to sleep in the arms of a ‘non-living’ person and says that it won’t come to happen (*ørvænt vera* [...] *þú á armi / ólifðom sefr*). So, after these words he just mentioned that he had to leave, and he did so.

The motif of Eros and Tanatos in Old Norse sources has been left almost unexplored, and that of the Eros and Tanatos in *draugar* cases has not been explored at all previous to this brief analysis. Steinsland points out that

⁶⁴¹ *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* st. 45.

⁶⁴² *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* st. 47.

⁶⁴³ *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* st. 48.

Grunnene til at dette idekomplekset som regel er satt til side når dødsforestillingene presenteres, kan være flere. En forklaring kan være at de fleste har ansett koblingen mellom død og erotikk som et litterært topos uten basis i genuine, førkristene forestillinger knyttet til døden. En annen forklaring kan være at ideen om et dødsbryllup virker makaber på bakgrunn av vår egen kulturs holdninger til døden.⁶⁴⁴

I could find in the sources mentioned in this chapter that the Eros and Tanatos motif does seem to have some genuine pre-Christian basis at least in the saga and Edda writers perception of *draugar*. If we group these sources according to the *draugar*'s erotic behavior we would have three different kinds of groups and activities. The first one would be that of those who came back with the clear intention of going to bed with someone of the opposite sex (Sigríðr, Klaufi and Þormóðr). The second is that of the ones who come and harass someone of the opposite sex with the intention of taking that person with them to the grave (Styrr, Glámr and Þórólfr). The last one is that of the ones who came back to talk with their widows (Þorsteinn Eiríksson and Helgi). Of these only Þorsteinn was Christian, and by contrasting his actions with the others it might be possible to cast some light in this topic.

As I mentioned before, the consecutive *draugar* episodes in *Grænlandinga saga* and in *Eiríks saga rauða* appear to be intended to contrast the benefits of the Christian ghosts with the malevolence of the pre-Christian *draugar*.⁶⁴⁵ If that is the case, then it is quite meaningful that the actions of Sigríðr seem to be exclusively sex-oriented. Maybe the Groenlandic 'uppsitjendr' cases were also intended to compare the different kinds of love after death. The dead Christian came back for jealousy, yes, but also for love of his wife since he intended to comfort her. Þorsteinn, after all, had gone to Heaven, which in the Christian perception is a realm of happiness and pure love. Meanwhile the pagan couple confronted death in some way which might have been considered grotesque in the medieval mind: one coming back as a corpse to get into a man's bed and the other not respecting the widow's (nor his) mourning. The actions of Sigríðr don't seem to have been chosen randomly and without basis, since we have seen other *draugar* behaving in the same way. The idea might have been also to contrast the kinds of emotions in both religions' afterlives, the Christian one behaved nobly while the pre-Christian behaved grotesquely. It may also point to some origins of the fear of the dead in the pre-Christian religion, since in all the sagas that were analyzed in this chapter the *draugar* came back to pick up a partner (as a grave good) for the afterlife. This may be one of the possible origins of the suttee

⁶⁴⁴ Steinsland, Gro 1992: 321.

⁶⁴⁵ See above Chapter 4.4.

tradition. Meanwhile the Christian ghost came to protect his partner and was, therefore, trustworthy.

There is also a contrast between Helgi and Þorsteinn motivations to come back. Both of them went to the best of the places in both sets of beliefs; Helgi was in Valhǫll and Þorsteinn was in Heaven. Þorsteinn came back to comfort his widow and his only sexual motivation was jealousy, which can be perceived as another way of protecting her. On the other hand, pre-Christian revenants seem to be quite selfish and only think about themselves. Helgi was not the exception, since after death he did not care much about his wife⁶⁴⁶ but only about his well being. His lack of sexual appetite might have been due to the fact that he was, as all *haugbúar*, lazy and passive. However their love did not die with them, since they both reincarnated and became a couple some time after.⁶⁴⁷

In these *draugar* cases that I have just analyzed there seems to be a sexual motivation to come back from the death. This sexual drive seems to be specially accentuated in the pre-Christian cases, which points to a conception of the Otherworld as a place in which a couple was required. Maybe this is linked to the tradition of suttee, which may have originated in the fear of the dead coming back in search of company. It is noteworthy that there are no cases of *fyrirburðr* linked to an erotic activity. This can be due to the fact that their main appearances were in transit to the Otherworld or as death omens.

⁶⁴⁶ As a matter of fact she died of grief soon after. (Cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*: prose section following st. 51).

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*: prose section following st. 51.

General Conclusion

It now remains to review briefly the main points of significance that have been discussed in the course of this study and afterwards make some general conclusions.

The previous research done in the field of *draugar* proved to have oversimplified the realm of the Old Norse ‘undead’. The *draugar* were taken as if they all were the same kind of creatures and therefore were supposed to share the same qualities and show the same behavior. This generalization may be due to the few sources that the researchers used in their studies. In this paper I have argued towards four different ways in which the ‘undead’ manifested themselves in the Heroic and Family sagas as well as in some *Þættir*. I have also shown that ‘*draugr*’ appears as a word used to name these corporeal manifestations of the ‘undead’, but this does not imply that all *draugar* were considered to be the same kind of creature.

The word ‘*draugr*’ is used in two different ways the sources. The first use is in skaldic poetry in kenningar for ‘man’. The second use is for naming corporeal revenants and occurs in the prose and some few poems. However ‘*draugr*’ has only one meaning, which is ‘tree trunk’. The sources to the Old Norse mythology justify these two different uses of the word because in the different versions of the anthropogonic myth they depict mankind as being created out of wood, plus the gods-gifts of *qnd*, *óðr*, *lá* and *lito góða*. So ‘*draugr*’ was used in kenningar for ‘man’ because being partly-tree was considered as one of the characteristics of mankind. On the other hand ‘*draugar*’ was used in a more literal and descriptive sense when it came to name the ‘living-corpses’ in the sources. ‘*Draugr*’ was used to name them because, according to the pre-Christian perception, these ‘undead’ were considered to be mere pieces wood since they had lost most of the gifts of the gods and nothing remained in them but the tree nature and *qnd* the gift of Óðinn, the *draugardrottinn*. This belief appears to be due to the fact that human life was not considered to be of a dual (body and soul) nature, but it was composed of five different elements, that added one to the other created life. Accordingly, this word was used to describe the ‘living dead’ in general, but the folklore registered in the sources seems to have made a differentiation between the different kinds of revenants.

There are four different kinds of ways in which the dead manifested themselves in *Miðgarðr*. Three of these ways were corporeal, while the other one was of an ethereal nature. All of them had a particular noun attached to them, except the ones that I decided to call ‘*uppsitjendr*’. The use of the linguistical markers attached to them showed coherence in the sources when it came to the particularities of each kind of revenant. In some occasions a revenant

did not have any particular noun attached to it, but still its behavior and characteristics remained coherent, which permitted its inclusion in one of the fore mentioned four groups.

The main differences between the four groups of revenants are (apart from the noun that identified each one of them as belonging to the same classification): social class and origin; burial place; appearance, behavior and reasons to come back from among the dead; place and situation in which they manifested themselves; and finally their corporeality.

The first group is that of the ones named '*haugbúar*' in the sources. These *draugar* belonged to the higher classes of society, some time of the legendary past, and used to stay inside their grave-mounds. They were usually buried with rich grave-goods, which was precisely what attracted the living to their mounds. But the living were also looking forwards to fight with them due to the honor of defeating an ancient king or noble warrior. The *haugbúar* were lazy beings that had to be incited into action, and behaved violently only when it came to defend their grave goods. Whenever they are described they appear to be extremely strong. Despite the fact that they are elegantly dressed they have a horrible appearance: black and bloated and connected with a great stench. Their main means of communication was skaldic verse, and their grave-mounds were appreciated as places of inspiration. When a *haugbúi* left its grave-mound was in an incorporeal form, mostly as a vision, and never went further than the limits of their own grave. The objectives of leaving the mound were mainly to keep the living from disturbing their rest. The *haugbúar* were creatures of the summer, which is the period of the year in which the living could go to sleep on their mounds or to break into them. Finally, these revenants seem do not seem to be part of the Icelandic folklore, since most of the times in which they appear in the sources they do so in Scandinavia. This makes sense because most of them were legendary heroes and kings, what makes impossible their existence in Icelandic soil.

The second group of *draugar* are the ones named '*aptrgǫngur*' in the sources. While alive they belonged to the lower strata of society or they were sorcerers or foreigners. Most of the times at least two of these last three requisites were combined in one who was going to become an *aptrgangr*. They were buried in a *dys*, which was a low standard grave. The *aptrgǫngur* were buried without grave-goods, and their main reason to come back was to provide themselves with the goods that they lacked. This led them to be extremely active and violent, but they behaved like this only outside their graves: whenever someone dug into an *aptrgangr*' *dys* the creature did not defend itself at all. Unlike the *haugbúar* the *aptrgǫngur* did not have communication skills. They were not related with poetry or with any other way of speaking. They were usually described as 'horrible to see' and not having human features. They were always corporeal and

could haunt during the whole year, but they were more active during the winter (especially around Yule). Their appearance was not linked to their burial site, but to a whole farm or district. The *aptrgǫngur* were exclusively an Icelandic phenomenon, and their emergence in the folklore may be due to a change in burial customs. However it remains to make a study about the areas of Iceland in which their apparitions were reported, since they might have been originally linked only to a local belief rather than to the whole Icelandic territory.

The last and third group of *draugar* does not have a noun attached to the revenants. They were not even called *draugr* in the sources. This lack of name may be due to the fact that they appeared quite late in the Icelandic folklore, around the time of the conversion. More than being linked to a particular social class these *draugar* were linked to the Christian religion. Three out of the four cases that I registered corresponded to Christian revenants. They are also characterized because their return happens before they were buried, and only happens for a brief period of time. Their physical description is not grotesque, as was the case with the *haugbúar* and *aptrgǫngur*. Their reasons to come back were, mainly, to give a moral lesson to the living or to preach in favor of the Christian faith. This led me to conclude that they were a Christian adaptation of the heathen revenants, intended mostly as an exemplum or to contrast the old and the new faith.

The fourth way in which the ‘undead’ manifested themselves was in a non-corporeal form. This kind of revenants is called *fyriřburðir* in the sources. They were not named as *draugar* in the sources because they were of an ethereal nature, in other words is; they were lacking the *draugr* as a ‘tree trunk’ in their appearances. It seems that there was an evolution in the conception of the *fyriřburðir*, since in the earliest sources they were linked with the vision of the drowned in transit to the Otherworld, but later they were considered to be a death omen. Originally, the *fyriřburðir* were seen at the distance, just as mere ‘souls’ in transit. That implies that they did not interact at all with the living. A *fyriřburðir* could also manifest itself in the shape of a talking head or an eagle flying, but three things remained a constant: they were always visions of dead people, they were of an ethereal nature and, they did not interact with the living.

The existence these different ways in which the ‘undead’ manifested themselves leads me to think that the *haugbúar*, *aptrgǫngur*, ‘*uppsitjendr*’ and *fyriřburðir* were actually conceived as being four different kinds of creatures, each one with its own characteristics and behavior. Also each one of them had its own role in the Saga Age mentality.

Draugar also seem to have other than the previously mentioned reasons to return. In several stories they were linked with a post-mortem sexual activities. This leads me to think that

the Eros and Tanatos motif was also present in the Old Norse society, in which sexual needs and a partner were required in the afterlife.

But what does this all tell us about the Old Norse society in general? First I would like to point that the realm of the dead seems to be more complex than previously believed. This society created a pantheon in which it's real and every day life is reflected. And in the sources to the mythology we can perceive a highly stratified society, as is the case in *Rígsþula*. But their society can be also reflected in the monsters that they created. And when it comes to the undead we can see that their social differentiations were also reflected in them. Their monsters span from noble and heroic revenants that reflected the heroes of the legendary past, to violent and destructive *aptrgǫngur* that reflected all the persons that did not fit in their society. These monsters reflect the ideas of the society that created them, and what they show is a highly stratified society, and in it the worst and most violent monster was the 'Other', that which was not understood.

The sagas can be used also as sources to the Old Norse mythology, or at least they can be used to confirm what we can learn from the Eddas. In this case the *draugar* confirmed the plural nature of what human life is, as we knew before from the anthropogonic myth. They can also teach about the origins of the burial practices as originated due to the fear of the dead. For example, *aptrgǫngur* seem to have their origins in a change of burial practices. As for the way in which the journey to the Otherworld was made, the *fyrirburðir* can give a clue, first in the belief of a disembodied 'spirit', and second that the journey could be made by foot or even swimming, for they were the spirits of the drowned that had to cross both sea and land in order to reach it.

The belief in corporeal revenants is not particular of the Old Norse folklore, but at least we can know that it is not of Christian origin. So, we can be sure that the stories about *haugbúar* and *aptrgǫngur* are indigenous to the Old Norse set of supernatural creatures. Their stories do not have moral lessons, while the Christianized version of these creatures seem to have mainly a moralizing content. It would be interesting to continue the study of the 'undead' and find out the ways in which they were changed in later sources, like the Contemporary and the Bishop sagas. We could learn a big deal about Old Norse folklore by analyzing how its beliefs and supernatural beings were adopted and adapted by a religion that was trying to displace such beliefs.

I am not really sure if the sagas did or did not preserve stories that were orally transmitted for many generations. But from the previous pages I can be at least sure that they do transmit pre-Christian folklore. Glámr, Þórólfr, or Soti most surely never existed as *draugar*, and maybe the actions that they were attributed did belong to another person, as was the case of Þórgunna adopting Styrr's story, but what really matters is the folklore that lays behind them.

Appendix 1. - Uses of the Word “*Draugr*” in Prose and Poetry

Appendix 1a. - Uses of the Word ‘*Draugr*’ in Poetry

1. - *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*

*Hervaðr, Hjörvaðr,
Hrani, Angantýr,
svá sé yðr öllum
innan rifja
sem þér í maura
mornið haugi,
nema sverð selið,
þat er sló Dvalinn;
samir eigi draugum
dýrt vápn bera.*

(*Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* IV: 16)

2. - *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*

*Brennið eigi svá
bál á nóttum,
at ek við elda
yðra hræðumst;
skelfr eigi meyju
muntún hugar,
þótt hún draug sjái
fyr durum standa.*

(*Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* IV: 18)

3. - *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*

*Fékk í firna dökkum,
féll draugr, tekið haugi
sax það er seggja vexir
sár, hyllestir báru,
og skyldi mér aldri
jálms dýr logi hjálma,
ýtum hættr, ef eg ætta,
angrs, hendi firr ganga.*

(*Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* XVIII: 60)

4. - *Harðar saga og Hólmverja*

*Því gerði eg
þegn að finna
og fornum draug
firra auði,
og af öllum
alræmt orðið,
að hvergi muni
í heimi öllum
verri maður
vopnum stýra.*

(*Harðar saga og Hólmverja* XV: 41)

5. - *Ragnarsdrápa*

Ok ofþerris æða
*ósk-Ragn at þat sínum
til fárhuga færa
feðr veðr boga hugði,
þás hristi-Sif hringa
hals en bqls of fylða
bar til byrjar drqsla
baur örlygis draugi.*

(*Skaldskaparmal* 47(50))

6. - *Grettis saga*

*Voskeytt er far flösu,
fár kann sverð í hári
æskiruðr fyrir öðrum
örveðrs sjá gjörva.
Veðja eg hins, að hreðjar
hafi þeir en vér meiri,
þó að éldraugar eigi
atgeira sin meiri.*

(*Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* LXXV: 240)

7. - *Hákonar saga góða*

Veitk, at beit enn bitri
*byggving meðaldyggvan
bulka skiðs ór bqdum
benvqndr konungs hqndum.
Ófælinn klauf Ála*

*éldraugr skarar hauga
gullhjqltuðum galtar,
grandadr Dana, brandi.*

(*Hakonar saga góða* XXXI: 190)

8. - Haralds saga gráfeldar

*Vel hefr hefnt, en hafna
hjqr̄s berdraugar fjqr̄vi,
fólkrakkr, of vannt, fylkir,
framligt, Haraldr Gamla,
er dökkvalir drekka
dlgbands fyr ver handan,
roðin frá k rauðra benja
reyr, Hqkonar dreyra.*

(*Haralds saga gráfeldar* I: 198-991)

9. - Hrómundar þáttur halta

*Varat mér í dag dauði,
draugr flatvallar bauga,
bíuumst við Ilmar jalmi
aðr, né gær of ráðinn.
Ræki eg lítt þó að leiki
litvöndr Héðins fitjar,
áðr var oss of markaðr
aldr, við rauða skjöldu.*

(*Hrómundar þáttur halta* V: 313 and *Landnámabók*, S168, H137, pp 203-04)

10. - Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar

*Flóttu gekk til fréttar
felli-Njqr̄dr á velli.
Draugr gat dólga Sagu
dagráð Héðins váða.
Ok haldboði hildar
hrægamma sá ramma.
Týr vildi sá týna
teinlautar fjqr̄ Gauta.*

(*Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* XXVII: 261)

11. - *Droplaugarsona saga*

*Hlógu hirðidraugar,
hlit var að því lítil,
seims þá er særðum Grími
sunnr var harmr of unninn.
Nú tér Freyr að fári,
fregn eg auðskata dauðan,
fyllar mars í fjöllum
Fljóts annan veg þjóta.*

(*Droplaugarsona saga* XIII: 172)

12. - *Ásgrímr Jónsson*

Láðs rupla fé fríðu

*fornbauga hydraugar
sverða sæki-Njǫrðu
sér veslari heslis.*

(Ásgrímr Jónsson, in Kock, Ernst A. *Den Norsk-Isländska Skaldediktningen* vol. II: 73)

13. - *Hákonar saga góða*

*Þars er þǫdhardir þǫrdusk
bands jǫrðraugar landa,
lystr gekk her til hjǫrva
hnits í Stord á Fitjum,
og gimsløngvir ganga
gífrs hlémána drífu
nausta blakks et næsta
Nordmanna gram þorði.*

(*Hakonar saga góða* XXX: 187)

14. - *Þórðar saga hreðu*

*Enn hefi eg sex, hin svinna,
svellr móðr af því, þella,
goldið gálga valdi,
gullbaugs, jöru drauga.
Grund, lét eg Össur öndu,
arms sýnar, þar týna.
Lundr var hann lóns hinn sjaundi
logs, pells, veginn, þella.*

(*Þórðar saga hreðu* IX: 211)

15. - *Svarfdæla saga*

*Kól aldregi Ála
éldrauga ske vélum,
beit á seggja sveitum,
svimm eg nú við ský grimmum,
svimm eg nú við ský grimmum.*

(*Svarfdæla saga* XXII: 190)

16. – *Fóstbræðra saga*

*Éls, hef eg illan dila,
Ekkils, þeim er mig sektu,
geig vann eg **gervidraugum**,
Grænendingum brenndan.
Sá munat sækitívum
sverðéls frömum verða
hrings á hryggjar tanga
hóggræddr nema mér lógi.*

(*Fóstbræðra saga* XXIV: 259)

17. -*Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*

*Hlógu **herðidraugar**
hvinnendr of sök minni.
Fróns á frænda mínum
falli dómr í skalla.
Nú tér, síð er vegnir voru
víðníðingar sverðum,
hverju hóps í bjargi
hóts annan veg þjóta.*

(*Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* XIII: 334)

18. - *Brennu-Njáls saga*

*Mælti dögglá deilir,
dáðum rakkr, sá er háði
bjartr með bestu hjarta
benrögn, faðir Högna:
Heldr kvaðst hjálmi faldinn
hjörþilju sjá vilja
vættidraugr en vægja,
val-Freyju stafr, deyja -
og val-Freyju stafr deyja.*

(*Brennu-Njáls saga* LXXVIII: 193)

19. - *Eyrbyggja saga*

*Knáttu hjálmi hættar
hjaldrs á mínum skjaldi
Brúðar vangs hins þunga
þings spámeyjar singva
þá er bjúgröðull bógar
baugs fyrir óðaldraugi,
Gjöll óx vopns á völlum,
varð blóðdrifinn Fróða.*

(*Eyrbyggja saga* XIX: 43)

20. - *Bergbúa þáttur*

*Laugast lyftidraugar
liðbáls að það síðan,
vötn koma heldr um hölda
heit, í foldar sveita.
Það sprettr upp und epla
aur þjóð, vitu, jóða.
Hyr munat höldum særi
heitr, þar er fyrða teitir,
heitr, þar er fyrða teitir.*

(*Bergbúa þáttur*: 444)

21. - *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*

Verðu eigi svá ær
at ein farir,
dís skiöldunga,
draughúsa til!
verða oflgari
allir á nóttom
dauðir dólger
en um daga liósa.

(*Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* stanza 51)

Appendix 2b. - Uses of the Word ‘*Draugr*’ in Prose:

1. - *Flóamanna saga*

Hann sá *draug* fyrir dyrum standa, mikinn og illilegan.

(*Flóamanna saga* XIII: 255)

2. - *Flóamanna saga*

Og sem þeir koma þar snýr *draugurinn* á móti.

(*Flóamanna saga* XIII: 255)

3 - *Flóamanna saga*

En að lyktum varð svo, með því að Þorgilsí var lengra líf ætlað, að *draugurinn* fellur á bak aftur en Þorgils ofan á hann.

(*Flóamanna saga* XIII: 255)

4. - *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*

Karlinn segir, at byggð sín væri allskammt þaðan, ok kvað meiri fremd at brjóta hauga ok ræna *drauga* fé.

(*Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* III: 367-68 [III: 410])

5. - *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*

Draugr mælti: Þat er engin fremd, at bera sverð á mik vápnláusan.

(*Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* IV: 369 [IV: 411])

6. - *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*

Þá sagði *draugr*: “Nú mun mál vera at fara á fætr, fyrst þú frýjar mér hugar.”

(*Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* IV: 370 [IV: 412])

7. - *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*

Þá datt *draugrinn* á annat kné ok mælti: “Þú stjaskar mér, ok víst ertu hraustr maðr.”

(*Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* IV: 370 [IV: 412])

8. - *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*

Draugrinn mælti: “Þú munt fæddr vera af Gunnlöðu. Eru fáir þínir líkar.”

(*Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* IV: 370 [IV: 412])

9. - *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*

Þá mælti *draugr*: Nú vannstu mik með ráðum ok tókst sverð mitt.

((*Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* IV: 371 [IV: 413])

10. - *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*

“Hundrað fjóra ok tuttugu,” kvað *draugrinn*, “ok fekk ek aldri skeinu.”

((*Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* IV: 371 [IV: 413])

11. - *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*

Hjó hann svá höfuðit af *draugnum* ok brenndi hann upp allan á báli, fór svá ór hauginum.

((*Hrómundar saga Greipssonar* IV: 371 [IV: 413])

12. - *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappa hans*

Böðvarr mælti: “Drjúgt er liðit Skuldar, ok grunar mik nú, at þeir dauðu sveimi hér ok risi upp aftir ok berist í móti oss, ok mun þat verða torsótt at berjast við *drauga*, ok svá margr leggr sem hér er klofinn ok skjöldr rifinn, hjálmr ok brynja í smátt sundr höggvinn ok margr höfðingi í sundr bolaðr, þá eru þeir nú grimmastir inir dauðu viðreignar, ok ekki höfum vér mátt við þessu, enda hvar er sá kappi Hrólfs konungs, sem mér frýði mest hugar ok mik kvaddi oftast útgöngu, áðr en ek svaraði honum, ok eigi sé ek hann nú, ok em ek þó eigi vanr at hallmæla mönnum?”

(*Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappa hans* LI: 105-06 [LI: 102])

13. - *Laxdæla saga*

En það sama kveld er þeir Þorkell höfðu drukknað um daginn varð sá atburður að Helgafelli að Guðrún gekk til kirkju þá er menn voru farnir í rekkjur og er hún gekk í kirkjugarðshliðið þá sá hún *draug* standa fyrir sér.

(*Laxdæla saga* LXXVI: 222)

14. - *Heiðarvíga saga*

Það var stirt kveðin og æði *draugaleg* dróttkveðin vísa alls ólík þessari sem menn hafa um hönd: Horfinn er fagur farfi etc.

(*Heiðarvíga saga* IX: 234, footnote 1)

15. - Þátr Þorsteins skelks

Hann kyndir ofnn brennanda sagdi draugrinn.

(Þátr Þorsteins skelks: 416)

16. - Þátr Þorsteins skelks

Draugrinn suarar.

(Þátr Þorsteins skelks: 416)

17. - Þátr Þorsteins skelks

Ekki er þa rett a litit quad draugr þuiat iliarnar æinar standa upp or elldinu(m).

(Þátr Þorsteins skelks: 416)

18. - Þátr Þorsteins skelks

Fiarri ferr um þat quad draugr.

(Þátr Þorsteins skelks: 417)

19. - Þátr Þorsteins skelks

Draugrinn hafde þokat at Þorsteini vm þriar setur vid huert opit ok voru þa þriar æinar a mille þeirra.

(Þátr Þorsteins skelks: 417)

20. - Ynglinga saga

Oðinn hafði með sér hqfuð Mímis, ok sagði þat honum mqrq tíðendi ór qðrum heimum, en standum vakði hann upp dauða menn ór jqrðu eða settisk undir hanga. Fyrir því var hann kallaðr draugadróttinn eða hangadróttinn.

(Ynglinga saga VII: 18)

Figures:

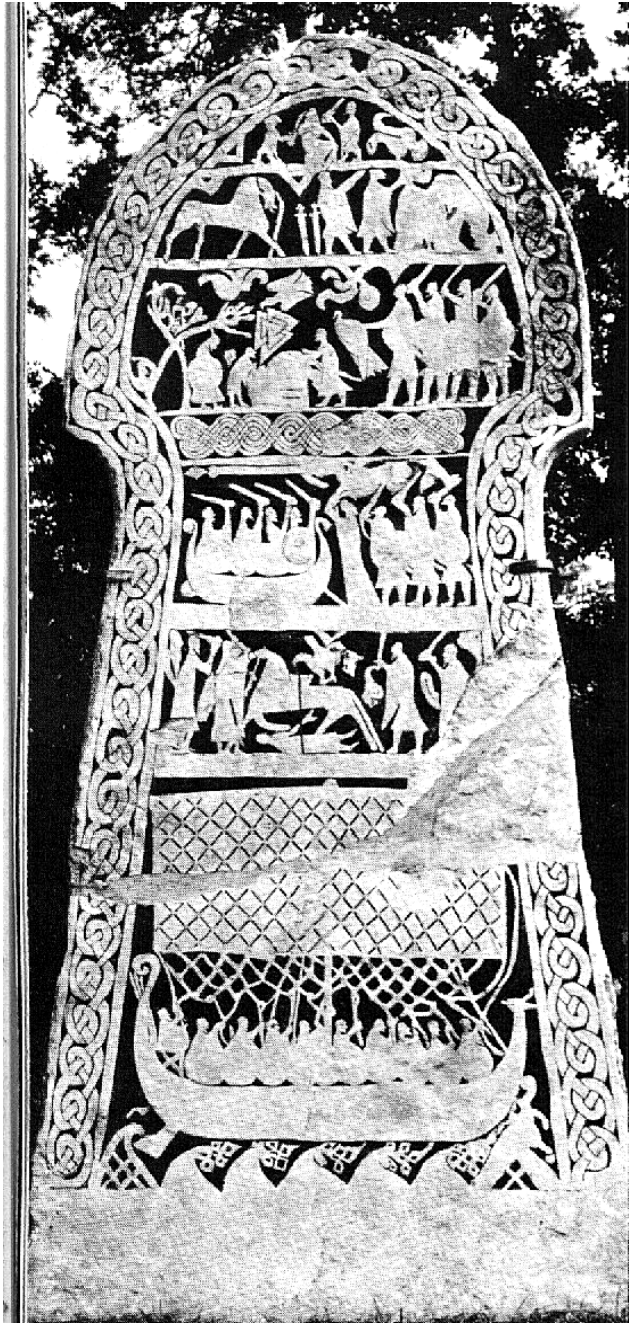


Figure 1: The stone from Lärbro, St. Hammars



Figure 2: The stone from Klinte

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