

Landscape and Authorial Control in the Battle of Vigráfjörðr in *Eyrbyggja Saga*

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Eyrbyggja Saga (*Eyrb.*), like most *Íslendingasögur*, is replete with references to the landscape of Iceland. Indeed, such is the detail of saga landscapes that, until recent years, many readers of sagas considered their representations of landscape to be indistinguishable from the actual landscape of Iceland: that the sagas merely recorded the physical topography of Iceland. The impression of realism projected by saga landscapes, in conjunction with their perceived geographic accuracy, is a key element of the sagas in which the Icelanders have taken great pride and since the nineteenth century, foreign saga enthusiasts have also been drawn to exploring the literary and physical landscapes of Iceland.

Gary Aho examines the writings of forty British travellers to Iceland between 1772 and 1897.¹ He discusses the work of nine British travellers to Iceland between 1772 and 1834 for whom, he states, research or exploration could be said to be the *raison d'être* of their journeys; whereas during the latter part of the nineteenth century visiting saga sites appears to have been the predominant attraction for travellers to Iceland. Andrew Wawn identifies Fredrick Metcalfe as the first traveller to Iceland to bring the 'saga-steeds alive for British readers'.² Metcalfe makes some geologic remarks, as well as observations on the history, customs and living conditions of the Icelanders, but his primary objective is to visit saga sites. In his introductory discussion (written in the style of a conversation) he highlights visiting saga sites: 'to see with your own eyes the spots we have been reading of in the Sagas'.³ Metcalfe's desire to see the place of the sagas in the actual landscape is illustrated by his comments on *Vatnsdæla saga* and Vatnsdalur:

The whole scene hereabouts is described with such minuteness by the saga —which, witchcraft apart, must be genuine, as much of it

is quoted by the Landnama and other sagas— that the actual localities can easily be identified.⁴

For Metcalfe the apparent correlation between saga landscapes and the physical landscape of Iceland confirms the historicity of the *Íslendingasögur*, or at least *Vatnsdæla saga*.

The breadth of the topographic vocabulary employed by saga authors is comparable to that used in representing other areas of life in the sagas, as with the range of terms used to depict the appearance and nature of individual characters, homes and dwellings, metals, sources of energy, and much else besides. Moreover, the distribution of topographic terms is approximately proportionate to saga length.⁵ The saga author may refer to the name of a hill or a river or some other feature, describe a valley, give a brief description of a storm, highlight a wood, note a breeze or describe deteriorating weather in remarkable detail. For example, in *Eyrb.* we find:

Þat var einn vetr, at snimma kom á vetrarríki mikit, ok gerði þegar jarðbönn^a þar um Bitruna; tóku menn þá aflát stór, en sumir ráku fé sitt um heiði^b [. . .] Um vetrinn á góí kom hríð mikil, ok helzk hon viku; þat var norðanveðr mikit. En er af létti hríðinni, sá menn, at hafiss^c var at kominn allt it ytra,^d en þá var íssinn^e eigi kominn inn í Bitruna; fóru menn þá at kanna fjörur^f sínar.⁶

[It was one winter that severe winter weather came early, and this soon created a lack of grazing there around Bitra. People then took large losses, but some drove their live-stock on to the heath. . . . During the winter, in February, a severe storm came and it blew for a week; it was a strong northerly wind. And when the storm let up, people saw that sea ice had come all the way in to the outer part [of the fjord], but the ice had not come in as far as Bitra. Men then went to search their shores.]

The primary function of this brief description of a severe winter is to provide the narrative motivation for a later conflict, but it also illustrates the precarious nature of agrarian life in medieval Iceland by reference to the landscape. The farmers have lost their high quality fodder (*a*) and have to resort to releasing their animals to forage on the heath (*b*). The weather is so severe that sea ice (*c*, *e*) has actually come into the fjord (*d*), and food is in such short supply that

people have to scavenge on the foreshore (*f*). Just as the lives of men depend on the land, so the saga author makes use of representations of the landscape to depict that life. By describing such a landscape and the ways in which the weather affects it, the saga author illustrates famine conditions without referring directly to the hunger of individuals.

The significant number of place-names, topographic references and comments about the weather in the *Íslendingasögur* combine to evoke the physical Iceland. As Vésteinn Ólason has noted: 'Iceland is the centre of the *Íslendingasögur* world, and the sagas exhibit a powerful sense of place as regards the various parts of the country in which the actions occur'.⁷ Indeed, it is the view of many commentators, particularly *Íslenzk fornrit* editors, that saga landscapes are primarily representations of the physical Iceland. For example, Guðni Jónsson discusses the possible location of the sighting stone erected by Grettir Ásmundarson to locate the mythical Þórisdalur.⁸ This identification of saga references with topographic features or place-names in the actual landscape of Iceland has the effect of reducing saga landscapes to a form of literary grid reference. Such a reductive reading of saga landscapes is perhaps not surprising given their geographic authenticity, and their importance to the cultural identity of Icelanders. As Gísli Sigurðsson observes, the 'sagas and the role played by the Icelandic landscape were...of major significance in the development of the romantic sense of national identity among Icelanders'.⁹

Though the landscapes of the sagas are an important element of the perceived realism of these narratives, they have received very little scholarly attention from a literary perspective I would suggest that it is, paradoxically, the perception of saga landscapes as actual locations that has contributed to a scholarly neglect of these landscapes as literary phenomena. Paul Schach has also noted the lack of scholarly interest in saga landscapes as narrative devices:

Oddly enough, the problem of the treatment of natural scenery in the Old Norse Sagas has been almost completely ignored. The few remarks one finds on the subject are, like most of the comments regarding the style of the Sagas, sweeping or superficial generalizations.¹⁰

Schach's discussion of a wide range of topographies throughout the *Íslendingasögur* remains the only significant examination of saga landscapes as literary devices. For example, in a section on cold weather, Schach finds that the

landscape in the famine scene from *Eyrb.* (discussed above) is an anticipatory setting that prepares the narrative conditions for a conflict over a beached whale, which represented a valuable source of food and potential wealth.¹¹

I have shown elsewhere that, in contrast to a view of saga landscapes as mere backdrops representing the physical reality of the Icelandic landscape, saga landscapes display patterns of functionality in which specific narrative functions may be associated with individual topographic lexemes.¹² For example, *skógr* [woodland] usually refers to the dwarf birch woodlands of Iceland and is associated with concealment, whereas *mörk* [forest] represents the vast forests of Scandinavia and often signifies royal wealth, authority and power. An *á* [river] may carry a retardation function or operate as a physical or legal boundary, and *íss* [ice] provides a neutral location for action. This paper explores the integrated functionality of topographic references within a single saga episode to demonstrate how the saga author may employ references to landscape and weather to integrate or control particular narrative strands and thus illustrate the role of landscape as an element in the narrative grammar of the sagas.

The battle of Vigrafjörðr in *Eyrb.* is an extremely vivid battle scene, which makes wide use of topographical, geographical and meteorological terminology.¹³ Examination of all these elements will demonstrate the role of landscape as an authorial device by illustrating the saga author's use of topography and geography to integrate this scene into the saga, and to orchestrate the outcome of the battle so as to achieve a lasting resolution and thus the closure of a narrative strand.

The following discussion of the use of landscape in this episode is divided into three broad parts. The first will examine the role of the weather in establishing the narrative conditions for the battle, and will comment on the saga author's use of the time frame; there follows a discussion of the use of geography in affirming clan loyalties and as a retardation device. The third element is an exploration of the functions of snow and ice in the actual battle, and its resolution. However, as such a division of elements in an attempt to explore the integrated use of landscape features is somewhat artificial, it should be understood that there is a degree of overlap between these sections.

Weather

The battle of Vigrafjörðr follows that of Álptafjörðr.¹⁴ The two battles are elements of the same feud but they are not causally related. Indeed the events that culminate in the battle of Vigrafjörðr are established during the summer before the battle of Álptafjörðr:

Þat sumar, áðr bardaginn var í Álptafirði,^a hafði skip komit í Döggurðarnes,^b sem fyrr var sagt; þar hafði Steinþórr af Eyri keypt teinæring^c góðan við skipit; ok er hann skyldi heim fœra skipit, tók hann vestanveðr mikit,^c ok sveif þeim inn um Þórsnes,^d ok lendu í Þingskálanesi^e ok settu þar upp skipit í Gruflunaust^f ok gengu þaðan út yfir ásana til Bakka^g ok fóru þaðan á skipi heim,^h en teinæringrinn hafði ekki sótt orðit um haustit,ⁱ ok stóð hann þar í Gruflunausti.^j¹⁵

[That summer before the battle of Álptafjörðr a ship had come into Döggurðarnes, as was said before. There Steinþórr of Eyri had bought a fine ten-oared boat from the ship. But when he was to bring the boat home he got a strong westerly wind, which drove them toward Þórsnes¹⁶ and they landed at Þingskálanes and brought the boat ashore at Gruflunaust. And they went on foot out from there over the ridges to Bakki and went home from there by ship, but the ten oared boat was not collected during the autumn, and it remained there at Gruflunaust.]

After the uneasy and fragile settlements made following the battle of Álptafjörðr, the author takes us back in time (*a*), and shifts the geographic focus of the narrative (*b*) away from Álptafjörðr to coincide with the earlier reference to the ship's arrival at Döggurðarnes.¹⁷ The introduction of the ten-oared boat (*c*) is critical to the development of the narrative, because having bought the boat Steinþórr is blown off course (*d — f*) when he tries to take it home the retrieval of this boat is the narrative motivation for the later movement of men that culminates in the battle. The westerly wind that takes them off course (*d*) removes all control from Steinþórr, and the author focuses our attention, by degrees, to the precise location of where the boat will be left (*e — f*); the author controls the narrative and determines the location for the boat's landing (*f, j*) through the use of weather. It is as a result of the weather conditions that

Steinþórr is forced to leave his boat in Vigrafjörðr, almost within sight of Helgafell, the home of his enemy Snorri goði. The saga author creates the narrative opportunity for the battle by making use of the weather to force Steinþórr to leave his boat at Gruflunaust, and the battle occurs when Steinþórr returns to collect the boat.

After landing the boat in Vigrafjörðr, Steinþórr and his men walk to Bakki (g) to arrange for a ship in which to go home to Eyrr (h). Yet, it would be much easier for Steinþórr and his men to have walked south east from Gruflunaust across Þingskálanes, to arrange for a boat across Álptafjörðr to Eyrr, than to travel west to Bakki (see Figure 1, below). So, why does he choose this route? Although this scene predates the battle of Álptafjörðr in terms of narrative time it occurs after it in the textual sequencing, and I would suggest that Steinþórr took the long route home because of his alliance with the Þorlákssynir. Bakki is presented as the familial centre of the Þorlákssynir, despite their ancestral links with Eyrr, whereas Þingskálanes and the western side of Álptafjörðr are under the control of the Þorbrandssynir, and so it is simply safer for Steinþórr to take the longer route. This notion is supported by the similarly circuitous route taken by Steinþórr when he goes to collect the boat (see below). However, in order to accept this reading of Steinþórr's journey we also have to acknowledge that the saga author has created a minor discrepancy in the saga's time frame, because Steinþórr is taking these precautions before he is involved in the conflict with Snorri. When Steinþórr returns home the saga author returns to the present (i), just after the battle of Álptafjörðr, and a reminder that the boat is still in Gruflunaust (j).

In this brief introductory section, the saga author makes use of geography, landscape and seasonal references to establish a new narrative thread and integrate it into the fabric of the saga. He also shifts the focus of interest away from Álptafjörðr to the area from Bakki to Þingskálanes and so highlights the importance of geography to clan alliances.

Geography

Just before Christmas Steinþórr decides to retrieve his boat from Gruflunaust, and he sets off with seven men:

alls váru þeir átta saman ok váru fluttir inn yfir fjörð til Seljahöfða ok gengu síðan inn á Bakka, ok fór þaðan Þormóðr, bróðir þeira; hann var inn níundi. Íss var lagðr á Hofstaðavág mjök svá at Bakka inum meira, ok gengu þeir inn eptir ísum ok svá inn yfir eið til Vigrafjarðar, ok lá hann allr.¹⁸

[[. . .] they were eight all together and were ferried over the fjord to Seljahöfði, and then went over to Bakki and from there Þormóðr their brother went with them; he was the ninth. There was a great deal of ice in Hofstaðavágur as far as Bakki the Greater, and they walked along the ice and over the isthmus into Vigrafjörðr, which also lay under ice.]

As Steinþórr had to be ferried across Álptafjörðr, from Eyrr to Seljahöfði, he could just as easily have been taken to Þingskálanes with a short walk to Grufunaust, or even to the edge of the ice in Vigrafjörðr. Steinþórr's circuitous route reflects the complexity of familial alliances, and the locations of their homes (Figure 1, below), in a blood feud within a small community. Although the Þorlákssynir are described as *á Eyri* [of Eyrr] it is Bakki that appears to be the more significant place in the context of this conflict, and thus in order to move safely overland Steinþórr has to take the long route via Bakki.

Figure 1, below, offers an approximate indication of the areas of influence of the conflicting parties as represented in the saga. I would suggest that Vigrafjörðr is at the confluence of the familial areas of both clans, and it is also directly below Þórsnessþing, the area's administrative centre, and Helgafell, the home of Snorri goði. Although Eyrr is the ancestral home of the Þorlákssynir the saga author highlights Bakki as their familial centre for the action in the episode; this view is supported by Steinþórr's journeys prior to the battle. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards observe that 'the [saga] author draws attention to the enormous pressure these conflicts are placing on society'.¹⁹

However, Steinþórr's lengthy journey also functions as a retardation device. If he had taken a direct route to the boat he could have met with the Þorbrandssynir on the headland of Þingskálanes, and as he outnumbered them and is a renowned fighter himself it is likely that Steinþórr would have won the battle outright. In order for a settlement to be achieved the saga author, working within the confines of a feud culture, mitigates the victory by placing the battle on the ice and redressing the imbalance of numbers through the use of a skerry (see below). In order to achieve this the author uses Steinþórr's long journey to place both parties on the ice so that they meet by accident. There is no intrigue or

planning before the fight, no theft, no beached whale—it is simply the chance clash of two feuding parties with no other motivation than the grudges borne by both sides.

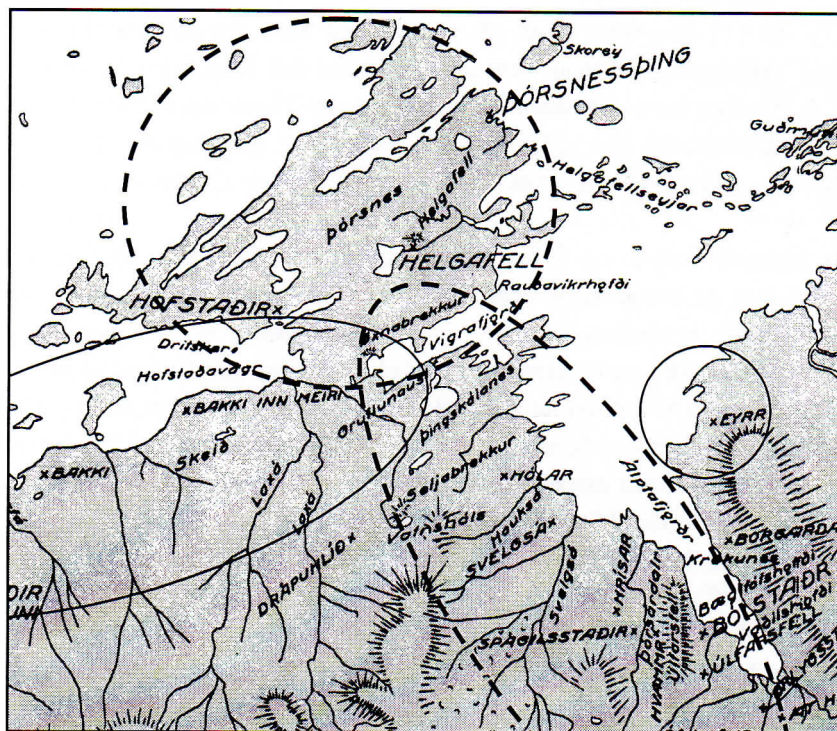


Figure 1: Vigrárfjörður and Areas of Familial Influence²⁰

----- Þorbrandssynir ————— Þorlákssynir

Ice and Snow

An area of frozen water provides the saga author with an unusual location that is temporary, belongs to no one and is under complete authorial control. So, as with rivers, ice may be considered as an active feature that the saga author is able to manipulate for his own narrative purposes.²¹ By using ice as a location the saga author removes any sense of territoriality from the protagonists, and so the ice

may therefore be considered as a neutral location. I would further suggest that the underlying function of ice as a neutral location is to aid the settlement of conflict; swift resolution is, indeed, an element that is common to all conflict scenes located on ice in the *Íslendingasögur*.²²

The battle of Vigrafjörðr concludes a protracted conflict between Snorri goði and the Þorbrandssynir against Björn Breiðvíkingakappi and the Þorlákssynir. Rory McTurk notes that in relation to the overall structure of the saga this feud is one of six narrative strands within the saga that are concerned with Snorri goði.²³ McTurk's discussion augments Paul Bibire's argument that narrative crises within the saga are highlighted by verses;²⁴ the battle of Álptafjörðr is such a crisis and is highlighted by strophe 33.²⁵ Although the battle of Álptafjörðr is the crisis point, the outcome of the battle is inconclusive in that the settlements made are only temporary—'allt var griðalaust með mönnum, þegar er menn váru heim komnir frá fundinum' [there was no truce at all between men once they arrived home from the battle].²⁶ The battle of Vigrafjörðr with its enduring settlement provides the actual conclusion to this feud, even though it is not causally related to the battle of Álptafjörðr. The ice in Vigrafjörðr functions as a frozen no-man's land between the areas of the conflicting parties and the neutrality of this location serves to support the resolution of the feud. The conflict affects the whole community and so its resolution on ice transcends clan alliances, which are partially established by geography.

Setting the scene with icy fjords is therefore crucial to the action of the battle, and the precise conditions are established in detail.

Honum er svá háttat, at hann fjarar allan at þurru, ok leggsk íssinn á leirana,^a er fjaran er, en sker þau, er eru á firðinum, stóðu upp ór ísinum,^b ok var þar brotinn mjök íssinn um skerit, ok váru jakarnir hallir mjök út af skerinu.^c Lausasnjór var fallinn á ísinn, ok var hált mjök á ísinum.^d²⁷

[Vigrafjörðr is such that it is left completely dry by the outgoing tide, and the ice lay on the mud-flats at low tide. But those skerries which are in the fjord stood up through the ice, and the ice around the skerry was much broken, and shards of ice were jutting out at angles from the skerry. Loose snow had fallen on the ice, and the ice was very slippery.]

This description of the conditions in the fjord is an excellent example of what Schach termed expository setting, as each element may be seen to play a role in the battle sequence.²⁸

The low tide leaving muddy flats behind is essential if the skerries are to break through the ice (*a*) and for the ice to remain safe enough for action to take place. A skerry with jutting ice shards around it (*b, c*) operates as a stronghold for the Þorbrandssynir, who are outnumbered: 'Þorbrandssynir vqrðusk vel ok drengiliga; hqfðu þeir ok vígi gott, því at jakarnir vǫru hallir út af skerinu ok vǫru ákafliga hálir' [The Þorbrandssynir defended themselves well and valiantly; they had a good fighting position, because shards of ice were jutting out at angles from the skerry and they were extremely slippery].²⁹ Eventually the Þorlákssynir overcome the defensive position of the Þorbrandssynir, who are left injured but with only one man dead because Steinþórr prevents his men from killing them all.

The slippery surface of the ice (*d*), which is exacerbated by the *lausasnjór*,³⁰ makes the battle conditions very difficult and so adds to the tension of the fight and aids the dragging of the boat across the ice and the isthmus out of Vigrafjqrðr. When Steinþórr is introduced into the saga he is described as 'inn þriði maðr hafi bezt verit vígr á áslandi' [one of the three best fighting men in Iceland].³¹ His skill is demonstrated in combat with Freysteinn bófi, when Freysteinn has the clear advantage:

Steinþórr bað hann eigi renna, ef hann væri eigi sárr; snerisk Freysteinn þá við í skerinu, ok sóttusk þá allfast, ok varð Steinþóri fallhætt, er jakarnir vǫru bæði hálir ok hallir, en Freysteinn stóð fast á skóbroddunum ok hjó bæði hart ok tíðum. En svá lauk þeira skiptum, at Steinþórr kom sverðshoggvi á Freystein fyrir ofan mjaðmir, ok tók manninn í sundr í miðju.³² [Steinþórr ordered him [Freysteinn] not to run if he was not injured; then Freysteinn turned around at the skerry and they attacked each other harshly, Steinþórr lost his balance because the shards of ice were both slippery and slanting, but Freysteinn stood firm on his spikes [shoes] and struck both hard and often. And their contest ended, when Steinþórr brought a sword strike just above Freysteinn's hips, and took the man apart at the middle.]

This scene clearly demonstrates Steinþórr's prowess as a fighter, overcoming Freysteinn against the advantages afforded him by his superior position on the ice blocks and his spiked shoes.

After the battle, when the Þorlákssynir have left the fjord, Snorri goði arrives at the scene. He arranges for the wounded to be looked after and notes that only Freysteinn has been killed, but he also notices a patch of blood on the snow: 'hann tók upp allt saman, blóðit ok snæinn, í hendi sér ok kreisti ok stakk í munn sér ok spurði, hverjum þar hefði blætt. Þorleifr kimbi segir, at Bergþóri hefir blætt' [he took up snow and blood together and squeezed it in his hand and put it to his mouth, and asked who had been bleeding there. Þorleifr kimbi said that it was Bergþórr's [Þorláksson] blood].³³ Snorri then says, "at þetta sé feigs manns blóð, ok munu vér eigi eptir fara" ["that this is a doomed man's blood, and we need not go after them"].³⁴ Snorri is under pressure to pursue the Þorlákssynir, but the evidence of the bloody snowball is enough to inform him that at least one man on each side has died, and his decision not to go after the men makes a settlement possible. Thus, the *lausasnjór* also plays a small but significant role in the peaceful conclusion of this episode.

In this discussion of the battle of Vigráfjörðr I have sought to suggest how a saga author deploys landscape elements—topography, weather and geography—as literary artefacts to inform and control the narrative. As Robert Lawson-Peebles, writing on the narrative use of landscape in the literature of revolutionary America, observes:

If there is no such thing as an artless language, it follows that descriptions of the environment are never merely empirical. They are strategies which encode the interests and concerns of the writer as well as the physical nature of the terrain, the climate, and so on.³⁵

NOTES

- ¹ Gary Aho, "'Með Ísland á heilanum": Íslandsbækur breskra ferðalanga 1772 til 1897', *Skírnir*, 167 (1993), 205-258.
- ² Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), p. 294; Fredrick Metcalfe, *The Oxonian in Iceland, or Notes of Travel in that Island in the Summer of 1860. With glances at Icelandic Folk-Lore and Sagas* (London: Longman, Green, 1861).
- ³ Metcalfe, *The Oxonian in Iceland*, p. 3.
- ⁴ Metcalfe, *The Oxonian in Iceland*, p. 215.
- ⁵ For detailed statistical analysis of topographic terms see Ian Wyatt, *The Form and Function of Landscape in the Old Icelandic Family Sagas* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, 2001), pp. 19-31.
- ⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit IV (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), p. 158.
- ⁷ Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Representation in the Sagas of Icelanders*, trans. by Andrew Wawn (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1998), p. 82.
- ⁸ *Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit VII (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1936), p. 201 note 1.
- ⁹ Gísli Sigurðsson, 'Icelandic National Identity: From Romanticism to Tourism', in *Making Europe in Nordic Contexts*, ed. by Perri J. Anttonen (Turku: Nordic Institute of Folklore, 1996), pp. 41-75 (p. 44).
- ¹⁰ Paul Schach, *The Use of Scenery in the Íslendingasögur* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1949), p. iii.
- ¹¹ Schach, *The Use of Scenery*, pp. 158-163.
- ¹² Wyatt, *Form and Function*, pp. 83-236; Ian Wyatt, 'The Landscape of the Icelandic Sagas: Text, Place and National Identity', *Landscapes*, 5/1 (2004), 55-72.
- ¹³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 125-130.
- ¹⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 120-125.
- ¹⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 125.
- ¹⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga*, trans. by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), p. 119, suggests 'which drove him round Thor's Ness' for 'ok sveif þeim inn um Þórsnes'; *Eyrbyggja saga*, trans. by Judy Quinn in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders I-V*, ed. by Viðar Hreinsson *et al* (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), V 190, offers 'which swept them east around Thorsnes'. However, Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p.

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xliv, notes the use of *inn* to mean 'towards land', and this usage is supported by Stefán Einarsson, 'Terms of Direction in Old Icelandic', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 43 (1944), 265-285 (p. 268), who also points out that this phrase can mean east in relation to Snæfellsnes. See also Einar Haugen, 'The Semantics of Icelandic Orientation', *Word*, 13 (1957), 447-459; Kirsten Hastrup, *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 51-57; Tatjana N. Jackson, 'On the Old Norse System of Spatial Orientation', *Saga-Book*, 25 (1998), 72-82.

¹⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 106.

¹⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 125-126.

¹⁹ Hermann Pálsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 8. On the topographic accuracy of the saga see also G. N. Garmonsway, 'Eyrbyggja Saga', *Saga-Book*, 12 (1940), 81-92 (p. 86).

²⁰ Map section taken from Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, facing p. 128 'Umhverfi Helgafells', reproduced with the kind permission of Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, <www.hib.is>. I have added the lines indicating areas of familial influence.

²¹ See Wyatt, *Form and Function*, pp. 128-173; Wyatt, 'The Landscape of the Icelandic Sagas', pp. 64-68.

²² See also *Fljótsdæla saga* [ch. 13]; *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* [ch. 15]; *Ljósveitinga saga* [ch. 20]. There is also an ice game in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* [ch. 18] played on *svell* [sheet ice]. A conflict is averted during the game, but the scene is made more complex as Gíslur recites a verse during the game that reveals him as the killer of Þorgrímur Þorsteinsson [ch. 16].

²³ Rory McTurk, 'Approaches to the Structure of *Eyrbyggja Saga*', in *Sagnaskemmtun: Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson on his 65th birthday, 26th May 1986*, ed. by Rudolf Simek, Jónas Kristjánsson and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (Wien: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachf, 1986), pp. 223-237 (p. 229), identifies the six narratives relating to Snorri as being in the following chapters: (1) ch.17; (2) chs 23, 26-27; (3) chs 35-38; (4) chs 39, 41-46; (5) ch. 56; (6) chs 57-62. See also Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1989 [note 10], pp. 7-8.

²⁴ Paul Bibire, 'Verses in the Íslendingasögur', *Alþjóðlegt fornsagnarþing, Reykjavík 2-8 ágúst 1973, Fyrirlestrar* (Reykjavík, 1973), I 1-28.

²⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 124.

²⁶ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 125.

²⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 126.

²⁸ Schach, *The Use of Scenery*.

²⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 127.

³⁰ I take *lausasnjór* [loose snow] to indicate powder snow, a type of snow which forms in extremely cold and dry conditions, such as one might expect to find in weather cold enough

to freeze moving salt water, such as a fjord. This therefore has a further function of contributing to the realism of the scene.

³¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 22.

³² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 128.

³³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 129.

³⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 129.

³⁵ Robert Lawson-Peebles, *Landscape and Written Expression in Revolutionary America: The World Turned Upside Down* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 6.