ELEMENTS OF PERSUASION IN THE RHETORIC OF
NJAL'S SAGA

by

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ABSTRACT

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The objectivity of the narrative style has been frequently cited by literary critics as one of the most perspicuous characteristics of Íslendingasögur. In more recent studies, however, saga objectivity has undergone closer scrutiny, and various forms of author intrusion have been found to exist in the narrative of family sagas. These forms consist of the interjection of subjective elements by the author or narrator which influence the reader's judgment regarding the evaluation of saga characters.

In this study Njal's Saga has been chosen as the model for the investigation of the author's persuasive technique. Aside from the fact that it is the best and most well-known among the family sagas, it has the advantage of containing an unusually large number of characters. An analysis of the characterization reveals that the author's method of persuasion contains a wide number and variety of rhetorical devices which manipulate the reader's judgment. These devices form three basic categories: a) descriptive elements, which pertain to the interjection of direct or indirect
evaluative statements made by the author or narrator concerning saga characters; b) stylistic elements, which derive their persuasive effect from distinctly literary devices of rhetorical construction; and c) didactic elements, which manipulate the reader's perspective by presenting the actions of saga characters within the framework of a moral and social standard of behavior advocated by the author.

The use of these persuasive devices is very widespread in the saga. Their effectiveness results from a repetitive and cumulative action and interaction between the various elements, which conditions the reader's judgment. At the same time, the persuasive aspect of the author's rhetoric is successfully hidden to the casual observer by the observation of a strict outward appearance of objectivity.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Literary critics have frequently cited the highly objective narrative style of the *Íslendingasögur* (Sagas of Icelanders) as one of the most perspicuous characteristics of this genre. In delineating classical saga technique, the empirical aspect of saga narration has been variously described as "pure narrative without ulterior aims of any kind,"¹ as "epic objectivity [which] is scrupulously observed,"² or as the type of characterization which, after a brief "perfunctory and final" character-sketch, leaves the reader to "draw his own conclusions about the personality as it becomes revealed in action, speech, or silence—never by interior analysis."³

In more recent studies this objectivity of saga narration has been the focal point of closer scrutiny.⁴ Paul Schach, in an article on author intrusion in the *Íslendingasögur*,⁵ concludes that five types of narrative interruptions occur with relative frequency in the Sagas of Icelanders. This interjection of subjective elements may take the form of first person statements (such as occur at the end of a saga, e.g., "and there I end the saga of the Burning of Njal"⁶), source references, and textual cross references to events in the past or future. Other examples of author intrusion which Schach cites are value judgments and "various other kinds of subjective obser-
vations" (p. 154). They may often be "enlightening observations on life in the 'saga age,' some of which, to the extent that they are accurate, shed welcome light on the cultural and literary history of Iceland" (pp. 154 f.). Particularly the latter type of author intrusion Schach sees as a largely functional device, because the objects of description play a role in the narrative. Among the subjective statements which Schach cites as evidence of author intrusion are value judgments such as the one quoted from Sighvats þáttr skálds: "After that Sighvatr died, and we are confident that King Óláfr has kept the promise he made to him, for he shows great mercy to many who call upon him" (p. 137), and the author's confession of ignorance or uncertainty of matters relevant to the story (p. 137).

A study of the more covert influences which the writer exerts over his reader through rhetorical devices is presented by the Swedish scholar Lars Lönnroth, who attempts to analyze the psychologically generative factors which discreetly guide the reader's judgment and, almost imperceptibly, lead him to reach the conclusions the saga writer wishes him to attain.

Because the present study is based, in part, on Lönnroth's findings and represents an extension of his work, it will be necessary to deal with his inquiry in detail. Lönnroth distinguishes between "formal objectivity," which is found in the sagas to a high degree, and that type of neutrality which remains most strictly uncommitted to causes
and values. In Njal's Saga he finds such a stringent neutrality only in the narrator's treatment of the feud between Gunnar and Njal, both of whom share the writer's "sympathy and admiration to the same extent" (p. 175). An essentially illusory impression of objectivity is therefore created in the saga because of the author's empiricism and emotional restraint (p. 160).

Lönnroth continues his discussion of saga objectivity with a reinterpretation of Hallberg's example from Droplaugarsona saga (Hallberg, pp. 72 f.), in which Hallberg speaks of a twofold objectivity: first, by presenting the incident in the manner of a "neutral report," the narrator "leaves it to the hearer or reader to draw his own conclusions from the facts as stated"; and secondly, "he [the narrator] does not permit himself to make a moral value judgment of the deed," although nothing prevents him from relegating the expression of such opinions to the speech of his characters (cf. n. 2). Lönnroth identifies the first of Hallberg's types of objectivity with "empiricism," the second with "impassibilité": "The behavioristic presentation of events, without any efforts to explain the 'inner' motives for any action, can thus be regarded as a function of empiricism, and the same thing can be said about the numerous references to what 'people have heard' (or said) concerning the factual circumstances of this or that event ('no one else heard their conversation,' 'Shortly
afterward, people heard,' etc.)" (Lönnroth, p. 161).

Such an analysis, however, is too gross an oversimplification to remain convincing, because its basis is the absent explanation concerning the motivating forces of the character depicted in the narration, and does nothing to prove the neutrality of the narrator in the selection of facts he presents to his reader. Furthermore, references to what people have heard or said are by their very nature highly subjective, and their intrinsic value can only be judged by the credibility of the narrator, not vice versa.

Actually, Lönnroth arrives at the same conclusion when he states that "it is interesting to note that the description of Hallstein's death apparently violates the principle of empiricism, since nobody could possibly have known anything about it except the thrall, who was himself killed 'immediately' afterwards. The narrator does not even bother to make a show of impartiality by giving Helgi's and Droplaug's version of what happened..." (p. 162).

The fact that the narrator manipulates the sympathies of his audience by employing a number of stylistic devices has been observed by various other critics. Sveinsson states in his work Dating the Icelandic Sagas, that the character portrayal of identical persons in different sagas varies because the authors saw the characters in a different light or perspective. As examples he cites Mord Fiddle (Mörðr Gígja) and Gudmund the Powerful (Guðmundr Ríki) in Njál and Ljósvetninga (pp. 35 f.). Sigurður Nordal,
although he admits that it was easier for saga authors to discover facts concerning the saga age than it is for modern scholars, eventually reaches the conclusion that the narrator of Hrafnkel's Saga had little concern for historical accuracy. Nordal considers the characters fictitious (despite the appearance of authenticity which pervades Hrafnkel's Saga), because, aside from the fact that some of them are demonstrably unhistorical, he finds them too clear-cut and explained. Hrafnkel's Saga, he feels, is a "short novel" by genre (p. 55).

Despite the widely recognized fact that the sagas do indeed contain definite standards of moral behavior as shown in the conflicts between protagonist and antagonist, author intrusions remain so skillfully hidden to the casual observer, that this subjective and sometimes didactic element is frequently overlooked. A large part of Lönnroth's article is devoted to an analysis and evaluation of this type of author persuasion, and not surprisingly he finds that "the saga narrators on the whole seem to have the same moral code as their characters--or in any case they have the same moral code as their heroes. When showing us the hero's adherence to this moral code in a favorable light, one of the implications is certainly that this is the way to behave, and to that extent the narrative can then be said to be didactic, or to 'contain a moral.'" The stringent honor code which pervades the actions of the saga
heroes, which spurs them on to battle against seemingly impossible odds and, on the other hand, makes them highly susceptible to risking their lives at the slightest prompting or taunting from their womenfolk, is reminiscent of the Viking philosophy contained in Hávamál: its ideal is to look upon death with disdain, while constantly striving for the fame which will endure beyond it. The thought of renown after death can for the characters in the sagas be a powerful incentive to do their utmost," comments Hallberg, "not least of all in hopeless situations" (p. 52); and Andersson, too, finds saga writers influenced by the heroic model: "...the author's mode of thought and many of his stylistic habits are certainly heroic." Taking his examples from Njal's Saga, Lönnroth then analyzes the rhetoric of his model according to the structural scheme introduced by Andersson. In discussing the initial character-sketch which customarily accompanies the introduction of a new character, and in which the author passes unveiled judgment on this person's physical qualities, family background, and community standing, Lönnroth notes that in spite of the fact that this appraisal is sometimes stated in "strong and unequivocal terms" (p. 165), it conforms to certain stereotyped patterns and the Icelanders' own ideals of empiricism and impassibilité. Such restraint, he says, reflects on the writer and "sets him up as a man of maturity and wisdom, the kind of man who would
not judge people lightly, and this in turn gives authority and credibility to the judgments that he does make" (p. 165).

A similar observation has been made also by Nordal, perhaps not in such expressly stated terms, when he notes that details, freely given by the author, contribute to an impression of accuracy (Nordal, p. 39). Andersson, however, writes that character introductions simply give "information for information's sake and are not integral in the sense that they contribute something vital to the later story" (Andersson, p. 9). I purport to show later that they indeed contain important descriptive elements without which the credibility of a progressive character delineation would suffer distinct impairment. 17

Among the various methods of author intrusion which Lönnroth cites are direct narrator statements, description of a character's appearance, and the recording of popular opinion. Through these formal devices the narrator injects subtle hints into the story which, consciously or unconsciously, influence the reader's own judgment. As an example of the first type of hidden persuasion, Lönnroth cites a narrator statement concerning Egill Skallagrimsson of *Egil's Saga*: "'He was rather tough to get along with when playing with other youngsters.'" He then comments that "an experienced reader would understand that a character described in this manner must turn out to be a very difficult person indeed! As a matter of fact, it seems quite likely
that this kind of underhanded and apparently noncommittal presentation is more effective as indoctrination than the most impassioned advocacy (Lönnroth, p. 166).

The second factor—description of outward characteristics—deals with an observation favored by Lönnroth in his studies: "Blond and beautiful persons will generally turn out to be good, while dark and ugly persons generally turn out at best to be rather problematic." In this connection, however, Sveinsson's observation must be mentioned: "Skarphedinn can be numbered among the not inconsiderable group which may be called the dark-haired heroes: they are, to be sure, each unlike the other, but nevertheless share certain characteristics in regard to the essentials of their temperaments and their destinies."

Skarp-Hedin is introduced as having "curly chestnut hair" (Nial's Saga, ch. 25), yet he is certainly portrayed as a sympathetic (even though difficult) character. This and other discrepancies between Lönnroth's theory and concrete saga usage tend to weaken Lönnroth's point, although it can be said that the "blond-is-beautiful" motif is a recurring one in Germanic literature and tradition.

More important is Lönnroth's third feature of persuasion technique—that of characterization by recording popular opinion. Most notably Lönnroth cites on pp. 167 f. the introduction of Mord Fiddle (Nial's Saga, ch. 1), and translates: "'nobody considered a verdict valid if he were not
present.* By introducing a consensus of popular opinion, the narrator strengthens his own just stated opinion, i.e. that Mord was a very experienced and skillful lawyer, and at the same time makes it all but impossible for the reader to harbor any suspicions to the contrary.

As a variation of these techniques Lönnroth's next example can be cited, in which he quotes Hrut's famous quip about Hallgerd's "thief's eyes" (Njal's Saga, ch. 1). Here the narrator clothes his own judgment in Hrut's reaction: "First of all the uncle himself has already been presented as manna vitastr, the wisest of men, so that we are immediately prepared to accept him as a spokesman of the narrator. Second, his words are given special emphasis in the context by being placed as the conclusion of the scene..." (Lönnroth, p. 168).22

The fact that heroes in Njal are "generally presented in greater detail than their adversaries and...always get the 'last word'" (Lönnroth, p. 169) is a breach of impartiality, as is the narrator's habit of placing those things which he wants stressed in direct rather than indirect speech.23

Another possibility of author persuasion is afforded the narrator in the linkage of character qualities with genealogical descent. Thus Valgard the Gray's son Mord is immediately assumed to be villainous (and indeed turns out to be), because of his father's evil ways: "Even though it
would seem that the father's behavior is strictly irrelevant to a fair judgment of his son, the narrator has no difficulty in establishing guilt by association, since most of us are susceptible to such arguments as 'like father, like son'" (Lönnroth, p. 169). Actually, as will be shown later, this "guilt-by-association" technique goes far beyond the limits of direct kinship. A persuasive characterization is drawn by the narrator in establishing the habits and character traits of people with whom a person associates, i.e., his friends and acquaintances, the chieftains he supports, the causes he favors, etc.

The rhetorical devices Lönnroth discusses in the section concerning the development of conflict consist primarily of those centering on "conformity," "perspective," and the Old Norse concept of personal "luck" (gæfa, gipta, hamingja). The conformity feature pointed out by Lönnroth is a reiteration and extension of a conclusion he reached earlier in his article (p. 160), showing narrator identification with the moral code of his heroes. Now Lönnroth enlarges this concept, letting the narrator's own views coincide with those of the entire community: "There is rarely a hint of conflict between this public opinion and the narrator's own views, or between public opinion and the views which the narrator expects his audience to have. 'Good' and 'bad' can be identified almost completely with
what the community approves or disapproves. In this respect the sagas are most conformistic" (Lönnroth, p. 170).

From a rhetorical point of view it is obviously of greater advantage to present the audience with a hero with whom it can identify, rather than to choose one whose personal characteristics mark him as an eccentric, antisocial, or unsympathetic figure. However, this author-hero-community identification is not a significant feature of the saga only, but is a fairly common, if not essential, feature of other genres as well.24

Undoubtedly it is the prerogative of the writer to manipulate and fix the perspective in such a manner as to create the greatest possible disparity of character between protagonist and antagonist. Saga narrators excel in this technique to the extent that the reader is frequently not aware of the fact that his sympathies, observations, and opinions are being manipulated to suit the purpose of the author. Lönnroth elucidates this point by examining the episode between Hallgerd, the beggar women, and Sigmund (who libels Njal's sons). A modern writer, he says, could have related the incident in such a manner "as to make Hallgerðr and Sigmundr appear as thoroughly charming and witty persons,...and Gunnar as a terribly priggish bore" (p. 177).

"The fact," he states, "that such a change of perspective is possible indicates that the narrator has played a trick on us when he makes Gunnar appear as a shining white figure
amidst a crowd of shady and despicable characters. The trick is played primarily by sheer narrative technique, i.e. by selecting and emphasizing the appropriate details in the appropriate order. Yet despite the fact that saga heroes are frequently exalted into superhuman beings, the narrators’ methods are so subtle that, as Sveinsson states, even in regard to Njal (which is particularly immodest in its hero aggrandizement) “people were in agreement far into the nineteenth century that Njáls saga was history” (Sveinsson, p. 9).

As a final persuasive device Lönnroth recognizes (on pp. 181 f.) “necrologies” or eulogies, which he again traces back to medieval convention in biographies. In contrast to heroes, he points out, villains and characters who are less important to the story are generally not honored by eulogies upon their death.

He concludes, then, that undoubtedly “all this amounts to a high degree of partiality in almost every saga episode, even though it may sometimes be difficult to see this, partly because of the extreme restraint in the use of emotive language” (p. 185). The narrator’s techniques of persuasion Lönnroth groups into three categories: commentary, stylistic variation, and staging. Of these, commentary is broken down into direct and indirect commentary, direct being equivalent to “editorializing” (pp. 185 f.), indirect encompassing such
devices as (among others) public opinion, comments made by narrator spokesmen, and prophecies.²⁸

With the term "stylistic variation" Lönnroth refers to "such devices as using a specially high-flown or solemn language when speaking of heroes while using a simpler, more straight-forward language when speaking of villains" (p. 185). The expression "staging," which Lönnroth has also adapted from Andersson, is used to define "the whole selective process whereby a narrator determines: a) which incidentals to use in the presentation of an event, a thing, or a character; b) the order in which to present these incidentals, c) the relative emphasis put upon them through the use of 'showing' versus 'telling,' direct versus indirect speech, detailed description versus passing reference, etc." (p. 185).

For the present study this terminology is too general and all-inclusive to be useful in the differentiation of the various persuasive elements in the rhetoric of the saga, but wherever one of Lönnroth's terms appears to be the one which most closely describes the function of a specific rhetorical device, it shall be defined and retained. Furthermore it shall be shown that the use of these devices, contrary to prevalent scholarly opinion,²⁹ is very widespread and interrelated in the saga, inasmuch as persuasive rhetoric can be found on nearly every page of the saga examined, and frequently two or more devices are employed
within the same sentence or paragraph. The model chosen for this analysis is Njal's Saga. Aside from the fact that it is the best and most well-known among the Islendingasögur, it contains an unusually high number of characters, and it may have become apparent from the above discussion that the saga's persuasive rhetoric almost inevitably involves character delineation. With Njal as a model, it is therefore possible to examine a great number and variety of persuasive devices.

The grouping of these devices shall form three basic categories: a) descriptive elements; b) stylistic elements; and c) didactic elements. Because they all have a common purpose, namely character evaluation, and the manipulation of the reader's judgment to that effect, the boundaries between the groupings are sometimes rather fluid, i.e., one feature of character depiction demands that the hero have a formidable opponent (or else his defeat would not honor the hero), yet the same feature could be classified equally well as one of polarity (a stylistic device emphasizing, in this instance, the personality differences between hero and villain).

Under the heading "Descriptive Elements," devices pertaining to direct or indirect character evaluation will be discussed. "Stylistic Elements" are those involving polarity, repetition, etc., whereas "Didactic Elements"
contribute to character evaluation in a form involving moral value judgments, i.e., condemnation of stealing, burning, pledge breaking, etc.

One further point must be emphasized: in this analysis *Njal's Saga* will be treated strictly as a work of fiction, and no attempt will be made to evaluate its historical veracity or its genesis.
CHAPTER TWO
DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENTS

Ulrich Gaier, in his study on the relationship between literary form and information, attributes the following function to the discipline of literary criticism:

"Sie [Literaturwissenschaft] soll lehren, sich über die Implikationen und Wirkweisen jeder Art von Sprachverwendung klar zu werden, Manipulation durch Bewusstmachung auszuschalten, kritische Distanz zu den Ober- und Untertönen des Gesprochenen oder Geschriebenen zu gewinnen und sie in der eigenen Anwendung zu kontrollieren" (Gaier, pp. 48 f.). As elementary as this statement appears to be, its message has frequently been disregarded in the study of Íslendingasögur. Considering the highly persuasive nature of the genre, particularly in connection with character depiction, it seems unfortunate that so little attention has been focused on its persuasive technique that the author's direct influence on the reader pertaining to characterization is still seen as occurring chiefly in the introduction of characters.

By far the largest number of suggestive elements influencing the reader's judgment fall into the categories of direct and indirect character evaluation, and into a group utilizing a combination of these techniques. The term direct evaluation refers to statements made directly by the narrator concerning the appearance or personality of a certain
character. **Indirect evaluation**\(^{34}\) refers to personality judgments expressed by characters within the saga, or to characterization as it develops through the narrative process in the revelation of a character's reaction to a given situation. Thus, the introduction of important personalities comprises only one segment of direct evaluation, whereas magnification of the heroes and their final typification in eulogies belong to the group showing a pattern of alternation between direct and indirect evaluative methods. Introduction, magnification, and eulogy have been sufficiently discussed by other critics,\(^ {35}\) so that only a brief mention of them in this study is justified. Although all three are very important for individual characterization, they are sometimes so bombastic in nature that their persuasive value is diminished; for the reader is more easily influenced by subtle but repeated statements,\(^ {36}\) which permit him the illusion that he is forming his own conclusions, and the saga author is basically a gentle persuader.

The **introduction** is calculated to impress the reader with the type of behavior which is henceforth to be expected from the character in question, and the narrator puts his stamp of approval or disapproval upon each newly entered personality in direct evaluative form. At this point the narrator uses quite strong, unmistakable language. Generally speaking, the introduction of villains is much
shorter than that of heroes. A comparison of the description of Mord Valgardsson, Lyting of Samstead, and Gunnar of Hlidarend elucidates the author's technique: "Valgard and Unn had a son called Mord, who plays a large part in this saga. When he grew up he treated all his kinsfolk badly, but Gunnar worst of all. He had a malicious cunning, and his advice was always calculated to cause trouble" (ch. 25). In this instance, the author's incrimination of Mord is further heightened by the statement that Mord mistreated Gunnar, the saga hero.

Lyting's description, on the other hand, is not entirely negative: "A man called Lyting, who lived at Samstead, was married to Thrain Sigfusson's sister, Steinvor. He was a big, powerful man, wealthy, but unpleasant to deal with" (ch. 98). This introduction is amplified by the statement that "Lyting had two brothers, Hallstein and Hallgrim. They were men of violence, and kept company with Lyting because no one else could bear them" (ch. 98). It is more this added insight than Lyting's actual introduction, which causes this character to appear in an unfavorable light.

In contrast to Mord and Lyting, Gunnar arrives on the scene unquestionably as the shining hero:

Gunnar lived at Hlidarend, in Fljotshlid. He was a tall, powerful man, outstandingly skilful with arms. He could strike or throw with either hand, and his sword-strokes were so fast that he seemed to be brandishing three swords at once. He was excellent
at archery, and his arrows never missed their mark. He could jump more than his own height in full armour, and just as far backwards as forwards. He could swim like a seal. There was no sport at which anyone could even attempt to compete with him. It has been said that there has never been his equal.

He was a handsome man, with fair skin and a straight nose slightly tilted at the tip. He had keen blue eyes, red cheeks, and a fine head of thick flaxen hair. He was extremely well-bred, fearless, generous, and even-tempered, faithful to his friends but careful in his choice of them. He was prosperous. (ch. 19)

Aside from its use in introductory rhetoric, direct evaluation occurs throughout the saga in intermittent judgments which are kept as short and free of emotive language as possible. Sometimes nothing more than a brief glimpse of a character trait, inserted in regular narrative description, serves as the suggestive agent. Thus the statement "Thrain was extremely ostentatious" (ch. 91), which is actually the topic sentence of a short paragraph, loses much of its pungent and openly critical quality by being placed within the narrative description which, by customary usage, it should either precede or close. In fact, its unusual position invites the reader to quickly pass over it, because it interrupts, rather than links, the preceding and following sentence: "Thrain had fifteen able-bodied men in his household, and eight of them accompanied him wherever he rode...[here follows the author's evaluative statement] when he rode, he always wore a blue cloak and gilded helmet, and carried the spear that Earl Hakon had given him, a splendid shield, and a sword at his belt."
The paragraph written thus, without its topic sentence, contains all the necessary information for a purely narrative, or empirical description. The suggestive element lies in the terse statement that Thrain was an ostentatious man; yet the peculiar position in the paragraph it dominates has a two-fold function: to minimize its inductive quality while preventing the reader from reaching an unwanted conclusion (i.e., that Thrain feared his enemies' attack, and therefore surrounded himself with men and weapons).

A very similar description shows Skarp-Hedin in battle array: "He was wearing a blue tunic with a silver belt, blue-striped trousers, and black top-boots. He was carrying a small round shield and the axe with which he had killed Thrain Sigfusson and which he called 'Battle-Troll'. His hair was combed well back and held in place by a silk headband....and everyone knew him at first sight. He kept exactly to his position in the line" (ch. 120). Again, the narrative gives a sufficiently detailed account of Skarp-Hedin's appearance to allow the reader to form his own conclusions about his countenance; again the topic sentence consists of a brief, evaluative interpolation by the author; but this time the comment is favorable: "He looked every inch a warrior." The fact that an insertion such as "he was an impetuous and violent man," or "he looked conceited
about himself" would have augmented the narration equally well, shows that the reader's perspective depends entirely on the author's evaluation of Skarp-Hedin, and not on conclusions he is allowed to draw himself.

In this instance the suggestive intent of the interpolation is further obscured by the following, final sentence of the paragraph, that Skarp-Hedin "kept exactly to his position in the line." An experienced reader's attention would immediately focus on that statement as being significant for the acceleration of the action which begins at this point. By contrastive analysis, however, such as the paragraphs cited in the evaluation of Thrain and Skarp-Hedin, the subtleties of the author's persuasive technique can be shown most effectively.

In contrast to such an intermittent placement of value judgments by the narrator, a third form of direct evaluation is found in a much more conspicuous position in the text: narrator statements involving direct character evaluation which show regular (i.e. topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph) or inverted paragraph structure (i.e. topic sentence at the end of the paragraph). Both of these methods of paragraph construction are common also in modern expository writing. The function of the topic sentence in a paragraph is to announce the subject to be discussed, or, if it is placed at the end, to condense and clarify the preceding narration topic in a concluding statement. Such
sentences, therefore, attract the attention of the reader, and this type of direct evaluation can be counted among the most overt forms of author intrusion. Many examples of this kind may be found in Njal. Flosi, for instance, is characterized by the narrator as "a very genial man and an excellent host" (ch. 146, regular structure), and in chapter 131 it is said of him that "Flosi never boasted of what they had done; nor did he ever show a trace of fear" (inverted structure). Gunnar Lambason's storytelling is rudely undermined by the author's curt conclusion that "his whole account had been extremely biased, and riddled with lies" (ch. 155). Of Thorvald Cropped-Beard and Kol the narrator states: "they had both been utter scoundrels" (ch. 145), but about Thorgerd he comments that she "took over at Grjotriver and proved to be an excellent housewife" (ch. 34). Her mother, on the other hand, receives little praise from the author. He introduces a paragraph on her gifts of management with the following character sketch: "Hallgerd turned out to be demanding and prodigal. She claimed everything for her own, whether it belonged to her or not, and wasted it all extravagantly" (ch. 11).

Another form of direct narrator evaluation of a saga character consists of an artfully disguised, but nonetheless flagrant breach of impartiality: the insinuation of a trait of character by the author through his implication of a particular action's habitual occurrence. It is said of
Mord Fiddle's presence at court, for instance, that he "was interpreting the law there as usual" (ch. 2), or of Mord Valgardsson that he "started slandering Hoskuld as usual" (ch. 110). Although the author may have never before or afterwards again cited a similar occurrence de facto, the reader is left with the impression that the action involved is indeed one recurring with great frequency, and therefore characteristic of an established personality pattern.

A much more overt character appraisal involves the principle of author selectivity, that is, the author's prerogative to choose or to manipulate the facts represented to the reader. When the narrator states, for example, that Gizur the White "selected all the wisest men amongst their supporters to accompany him; they included Hjalti and Asgrim and Kari and Thorgeir Skorar-Geir" (ch. 139), the real option of choosing is not Gizur's, who selects a (to the reader) unknown quantity of men to represent wisdom, but that of the narrator-author, whose prerogative it is to exclude all but four of Gizur's choice from honorable mention. The reader is therefore confronted with Hjalti, Asgrim, Kari, and Thorgeir as the only representatives of male wisdom in the district, yet he retains the impression that this distinction was conferred upon them by Gizur.

Author selectivity involving the choice of descriptive adjectives in the portrayal of Hallgerd may be briefly mentioned here. Her development as a character shows an
unusually large number of direct evaluative statements, a factor which undoubtedly contributes to the variety of scholarly opinion expressed about this character. Njal's author describes her variously as "impetuous and wilful" (ch. 9), as a "hilariously cheerful bride" (ch. 10), as demanding, prodigal, wasteful and extravagant (ch. 11), as gracious, confident and at ease (ch. 13), as properly behaved, greatly restrained, lavish, resourceful (ch. 14), etc. It almost appears as if the author had selected her as a representative of all that is good and evil in woman and, in the process of portraying her, lost all his coolness and restraint. At one point he even resorts to an analysis of her feelings: "Meanwhile Hallgerd was sitting outside the house, feeling very resentful" (ch. 11). This type of psychological examination of a character is extremely rare in the genre.

As can be seen from the small sample of direct evaluative statements cited (there are many more in the saga), the frequently expressed opinion that the personality of saga characters is revealed after initial introduction only through their action or speech, but not through interior analysis, can hardly be upheld. Yet the author makes use of a number of other methods as well to insure that the reader's imagination follows a predetermined path.

One of these methods is indirect character delineation.
It involves not a directly stated personality judgment by the author, but one expressed through other characters within the saga, through implication by recording a character's reputation, or through the narrative process by registering a revealing reaction to a given situation.

The use of a narrator substitute, or proxy, for characterization has the advantage that the author may remain verbally impartial, thus guarding the appearance of formal objectivity, while a chosen character from within the story conveys the necessary personality description. This kind of indirect characterization is very frequent in the saga. A case in point is Hrut's famous quote about Hallgerd's eyes. The narrator, when introducing her formally, describes her in perfectly simple, but favorable terms: "She was a tall, beautiful child with long silken hair that hung down to her waist" (ch. 1). It is Hrut's assertion which contains the negative appraisal: "'The child is beautiful enough, and many will suffer for her beauty; but I cannot imagine how thief's eyes have come into our kin.'" With this remark by Hrut the author has placed Hallgerd, from the first page of the saga, in an unfavorable perspective, and at the same time conditioned the reader to expect the action justifying Hrut's appraisal. This practice of préfiguration is an important stylistic device used in the genre. It is one of the most obvious,
and at the same time most effective characteristics of indirect evaluation, that it is rarely based on a simple statement alone (as is direct evaluation), but rather that this remark is often combined with other stylistic, didactic, or descriptive devices. The result is a veritable web of persuasive or indicting elements, from which it is practically impossible for the reader, without careful analysis, to separate fact from suggestion.

Simple indirect description is a relatively obvious device of characterization, as can be seen from the conversation between Mord and Hoskuld: "'I know that you are a great chieftain,' said Mord, 'but of your brother I know nothing.' 'He is a better man than I,' replied Hoskuld" (ch. 2). The topic of discussion is Hrut, Hoskuld's brother, who wishes to marry Unn, Mord Fiddle's daughter. In two short sentences the author characterizes both Hoskuld, through Mord, as a great chieftain, and Hrut, through Hoskuld's statement, as a man of even greater consequence. In a similar technique, Njal is evaluated in the conversation between Skarp-Hedin and Hogni: "'Would you have believed this if others had told you of it?' asked Skarp-Hedin. 'I would have believed it if Njal had told me,' replied Hogni, 'for Njal has never been known to lie'" (ch. 78). A negative evaluation by admission of guilt through a proxy is shown in the following confrontation:
"Hoskuld said to Njal, 'I am here to plead for Lyting, my aunt's husband. He has done you grave injury, broken the settlement, and killed your son'" (ch. 99). That persuasive factors are at work here can be seen from the fact that Lyting himself does not view the situation from quite the same perspective: "...Lyting said, 'Everyone knows that I received no compensation for the death of my brother-in-law Thrain. I shall never be content until he is avenged'" (ch. 98). The fact that even negatively portrayed characters may sometimes serve as narrator substitutes is shown in Hallgerd's statement concerning the brothers Glum and Thorarin: "'I know that you brothers are men of great distinction,' said Hallgerd. 'I know too that this would be a much better marriage for me than my previous one" (ch. 13). The pages of the saga abound with this type of indirect evaluation, and it can be said that of all descriptive devices used by the author, he avails himself most often of the proxy statement for characterization.

Another form of indirect evaluation is achieved by recording a character's reputation. This may be done through the narrator himself, or through his substitute. Substitute statements are perhaps not quite as effective as persuasive devices, because they carry a connotation of hearsay within them, lacking the authority and credibility of direct author support. The difference between the two methods can readily be seen by a comparison: Gunnhild's
remark that "...Hrut is said to be a shrewd and able man!" (ch. 3), and Hall's admonition to Flosi that "'If you carry out your duties manfully, you will be accounted a good man even though you stumbled into this disaster!'" (ch. 147), are readily accepted by the reader as probably factual; but when the narrator states that "Gunnar earned great credit from the outcome of the case" (ch. 24), or that Flosi "was so well liked by his followers that he could get any goods from them on loan or as a gift" (ch. 149), the effect is that of an absolute, peremptory statement, barring any doubt on the part of the reader concerning its veracity.

An imaginative game is played with this technique by the author in the episode involving Hawker-Hedin and Hrut. The entire plot, as staged by Njal and Gunnar, is based on the reputation of a fictitious character, the peddler Hedin, whose fame as an ill-mannered and quick-tempered scoundrel is cleverly manufactured by Njal and acted out by Gunnar and his companions. It is interesting to note the manner in which Njal achieves Hawker-Hedin's ill repute, because it is essentially a model of the author's own method of character portrayal in the saga. In this little episode, which is strongly reminiscent of the Shakespearean "play-within-the-play" and the revival of this technique, for example, in Tieck's comedy Der gestiefelte Kater, Njal, as the author-narrator, instructs Gunnar on how
to proceed:

'Set off early tomorrow morning, and as soon as you have crossed west over Hvit River, pull your hat well down over your eyes. People will ask who this tall man might be; your companions are to say [proxy statement, indirect evaluation] that it is Hawker-Hedin the Mighty, from Eyafjord, with handiwork for sale; that he is bad-tempered and loud-mouthed and thinks that he alone knows everything; and that he is apt to cancel a sale and assault people if anything is not done exactly as he wants it [end of proxy evaluation].

'Ride west to Borgarfjord, offering your wares for sale everywhere but cancelling the deals often enough to let the story spread that Hawker-Hedin is an extremely unpleasant person to have any dealings with, and that his reputation is in no way exaggerated [narrator testimony of Hedin's reputation].

'...go to the farm closest to Hrutstead. Offer your wares for sale there, showing all the worst articles and trying to disguise their defects [narrator statement, direct evaluation].

'The farmer will examine them closely and will notice the faults; then you snatch them away from him and start abusing him [evaluation by portrayal of character reaction—indirect—discussed below]. He will say that it is little wonder that you are so rude to everyone else [proxy statement]; at that you must fly at him [character reaction], even though you are not accustomed to assaulting people, but control your strength in case you are recognized or arouse suspicion.' (ch. 22)

The italicized words represent a regression by Njal into saga "reality." He is now no longer narrator of the story within the story, but returns briefly to his original role of character within the saga, and his remark, directed at Gunnar, is therefore a nicely disguised evaluative statement by Njal as the narrator substitute. Njal then continues to act as narrator of the interposed story, using a number of other literary devices (e.g., taunting, self-
evaluation, etc.) which will be discussed later. The entire narration, of course, falls into the framework of préfiguration, because the actual confrontation of Gunnar/Hedin and Hrut is described shortly after the quoted passage as having "followed closely the lines that Njal had predicted" (ch. 23). The real art of the saga becomes apparent when we realize that the complexities of its construction are so skillfully hidden as to convey an appearance of simplicity and uniformity of style to the casual observer.

A third method used frequently for indirect character evaluation is that of portraying a given person's reaction to a stimulus (e.g., danger, aggression, etc.) in such a way as to entice the reader to make value judgments concerning that character's temperament. Ideally, reaction evaluation comes very close to what Andersson terms "pure narrative," inasmuch as there is little persuasive interference from the author aside from the fact that he chooses the stage-settings and perspective in the first place. To illustrate the potency of certain key words in this type of construction, the following sentence is taken from a passage in chapter 79: "Then Starkad saw Skarp-Hedin, and, in terror, tried to turn back." Stated thus, the implication that Skarp-Hedin must indeed have presented an impressive and fearsome sight is quite clear. If, however, the italicized words are omitted, the sentence becomes ambiguous;
Skarp-Hedin loses his ferocity, Starkad his cowardliness, and the situation its pungency. Similarly, in the sentence "Hoskuld defended himself so briskly that for a long time they could not bring him down" (ch. 98), Hoskuld's prowess and agility are expressed with more poignancy by the use of the adverb "briskly" than by the statement that they fought a long time before they killed him. Such words and phrases are special "coloring agents," which afford the reader a great deal of insight with strict verbal economy. Much more frequently, however, reaction evaluation necessitates a more explicit approach. A good example is the seemingly impartial narrator statement, following the announcement of Gunnar's suit for Unn's dowry: "Hrut and Hoskuld had intended to use force against him, but they mistrusted their strength" (ch. 24). It is important to note that the narrator does not say Hrut and Hoskuld were not strong enough to defy Gunnar. Such a remark would not only violate one of the most important principles of characterization—that the hero must have a formidable opponent—but it would involve a directly stated narrator opinion. By remaining seemingly objective, the author places the burden of evaluation on the brothers, whose reaction with self-doubt in the face of Gunnar's challenge enhances the hero's stature.

Still another incident involving the brothers shows their differences in temperament by the way in which they
react to an aggressive act (ridicule). "Hoskuld was furious," the narrator states bluntly (ch. 8), "and hit the boy who was calling himself Mord with a stick. It struck him on the face and drew blood." Hrut, on the other hand, called the boy to himself and gave him a gold ring, asking him not to taunt people. Possibly the influence of Christian teachings may be seen in this passage; but it contains evidence also of a stylistic peculiarity frequently used by Njal's author: that of contrast.45

The contrasting personalities of the brothers are underscored by parallelism, which functions as the expository device: "Hoskuld...hit the boy...with a stick"—"Hrut drew a gold ring from his finger and gave it to him";

"'Get outside,' said Hoskuld, 'and don't try to ridicule us'"—"'Go away now,' [Hrut] said, 'and never provoke anyone again'" (ch. 8). These lines are followed by a proxy evaluation ("The boy went away, saying, 'I shall always remember your noble-mindedness'"), and closed by a narrator statement concerning the reputation this exchange earned for Hrut ("Hrut was highly praised for this"). Thus, analysis of relatively short paragraphs such as this one, containing in less than ten lines a handful of intricate stylistic devices, tends to expose the frequently cited simplicity of saga style as a scholarly misconception.

Another extremely effective device of evaluation is the technique of letting the character himself express an
opinion about his own personality. It is comparable in credibility to that of a narrator statement, and may be expressed in direct or indirect speech. A direct self-evaluative exclamation is seldom found before the character in question has been given a thorough character examination by other methods. When it does occur, it simply serves to strengthen the reader's opinion, either through the character's admission of guilt or his acknowledgement of ethical and moral values. Hrapp, for instance, has been described as a killer, a cheat, and a man of ill luck before he states of himself and Tofi: "...I know that we are both scoundrels," because you would not be burying yourself away here unless you were on the run from somebody yourself" (ch. 87). The reasoned statement in the dependent clause tends to underscore the plausibility of his observation. Less skillfully executed is Lyting's admission of guilt, because he has previously justified his position with conviction. Therefore his acknowledgement that he "committed a grave crime" ("hafda illa til gort") sounds artificial, insincere, and out of character: "'I have already paid in full for killing your father,' said Lyting, 'and your grandfather and uncles received the money, while nothing was paid for my own brothers. Certainly, I committed a grave crime, but I had to pay dearly for it'" (ch. 106).
Many self-evaluative statements are of a positive nature, of course. In the confrontation between the sons of Njal and Lyting and his brothers, a discussion arises as to who should deal with Lyting: "'He is the bigger catch,' said Skarp-Hedin, 'and I would be annoyed if he escaped. I have more trust in myself to prevent him from getting away'" (ch. 99). Similarly, Flosi's answer to Hildigunn shows that he is aware of his merits as an individual: "'I am neither king nor earl,' he said, 'and there is no need to make me a high-seat. There is no need to mock me, either'" (ch. 116). In a confrontation with Thorkel Braggart, Skarp-Hedin seems to want to surpass Thorkel's boastfulness: "'This is the axe I carried when I leapt twelve ells over Markar River and killed Thrain Sigfusson while eight men stood by and could not lay a hand on me. And I have never raised weapon against anyone and missed my mark'" (ch. 120). Two factors prevent the reader from assessing Skarp-Hedin's little speech negatively as a gross exaggeration: the fact that the incident was described previously by the narrator in great detail, thus verifying Skarp-Hedin's account, and, secondly, Thorkel's reaction, which shows that even the braggart believes the story to be true: "Thorkel sheathed his sword and sat down promptly. It was the only time in his life that such a thing happened."
Self-evaluative statements in indirect speech are not frequent in the saga, and when they occur, they portray the character negatively. Only the following three examples were found in Njal's Saga: Thorhall Asgrimsson, after a psychosomatically conditioned fainting spell, "got up and said that he had not behaved like a man" (ch. 132); Eyjolf, in his legal battle with Thorhall, "admitted that he had not the knowledge to be sure" (ch. 142); and Thrain Sigfusson, when asked to make a settlement with the Njalssons, "was curt in his replies, and said that he thought himself a match for the Njalssons anywhere" (ch. 92). Although Thrain's statement is positive per se, it is reduced to boastfulness in the reader's view when it is immediately corrected by Runolf, who claims that "no one is a match for the Njalssons now that Gunnar of Hlidarend is dead!" (ch. 92).

A third group of descriptive devices involves the author's use of both direct and indirect (complex) forms of characterization. The magnification of heroes falls into this category. Because magnification is one of the prerogatives of the main characters, elements of it pervade already their introduction. Descriptions involving feats of physical prowess, swordsmanship, and special skills, such as Gunnar possesses in an extraordinary degree, fall into this classification. Even independent of the intro-
duction, magnification is a fairly common method of characterization in the saga, and is found most frequently in the context of combat situations such as the following: Gunnar, on his way to Tongue with two companions, is being waylaid by his enemies. "'How many men do we need for an ambush?' asked Starkad. 'Lesser men are as nothing to Gunnar,' replied Sigurd. 'It would not be safe to have fewer than thirty'" (ch. 61). The author then continues to dwell on the superiority in manpower which is needed to fell Gunnar. As the episode progresses, Thorir states: "'You're surely needing a great deal of help, when such a host of men is to fight against three.'" But when the attack is actually carried out, even the superior force is not sufficient against Gunnar: "'Let us run,' said Starkad. 'These are not men we are fighting'" (ch. 63).

A man's wisdom, intelligence, or skill as a lawyer may also serve for the purpose of magnification. Thus it is said of Thorhall Asgrimsson, that "Njal taught him law so well that he later became the greatest lawyer in Iceland" (ch. 27). Njal himself "was so skilled in law that no one was considered his equal. He was a wise and prescient man....he remembered the past and discerned the future, and solved the problems of any man who came to him for help" (ch. 20). After Gunnar's and Njal's death, Kari inherits the saga heroes' renown. Flosi states, in
Closely related to magnification as a descriptive device is eulogy, but it is of necessity far less common than magnification—although the hero may fight many battles, even he can die only once. Perhaps the best example of eulogy, for illustration purposes, is contained in the description of Gunnar's last stand and the aftermath of that episode:

Gunnar defended himself with great courage, and wounded eight more so severely that many of them barely lived. He kept on fighting until exhaustion brought him down. His enemies then dealt him many terrible wounds, but even then he got away from them and held them at bay for a long time. But in the end they killed him.
This is what Thorkel Elfara-Poet said about his defence:

'We have heard from the south
How Gunnar, warrior of many seas,
Passionate in battle,
Wielded his mighty halberd.
Waves of foemen broke
On the cliffs of his defence;
He wounded sixteen men
And killed two others.'

Gizur the White said, 'We have felled a great champion, and we have not found it easy. His last defence will be remembered for as long as this land is lived in.' (ch. 77)

Less grandiose eulogistical descriptions may also be found for relatively minor sympathetic characters. Thus it is said after Skarp-Hedin's death: "They all agreed that they found it less uncomfortable to see Skarp-Hedin dead than they had expected; for no one felt any fear of him" (ch. 132).
This statement simply underscores, for the last time, the conclusion which the reader has already reached: that Skarp-Hedin was a great warrior.\textsuperscript{47}

Much less fustian than magnification and much more ingenious in their subtlety than eulogy are two descriptive methods which exploit the relationship of a character with his friends and opponents. The first of these, that of \textit{association}, invites the reader to draw conclusions pertaining to the character's personality from an account of his personal alliances: with whom he associates, whom he supports in conflicts, to whom he is related, whose characteristics he has inherited, etc.

A good example of progressive character delineation using this method is found in the figure of Hallgerd. Care is taken to establish the genealogy and virtues of Hallgerd's father and uncle before she herself is introduced for the first time.\textsuperscript{48} It is Hallgerd's uncle, Hrut, previously described as a man who is "always reliable in matters of importance" (ch. 1), who furnishes the reader with the initial important clue in regard to Hallgerd's character: "I cannot imagine how thief's eyes have come into our kin" (ch. 1). This statement alone suffices to classify her as an outsider in regard to dominant paternal family characteristics. Next, the author implicates Hallgerd by relating, in direct evaluative form, the
personality traits of people with whom she associates frequently, and with whom she has formed close interpersonal relationships: "She had a foster-father called Thjostolf, a Hebridean by descent. He was strong and skilled in arms; he had killed many men and paid compensation for none of them. It was said that he did little to temper Hallgerd's character" (ch. 9). After establishing the fact that she had inherited excessive pride from her father's kin ("'Pride,' said Hallgerd, 'is a thing you and your kinsmen have in plenty, so it's not surprising if I have some, too'"—ch. 10), the author incriminates her further by examining her maternal relatives: "There was a man called Svan, who lived on a farm called Svanhill in Bjarnarfjord, to the north of Steingrimsfjord. Svan was extremely skilled in witchcraft; he was Hallgerd's maternal uncle, and a very unpleasant person to have any dealings with. Hallgerd invited him to her wedding and sent Thjostolf up north for him; the two men took to each other at once" (ch. 10). Because each of the characters described implicates the others, economy is one of the chief virtues inherent in associative narration. The idea that kindred spirits are drawn to each other is firmly implanted in the reader's mind. Thus, when the narrator shows Thrain Sigfusson keeping company with undesirable characters, he need not explain at great length that trouble lies ahead:
"He [Thrain] was usually accompanied also by Gunnar Lambason and Lambi Sigurdarson and Grani Gunnarsson of Hlidarend; but his closest companion was Killer-Hrapp....It was Killer-Hrapp and Grani Gunnarsson who were the most vicious in their abuse of the Njalssons, and it was chiefly due to them that no offer of compensation was made" (ch. 91). At this point both his enmity towards the Njalssons and his friendship with the villains place Thrain into an unfavorable perspective. Similarly, when the narrator states that Thorgeir Starkadarson, Gunnar's enemy, exchanges "pledges of warmest friendship" with Thorgeir Otkelsson, that "the two Thorgeirs often met, and became intimate friends" (ch. 68), it is quite obvious to the reader that the "honest and straight-forward but rather easily led" (ch. 67) Thorgeir Otkelsson is heading for trouble.

Likewise, when favorably portrayed characters form friendships, they generally do so with persons of equally good repute. Of the many instances which could be cited, the friendship between Gunnar and Njal, and that between Skarp-Hedin and Kari shall suffice as examples.

The last method which shall be discussed here as a descriptive device is that of an indirect type of character evaluation, in which the stature and reputation of an adversary reflects back on the fame of the hero. It is an unspoken rule in saga combat situations that the protagonist be confronted with an antagonist of formidable
proportions, because only the defeat of a worthy opponent can enhance the stature of the principal character. Thus, in a confrontation between Njal's sons and Sigmund Lambason and his friend Skjold, Skarp-Hedin divides the responsibility in the following manner: "I am going to tackle Sigmund myself—he is man's work. Grim and Helgi, you deal with Skjold" (ch. 45). By underscoring Sigmund's proficiency as a warrior, and granting Skarp-Hedin the honor of fighting in single combat, the narrator skillfully detracts the reader's attention from the fact that the Njalssons outnumber their opponents three to two; yet the audience retains the impression that the Njalssons are engaging in a fair fight. The narrator's statement that "Skarp-Hedin waited while Sigmund armed himself" contributes further to the establishment of the Njalssons' integrity. When this episode is compared with a very similar situation which occurred earlier, the author's skill in manipulating perspective becomes obvious. The same villains, Sigmund and Skjold, are preparing to ambush Thord Freedmansson, Skarp-Hedin's foster-father, when the following conversation ensues: "Sigmund said to him, 'Give yourself up, for now it is time for you to die.' 'Certainly not,' said Thord. 'Come and fight me in single combat.' 'Certainly not,' said Sigmund. 'We shall make full use of our advantage in numbers'" (ch. 42). Here the superiority in numbers is emphasized in order to show Sigmund in the worst possible
light.

Confrontations between the characters for descriptive purposes are not confined to physical battle situations. They may occur between female antagonists, as in the quarrel between Hallgerd and Bergthora with its bloody consequences; or in legal combat, as in the test of skill between Thorhall Asgrimsson and Eyjolf Bolverksson; but the confrontation always derives its excitement, the protagonist always his glory from the fact that the antagonists are very evenly matched in skill, and that victory can be won only through outstanding achievements. The author then carefully tilts the scale in favor of the protagonist by lacing the narration with favorable direct or indirect evaluative statements. For example, he has Asgrim say to Mord that "'Njal once said that he had taught Thorhall law so well that he would prove to be the best lawyer in Iceland if it ever came to the test'" (ch. 142), or he has Skapti, the law-speaker, evaluate Thorhall's defense by stating that "'there are more great lawyers alive today than I thought....I can tell you that this is so precisely correct that not a single objection can be raised against it. But I had thought that I was the only person who knew this specialty of the law now that Njal is dead, for to the best of my knowledge he was the only other man who knew it'" (ch. 142).
Furthermore, this type of comparative evaluation contains elements of a stylistic device—that of contrast or polarity—which shall be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter; but from the preceding observations it should have become clear that the intrinsic persuasive effectiveness of descriptive elements lies not so much in any unique suggestive powers, but is the result of repetitive and cumulative action and interaction which conditions the reader's mind while observing an appearance of objectivity.
CHAPTER THREE

STYLISTIC ELEMENTS

In the preceding chapter various forms were discussed which the author employs for the purpose of characterization. The primary aim of these forms, although executed through literary devices such as direct and indirect speech, etc., was shown to be one of persuasive, descriptive character delineation.

The following examination shall reveal the stylistic devices through which the author achieves an amplification and intensification of his persuasive technique, that is, the characteristic stylistic elements of saga construction which influence the reader's perspective.

One of these elements is polarity. By employing contrast as an expository device the author focuses attention on certain positive or negative personality traits of his characters, but the method of comparison varies considerably from example to example. A fairly overt form of the polarity principle is exhibited in Gunnar's self-evaluative statement to Sigmund Lambason: "You and I are not alike; you have a malicious and mocking tongue, but that is not my way. That is why you and Hallgerd get on so well, for you are more alike by nature" (ch. 44). In this passage the author achieves not only a divorce of Gunnar's personality from Sigmund's, but from that of Hallgerd as well, who is implicated through the negative
association with Sigmund. A similar contrastive self-evaluation by Skapti follows Gizur's accusation, also in comparative form, which attempts to incriminate the law-speaker: "'You are not the man your father was,' he [Gizur] said, 'even though your father was not considered perfect. But at least he never failed people when they most needed his help.' 'You and I have little in common,' said Skapti" (ch. 139), and he amplifies his reply with the remark that Gizur took part in the killing of Gunnar of Hlidarend. The parallelism in the rebuttal is obvious, particularly in Skapti's insinuation that Gizur failed Gunnar at a time when he most needed help. In this instance the polarity principle is used to underscore negative qualities in both parties to the verbal exchange, thus justifying the refusal of the law-speaker, a highly respected and influential personage, to support Kari's and Gizur's equitable cause.

The contrast feature may be used to characterize two single individuals, two families, or the ethical values of two opposing factions within a group. Of the three categories, examples are most readily found for the first type. A direct narrator statement, for instance, compares Gunnar's sons: "Hogni and Grani were fully grown by this time. They were men of very different natures; Grani took after his mother, but Hogni was a fine person" (ch. 75). The contrastive evidence is very subtly and persuasively stated. The author never clearly says that Grani was an
evil person, but implies through the technique of association that he inherited his mother Hallgerd's undesirable characteristics. As soon as the reader has reached this conclusion, the author affirms it by noting that Hogni, on the other hand, took after his father and became a "fine person." A subsequent statement from Gunnar reaffirms this impression: "'I have only one request—that you look after my son Hogni. I do not say anything about Grani, for he does many things that are not to my liking'" (ch. 75).

Immediately after the introduction of Otkel Skarfsson, the author contrasts Otkel's and Gunnar's personalities by relating their behavior during a time of famine: "Gunnar shared out his own stocks with many people, and turned no one away empty-handed while they lasted, until he himself ran short of both hay and food. Then he asked Kolskegg to accompany him on a journey; together with Thrain Sigfusson and Lambi Sigurdarson they went to Kirkby and asked Otkel to come out. Otkel greeted them; Gunnar responded well to the greeting and said, 'The fact is that I have come to buy hay and food, if you have any.' 'I have both,' said Otkel, 'but I will sell you neither'" (ch. 47). This episode touches off the conflict in which Hrut's prognostication of Hallgerd's thievishness finds verification. From a critical standpoint, a proxy statement by Hallbjorn towards the end of the incident is significant. After Otkel has refused Gunnar's offer of compensation, and Gunnar has
returned home, Hallbjorn says "'What a sorry contrast in
men'" (ch. 49). This line reveals clearly that the author
is consciously employing polarity as a means of characteriza-
tion, that far from being a blindly imitated or coincidental
concoction, the episode is carefully constructed to reveal,
with the aid of a literary functor, the personality of
the two characters in a predetermined perspective.

The two women who figure most prominently in Gunnar's
life, his wife Hallgerd and his mother Rannveig, are also
presented in contrastive fashion. When Gunnar arrives home
after a successful battle with the two Thorgeirs, Hallgerd
basks in Gunnar's glory, but Rannveig senses imminent doom:
"They [Kolskegg and Gunnar] rode home and told what had
happened. Hallgerd was delighted at the news and was full
of praise. But Rannveig said, 'It may be a good feat; but
it gave me the unpleasant feeling that no good will come
of it'" (ch. 72). Similarly, when Gunnar breaks the
settlement and refuses to go abroad, Hallgerd "was delighted
at Gunnar's return, but his mother had little to say"
(ch. 75). The two women are confronted again when Hallgerd
refuses to aid her husband by contributing two strands of
her long hair to mend Gunnar's bowstring: "'You are an evil
woman,'" says Rannveig, "'and your shame will long be
remembered'" (ch. 77). After Gunnar's death Hallgerd and
Rannveig no longer have the common bond which prevented
an open outbreak of hostilities: "Rannveig treated Hallgerd so roughly that she came near to killing her; she accused her of being responsible for Gunnar's death. Hallgerd fled to Grjotriver, taking her son, Grani, with her" (ch. 78).\textsuperscript{52}

One of the briefest and purest\textsuperscript{53} examples of polarity occurs in chapter 102. It illustrates the contrastive feature as applied to the characterization of family groups, and is placed in context with the conversion of Iceland to Christianity: "...Njal and all his household took the new faith. Mord and his father Valgard opposed the new faith strongly."\textsuperscript{54} Even if the saga hero, Njal, had not previously stated that in his opinion the new faith was preferable to heathendom (ch. 100), and even if the Valgardssons had not earlier been characterized in detrimental terms, the reader would find little difficulty in concluding that the two families were diametrically opposed in moral and ideological terms.

Another example of polarity or contrast involving two families is woven into the household feud between Hallgerd and Bergthora, which escalates into a series of revenge killings.\textsuperscript{55} During the course of the conflict, Bergthora hires a man named Atli, who is characterized largely through self-evaluative statements such as "'I am a ploughman\textsuperscript{56}... and I can do many other things. But I won't try to conceal
the fact that I am a quicktempered man, and there are many who have felt the weight of my blows" (ch. 36). Then follows the narrator's statement that "Skarp-Hedin liked Atli" (ch. 36), which establishes a favorable characterization of Atli through the technique of association. After the killing of Kol, a further strengthening of ties between Atli and the household of Njal takes place: "'I would rather die as your servant than change my master,' said Atli. 'But I want to ask you as a favour, if I am killed, not to accept slave-payment for me.' 'You shall have a freeman's compensation,' said Njal, 'and Bergthora will promise—and no doubt provide—blood-revenge for you as well.' So Atli was made a member of the household" (ch. 38).

The figure with whom Atli is contrasted is Brynjolf, whose task it is to kill Atli. Brynjolf's depiction is terse and unflattering: "Hallgerd, for her part, sent west to Bjarnarfjord for her kinsman Brynjolf the Unruly, a scoundrel of a man. This was done without Gunnar's knowledge" (ch. 38). Brynjolf is characterized unfavorably not only through his kinship with Hallgerd (an element of negative association), but also by the direct narrator statement that he was "a scoundrel of a man." In this instance the parallel factor of association which is inherent in the descriptions of both Atli and Brynjolf establishes the contrastive situation. The question which remains to be clarified is: why does Atli, who also refers
to himself as a scoundrel, appear to the reader in a much more favorable light than Brynjolf?

Order of presentation, much more than descriptive technique, acts as the consequential factor in this instance. Atli is introduced into the Njal household in a carefully calculated manner: he wins first Bergthora's approval, then Skarp-Hedin's, and finally that of Njal himself. This order is significant, because these three characters comprise the most important members in the Njal family, and each endorsement by a higher-ranking individual entails a greater manifestation of the esteem in which the family holds Atli. This gradual rise from unemployed farmhand to accepted member of the family is contrasted with Brynjolf's arrival at Hlidarend "without Gunnar's knowledge." Hallgerd's clandestine invitation strongly suggests that Brynjolf's presence at the farm was neither expected by Gunnar, nor would he have welcomed it; and this negative relationship of Hallgerd's kinsman with the saga hero is not offset by positive elements in Brynjolf's character.

The technique of contrasting factions within a group to illuminate diverging standards of conduct is illustrated in the episode in which Grim and Helgi, Njal's sons, are confronted by greedy and blood-thirsty Vikings while they are aboard a merchant vessel. Grjotgard and Snækolf, the Viking captains, offer the merchant leaders, Bard and Olaf, the choice of relinquishing their goods or of being
attacked. At this point Helgi interrupts the negotiations: "Helgi replied, 'The merchants choose to defend themselves.' 'Damn your tongue,' said the merchants to Helgi. 'What kind of defence can we put up? Life is worth more than money.' Then Grim started shouting at the Vikings, to prevent them hearing the angry protests of the merchants. And Bard and Olaf said, 'Don't you realize that the Icelanders will ridicule you for your behaviour? Take your weapons and defend yourselves instead.' So they all took their weapons and pledged themselves not to surrender while they still had strength to fight" (ch. 83).

The polar elements in this situation are Njal's sons and the merchants. Grim and Helgi's determination not to surrender to the Vikings what is not rightfully theirs, even in the face of overwhelming odds, is calculated to illuminate the Njalsson's fearlessness, bravery, and sense of honor. The merchants, by contrast, are characterized as being of a more practical spirit—that is, they place a greater value on life than on fame—in violation of heroic idealism. Although this factor is not forcefully stressed, it is a recurring one in the characterization of merchants, hawkers, peddlers, etc., and as such reveals a certain class-consciousness, if not intellectual snobbishness, on the author's part. Because adherence to the Icelandic concept of honor functions as a descriptive agent for the purpose of characterization, and is influential
in establishing the desired reader perspective, it also contains an element of didacticism, and shall be discussed in the following chapter.

A second stylistic element in the saga is repetition. Repetition may be used to unify and intensify the subject matter or its episodes. It may also condition an audience to produce an automatic response in the manner in which a frequently repeated signal or catch-phrase tends to circumvent reflective thought by dulling the reader's attention. If a word or phrase is repeated within a relatively short time-span, and if it is of sufficient distinction to be recognized by the reader as a deliberate repetition, then such a key phrase acts as a unifying factor. The reader, in other words, notes the regular occurrence of the phrase in the past and anticipates its repetition in the future, thus recognizing a pattern for the structure of the episode. The phrase thereby attains the function of a leitmotiv.

One of Skarp-Hedin's characteristic features, his peculiar habit of grinning at the most inopportune times, possesses this quality of structural unification in the portrayal of his personality. It is, so to speak, his trademark, which makes him one of the most coherently depicted and memorable characters of the saga. Already at his introduction the author notes his facial features with
particular care: "He had curly chestnut hair and handsome eyes. His face was very pale and his features sharp. He had a crooked nose and prominent teeth, which made him ugly round the mouth" (ch. 25).

After having drawn the reader's attention to Skarp-Hedin's prominent teeth and ugly mouth, the author exploits this feature by repeatedly mentioning his grin. During the episode of the bloody feud between Hallgerd and Bergthora, Njal produces a purse of money while at the Althing with his sons. The author then continues: "What money is that, father?" asked Skarp-Hedin. 'This is the money that Gunnar paid me last summer for our servant,' said Njal. 'That will come in handy,' said Skarp-Hedin, and grinned" (ch. 36). His insinuative remark and grin leave the audience in no doubt that the money will soon have to be spent again in compensation for a retaliatory slaying—for the vendetta killings themselves are formally repetitive, and the reader is already accustomed to their sequential occurrence.

As soon as the slaying is accomplished, news of it is sent to the Njalssons at the Althing: "Skarp-Hedin said, 'Slaves are getting much more enterprising than they used to be. Once they merely brawled, and no one bothered about that, but now they insist on killing each other.' And he grinned" (ch. 37). The smile is sarcastic and insolent, and hardly compatible with the increasing gravity of the situation. Actually, his grin is intended to mask emotional
upheaval, as is shown in the next example. When it becomes known at Bergthorsknoll that Hallgerd has nicknamed Njal "Old Beardless" ("karl inn skegglausí") and Njal's sons "Little Dung-Beards" ("túlskegglinga"), Bergthora's sense of honor has been violently offended: "...Gunnar flew into a rage on your behalf," said Bergthora, 'and Gunnar is considered even-tempered. If you don't take vengeance for this, you will never avenge any insult.' 'Our old mother is enjoying herself,' said Skarp-Hedin, and grinned; but the sweat broke out on his forehead, and two red spots flared in his cheeks, which had seldom happened before" (ch. 44). Clearly, the author betrays a keen gift of observation when he notes such outward manifestations of psychological and emotional stress in this and similar contexts (e.g., Thorhall Asgrimsson's psychosomatic reaction to the news of Njal's death, ch. 132).64

Repetition for the purpose of intensifying or dramatizing a given situation is evident in the preparatory action for the ill-starred lawsuit which arises between Flosi and the Njalssons over the slaying of Hoskuld Hvitaness-Priest. Chapters 119 and 120 are devoted to the account of an attempt by the Njalssons and their friends to rally the influential chieftains to their support:

...Asgrim jumped to his feet and said to the Njalssons, 'Let us go and find ourselves some friends, lest we are outnumbered in court; for this case will be a hard-fought one.'
Asgrim went out, followed by Helgi Njalsson, then Kari Solmundarson, then Grim Njalsson, then Skarp-Hedin, then Thorhall Asgrimsson, then Thorgrim the Mighty, and then Thorleif Crow. They went to the booth of Gizur the White and walked inside. Gizur stood up to welcome them and invited them to sit and drink. (ch. 119)

At this point the reader is not yet aware of the importance of Skarp-Hedin's position in the line, and Gizur's invitation to "sit and drink," too, is merely preparatory. Soon, however, the situation is repeated at Skapti's booth ("Skapti was sitting on the dais and welcomed Asgrim, who returned the greeting. Skapti invited him to sit beside him"—ch. 119), and the reason for the detailed description of the line-up becomes apparent: "'Who is that man,' asked Skapti, 'the fifth in the line, that tall, fierce-looking, troll-like man with the pale, ill-starred look?' 'Skarp-Hedin is my name,' he replied" (ch. 119). A third repeated element—-that of Skarp-Hedin as an ill-starred ("gæfu-samliðr") character—has now been entered in the action, and the scene is set for a sequential repetition of the theme. After Skapti's refusal of help, Asgrim walks to Snorri's booth: "Snorri welcomed him cordially and invited him to sit [first repeated element]....Then Snorri said, 'Who is that man, fifth in line [second repeated element], the pale, sharp-featured man with a grin on his face and an axe on his shoulder?' 'My name is Hedin,' he replied, but some call me Skarp-Hedin in full. Have you anything else to
say to me?' 'I think you look very ruthless and formidable,' said Snorri, 'but my guess is that you have exhausted your store of good luck, and that you have not long to live.'" (third element—ch. 119). Snorri has added a fourth element, that of the prefiguration of Skarp-Hedin's imminent death, which serves to further heighten the tension. After Snorri's refusal to aid the Njalssons, the sequence continues at the fourth booth:

4th booth (Haf the Wealthy): "Haf welcomed him and invited him to sit (1)....Haf replied that he wanted no part of their troubles--'but I would like to know who that pale-faced man is, fifth in the line (2), who looks evil enough to have come straight out of some sea-cliff?'" (ch. 119)

5th booth (Gudmund the Powerful): "Gudmund welcomed him and invited him to sit (1)....'There is one man in your group that I have been looking at for some time,' said Gudmund. 'He seems to me unlike most other men I have ever seen.' 'Which one is that?' asked Asgrim. 'He is fifth in the line' (2), said Gudmund, '...But he looks a man of ill luck'" (3). Ch. 119

6th booth (Thorkel Braggart): "Thorkel was sitting in the centre of the dais....Asgrim greeted him and Thorkel returned the greeting....Thorkel went on, 'Who is that big baleful man, fifth in the line (2), the one with the pale, sharp, ill-starred (3), evil look?' 'I am called Skarp-Hedin,' he replied" (ch. 120).

Just prior to the Njalssons' confrontation with Thorkel, the author exposes the chieftains' persistent inquiries about the fifth man in line as rhetorical questions with the interpolation of a direct evaluative statement concerning Skarp-Hedin, which ends thus: "He looked every inch a warrior,
and everyone knew him at first sight. He kept exactly to his position in the line" (ch. 120). The reader's conclusion must be, therefore, not that the chieftains failed to recognize Skarp-Hedin, but that Njal's son had changed markedly; he had now the ill-starred look of a doomed man. It is this turning point in the heretofore successful warrior's life which the sequential treatment of the aid-seeking mission intends to elucidate. Concurrently with the emphasis on Skarp-Hedin's changing fate, the author achieves a quickening of the pace, through the increase of tension which is brought about by the repetition of the scene, toward the trial deadlock and, ultimately, the burning of Njal and his family at Bergthorsknoll.

A third literary device frequently applied in the saga is that of addition, or progressive delineation of a topic or character. In its topical form it serves to dramatize or escalate the action, as has already been seen in the feud between Hallgerd and Berghorda, whereby each successive killing results in the heightening of tension. The trial of Flosi and the Burners (chs. 141-145) also contains topical progression, inasmuch as Eyjolf's and Thorhall's legal skill is depicted in successively more cunning and clever interpretations of the law.

Progressive character delineation by addition is a device the author uses chiefly for the portrayal of minor
characters, whose introduction is generally kept to a minimum of descriptive elements. Instead of the inordinate allotment of space and detail which characterizes the introduction of heroes such as Gunnar, the author portrays his minor characters with admirable brevity. Frequently he inserts significant descriptive information as additional evidence of personality whenever a subsequent mention of the character permits him to do so. Thorgeir Otkelisson provides a good example of this technique. His introduction in chapter 47 is limited to less than a full sentence "He [Otkel Skarfsson] was prosperous, and had a son called Thorgeir, who was a promising young man" (ch. 47). Twenty chapters later the reader encounters him again: "Thorgeir grew to manhood tall and strong, honest and straightforward but rather easily led. He was well liked by people of most worth, and loved by all his kinsmen" (ch. 67).

A comparison between the two evaluative statements shows the addition of one element in the second phrase, that of Thorgeir's "tragic flaw": he was "easily led." The other statements about him are neither incongruous with his original introduction, nor particularly enlightening beyond the information already given. In the following chapter (68), the author acquaints his audience with Thorgeir's greatest mistake--his association with the villain Thorgeir Starkadarson: "The two Thorgeirs often met, and became intimate friends." Such a friendship, as has already been
noted in chapter two, leads almost unavoidably to a corruption of the favorably described character. In Thorgeir's case it leads to enmity with Gunnar, and death at his hands. Yet the final judgment over Thorgeir is passed in the narrator's statement that "news of these events spread far and wide, and Thorgeir's death was mourned by many" (ch. 73). In this final, laudatory phrase, Thorgeir receives absolution through favorable public opinion.

Hrapp, one of the saga's chief scoundrels, is characterized in quick succession as a killer (ch. 87—self-evaluative assertion), a cheat (ch. 87—proxy-statement), a seducer (ch. 87—public opinion), and a thief and arsonist (ch. 88—direct narrator statement). Finally the author insinuates that he and Hallgerd had a more than cordial relationship (ch. 88: "There were some who said that he and Hallgerd were very close, and that he slept with her; but others contradicted this"). Noteworthy in this instance is the variety of descriptive means which the author uses. It almost seems as if he wished to underscore the scoundrel's diversity of misdeeds by using for each new account of Hrapp's crimes a different narrative device for its presentation. The impression the reader receives from this type of narration is that Hrapp was universally recognized as a criminal of the vilest sort. Hardly a less positive associate could have been found to place Hallgerd into an unfavorable perspective.
Diametrically opposed to the technique of addition is a stylistic device based on the omission of evidence. It occurs most frequently when two or more characters are introduced, but it may occasionally appear in a different context also. In order to illustrate its effectiveness, the following passage from chapter 13 shall be contrasted with examples in which the author uses the device:

Three brothers now enter the saga—Thorarin, Ragi, and Glum, the sons of Olaf Hjalti. They were all men of great distinction and wealth. Thorarin was known as Thorarin Ragi's-Brother; he was an extremely intelligent man, and succeeded Hrafn Hængsson as Law-Speaker. Thorarin lived at Varmabrook, which he owned in common with Glum, who had spent many years trading abroad. Glum was tall and strong and very handsome. The third brother, Ragi, was a great warrior.

Lyting's brothers are introduced in a similar way in chapter 98: "Lyting had two brothers, Hallstein and Hallgrim. They were men of violence..." Although men of quite different personalities are described in the two passages, the technique of description is the same: all of the characters introduced receive some form of mention in the following sentences, usually in the customary manner of expository writing, with the topic sentence preceding explanatory narrative.

Occasionally, however, the author omits one of the characters from the ensuing discussion of their personality traits. In this fashion he establishes a contrastive situation which serves to differentiate the excluded character from the others, as for instance in chapter 57:
"A man called Starkad, the son of Bork Bluetooth-Beard, lived at Thrihyrning. His wife was called Hallbera. They had three sons, Thorgeir, Bork, and Thorkel, and a daughter, Hildigunn the Healer. The sons were all arrogant, brutal men, who had no respect for the rights of others." The fact that nothing further is said of Hildigunn in this chapter leads the reader to assume that she has little in common with her "brutal" and "arrogant" brothers; this assumption is soon confirmed by the author.

The original introduction of Gunnar's sons is also characterized by omission: "Gunnar and Hallgerd had two sons, Hogni and Grani. Hogni was a quiet, capable man, cautious and reliable" (ch. 59). No further mention is made of Grani in this context. Through the author's skillful manipulation the reader is prepared to accept a conclusion which is neither expressly stated nor logically deductible from the proffered evidence. The conditioning elements are contrast (Hogni vs. Grani), and repetition (only Hogni's person is mentioned again). The contrast feature induces the audience reaction that the brothers were different; when the author then states that Hogni had positive characteristics, the reader concludes, quite illogically but very predictably, that Grani's personality did not contain these favorable traits.

Other examples of omission tend to be governed by
The author, for instance, gives a very detailed but nevertheless incomplete account of the seating arrangement at Gunnar's wedding:

He himself [Gunnar] sat in the middle of one bench. Beside him on one side sat Thrain Sigfusson, then Ulf Aur-Priest, then Valgard the Grey, then Mord and Runolf, and then the other Sigfussons, with Lambi farthest from the door. On the other side of Gunnar sat Njal, then the four Njalssons, Skarp-Hedin, Helgi, Grim, and Hoskuld, then Haf the Wise, then Ingjald of Keldur, and then the three sons of Holta-Thorir, Njal's brother. Thorir himself insisted on sitting farthest out of all the honoured guests, for that made the others feel satisfied with their places. Hoskuld Dala-Kollsson sat in the middle of the other bench, with his sons on one side and Hrut on the other. The rest of the order of seating is not recorded."
(ch. 34)

In this case a continuation of the seating order would destroy the prefigurative function of the account by adding a superfluous and distracting list of names. The primary function of the arrangement is to show, in a vividly pictorial contrast, the two groups which are henceforth to engage in persistent hostilities: the Njalssons vs. that branch of Gunnar's kin which the author places on Gunnar's other side.68

Such prefiguration is a prominent feature of saga rhetoric, and one which is frequently used in conjunction with repetition. Actually, this method is inherently repetitive, for it always consists of at least two closely related elements: the prediction of an action, and the consummation of the prophecy. Its persuasive force is based largely on the fact that foreshadowed actions are
invariably carried to their predicted conclusion, and that the reader is therefore conditioned to accept the announced action with the same unquestioning belief as if he had been confronted with the actual occurrence. Prefiguration may therefore be used by the author as the catalyst in achieving a sudden change in a character's personality or appearance which would otherwise lack credibility. Thus, after a series of prefigurative statements have described Skarp-Hedin as an ill-starred character in the episode discussed earlier (pp. 54-57), the audience unquestioningly accepts his transformation from a successful, self-confident warrior into a doomed man. Similarly, Gunnar of Hlidarend, whose integrity the reader has never had occasion to doubt, suddenly becomes guilty of breaking his pledge in an incident described at greater length in the next chapter. Several prefigurative warnings by Njal, which foreshadow the pledge-breaking episode, condition the audience to accept a flaw of character in Gunnar for which a precedent has never been set, because Gunnar's action constitutes the consummation of the prophecy.

Since the intensification of the conflict through the repetitive element is not achieved through the reader's interest in whether or not the prediction will be verified, his attention is held by the anticipation of the time and context in which the foreshadowed action is to take place.
In this respect the author seldom tries his reader's patience very long. 70

In chapter ten, for instance, a twofold prediction is made concerning Hallgerd's impending marriage to Thorvald. Thjostolf, in an attempt to console Hallgerd, who is obviously displeased with her father's choice of Thorvald, says: "'Cheer up....This will not be your only marriage, and you can be sure that you will be consulted about it next time'"; and Hrut, Hallgerd's uncle, predicts that "'there will be no luck in this marriage, either for him or for her'" (ch. 10). Both of these predictions are fulfilled remarkably quickly. Thorvald is killed by Thjostolf (ch. 11), and Hallgerd wedded to Glum (ch. 14). The episode receives its cohesive bond from a repetition of Hrut's prediction through its confirmation by Hoskuld: "Hoskuld said, 'I can always rely on Hrut's predictions. He told me that this marriage-deal would bring terrible ill luck'" (ch. 12). From the standpoint of characterization, the ability to predict and foresee coming events is generally attributed only to those persons whom the author wishes to portray as men of wisdom and importance. In contrast to Gunnar, for example, whose renown is built chiefly on physical prowess and feats of strength and skill in battle, the second major hero of the saga, Njal (and, to a much lesser extent, Hrut),
is hailed primarily for his wisdom in the guidance of others and for his ability to foresee the future.

The contrast between Kari Solmundarson and his opponent Flosi Thordarson shows a similar divergence of personal attributes as that between Gunnar and his friend Njal. Flosi himself, after being told of Kari's escape from the flames at Bergthorsknoll, notes the similarity of Kari with Gunnar in a proxy-evaluation: "'What you have told us,' said Flosi, 'gives us little hope of being left in peace; for the man who has escaped is the one who comes nearest to being the equal of Gunnar of Hlidarend in everything'" (ch. 130). Flosi then continues with a prediction reminiscent of Njal's prophecies: "'You had better realize, you Sigfussons and all the rest of our men, that this Burning will have such consequences that many of us will lie lifeless and others will forfeit all their wealth.'"

This prediction is intensified in Flosi's ominous dream, in which a man named Iron-Grim appears and selects the doomed men from Flosi's followers by name:

He was shouting, calling to my men several at a time, summoning them by name. First he called Grim the Red and Arni Kolsson; then, strangely enough, he called Eyjolf Bolverksson and Ljot, Hall of Sida's son, and some half dozen others. He paused for a while; then he called five more of my followers, and among them were the Sigfussons, your brothers. Then he called another five men, including Lambi and Modolf and Glum. Then he called three more. Finally he called Gunnar Lambason and Kol Thorsteinsson. (ch. 133)
It is not necessary to trace the complicated web of battles and intrigues which follows to verify the outcome of the prediction; but the interchange of prefiguration and repetition which is evident in the account of Eyjolf's fate shall be noted, because it coalesces with, and aids, the intensification and escalation of the action.

The first indication of the fate which is to befall anyone undertaking Flosi's legal defense is given by Bjarni Brodd-Helgason: "'I can tell you this: it will mean death for the man who undertakes the defence of the Burners...'' (ch. 138). This prediction is quickly repeated by Snorri the Priest, who notices the gold bracelet which Eyjolf, the lawyer, has received from Flosi in return for his "friendship and help" (ch. 138). Snorri says: "'Was this bracelet bought, or was it given to you?...Eyjolf was embarrassed, and said nothing. 'It is obvious,' said Snorri, 'that you must have got it as a gift. I only hope that it does not cost you your life'" (ch. 138). Snorri's surmise is, predictably, confirmed shortly thereafter. Following the unsatisfactory outcome of the lawsuit against the Burners, Flosi and his men face the avengers of the Njalssons in pitched battle: "Flosi and his men retreated past the Vatnsfjord booth. Thorgeir Skorar-Geir said, 'There is Eyjolf Bolverksson now, Kari. Reward him for that bracelet.' Kari snatched a spear from someone and hurled it at Eyjolf. It struck him in the waist and went right through him; Eyjolf fell down dead at once" (ch. 145).
Prefiguration, it has been shown, acts as a unifying factor in the development of the plot, whereby its component parts of prediction and consummation span the intermittent material in coordinative fashion. It also, however, serves to some extent as a factor in characterization, and in plot intensification. With the other stylistic and descriptive techniques discussed in the present and preceding chapters, prefiguration has one feature in common: the chiefly covert nature of its persuasive function. The technique of the author's persuasiveness, in other words, is generally kept hidden from the reader so that the author infuses the narrative with a high degree of authenticity and credibility, while at the same time influencing the perspective of his audience.

The saga author, however, uses persuasion also in an overt manner. A number of characters in the saga, particularly those involved or knowledgeable in legal procedures, are characterized as masters of persuasion, and the means by which one character persuades or dissuades another sheds some light on contemporary values and ideals. The standards of behavior, as revealed through the actions and opinions of the saga's characters, and the extent to which the author advocates these standards in his work, shall be considered evidence of didacticism. To establish these didactic elements shall be the purpose of the following chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR
DIDACTIC ELEMENTS

The analysis of chapters two and three dealt with
the author's persuasive rhetoric as it is applied to
clear in certain stylistic
features. This chapter is concerned with the persuasive
influence exerted upon the reader through the manner in
which the actions of the characters are depicted. The
author of a work of fiction may freely choose a course of
action for his characters. At the same time he also
determines the perspective from which the audience views
this action. He has therefore the opportunity to present
certain behavior patterns of one character as more favorable
to his own views, more acceptable socially, or more sound
morally than those of a different character in his story.
If the author is successful in achieving a favorable reader
reaction to the behavior of the saga hero, a positive
standard of conduct has been set by the author and accepted
by the audience. The influence which this positive standard
exerts over the reader and the ethical values which it
upholds may be considered evidence of didacticism. A close
scrutiny of some of these didactic elements in the saga is
the purpose of this chapter.

Saga didacticism differs from the common medieval type
largely through its presentation: it is not the author or
narrator who instructs the reader directly and systematically.
Instead, the author expounds his view through his proxies, that is, the characters themselves. Very frequently didactic elements can be discerned in the attempt of one saga character to persuade another—a rhetorical feature which is fairly common in Njal's Saga. This form, involving a clearly recognizable intent of one saga figure to persuade another, shall be called overt persuasion in order to distinguish it from the underlying, but covert persuasive influence of the author. Overt persuasion is therefore merely another expression of the author's hidden persuasive technique.

The didactic elements of the saga can be grouped into two major categories, and elucidated through an analysis of passages containing overt persuasion. The first of these categories involves incorporeal aspects of the Icelandic concept of honorable conduct, the second pertains to the treatment of material possessions.

Distinguished behavior, as the author portrays it, demands the adherence to an intricate set of socially acceptable rules of deportment, which include, but are by no means exhausted by, faithfulness to kin and friends, bravery, trustworthiness, honesty, reliability, generosity, and above all the superposition of honor over life, should such a choice have to be made. M. C. van den Toorn, in Ethics and Moral in Icelandic Saga Literature, defines
heroic ethics thus: "Honour itself is no special virtue; it is only a certain apperception of various virtues, which seem not to be classed in a scale of valuation...[B]ravery, self-control and contempt of death are generally regarded as typical heroic virtues and their opposites as vices."
The extent to which a saga character adheres to ethical behavior is determined by the author. The author's didactic influence is felt in his manipulation of the perspective which determines the reader's apperception of the character's actions.

The idea that family members must support each other, for instance, is very basic in the saga. It is the failure to do so which characterizes Mord and Hallgerd as villainous creatures more than any of their other shortcomings. It is precisely the concept of family unity upon which the author's associative technique is founded, and which makes the genealogies in the saga so important to the contemporary audience; and it is the frequent repetition of this commandment of family solidarity which conditions the reader to evaluate the character not on his personal merits alone, but to classify him in accordance with his standing in and reaction to the familial environment in which he is placed.

Occasionally a character finds himself in the unfortunate position of owing allegiance to two conflicting
parties, and is forced to make the choice which is most honorable or to seek a compromise, if possible. Such incidences bring out particularly clearly to which of the ethical factors involved in the decision-making process the character attaches the greatest significance. This information, in turn, leads the reader to make value judgments concerning the character's honorable or dishonorable conduct. At the same time, the reader is conditioned to accept the author's ethical standards which he generally propounds through a proxy in overtly persuasive fashion.

A case in point is Ingjald Hoskuldsson's predicament in the struggle between Flosi and Njal. Ingjald is related to Flosi by marriage to Flosi's niece, but he is also the uncle of Hoskuld Njalsson, the illegitimate son of his sister Hrodny and Njal. In the conflict which arises between Flosi and Njal, Ingjald has promised to support Flosi; Hrodny, in her successful attempt to dissuade Ingjald from his plan, cleverly appeals to his sense of honor and gratitude:

'Is it true,' she [Hrodny] asked, 'that you have sworn an oath to attack Njal and his sons and kill them?'
'Yes,' he replied, 'it is true.'
'How utterly despicable you are,' she said. 'Njal has saved you from outlawry three times' [appeal to Ingjald's gratitude].
'The position now,' said Ingjald, 'is that if I do not, my own life is at stake.'
'No,' said Hrodny. 'You will live—and live to be called a man of honour, if you refuse to betray the man to whom you owe most' [appeal to remain faithful
to a friend and benefactor]. She took from her bag a tattered, blood-stained linen cap.

'This is the cap that Hoskuld Njalsson was wearing when they killed him,' she said [reminder of family ties--Hoskuld is Njal's son and Ingjald's nephew]. 'It seems to me less honourable for you to side with those who were involved in that' [implication of negative association].

In her attempt to dissuade Ingjald from supporting Flosi in the conflict, Hrodny appeals to Ingjald's honor in several different ways: first she calls him "utterly despicable," a highly subjective statement, which contradicts the manner in which Ingjald has been characterized until now. The phrase, however, serves to draw attention to her persuasive reasoning which follows, and during which she focuses on some quite valid criticisms of Ingjald's conduct. She reminds him eloquently that his honor is at stake if he fails to recognize his duty to support his friend, benefactor, and kinsman against Hoskuld's murderers. Less lucid than her overtly persuasive reasoning is the fact that Hrodny accomplishes another, much more important purpose with her speech: she convinces the audience of Ingjald's dishonorable action in siding with Flosi. As "proxy persuader" it is possible for her to make subjective statements and give subjective views which the author could not permit himself without destroying the appearance of objectivity. Furthermore, in affirming the course of action which Ingjald should take, she becomes the vehicle
for the author's indirect didactic comment: "'You will live...to be called a man of honour, if you refuse to betray the man to whom you owe most.'"

The second part of the dialog serves to vindicate Ingjald, since he agrees to change his plans:

'Very well,' said Ingjald. 'I shall not join the attack on Njal, whatever the consequences [Ingjald responds by affirming the heroic ideal--honor above life]; but I know that they will make trouble for me later.'

Hrodny said, 'You could do Njal a great service now if you tell him their plans' [Hrodny suggests that Ingjald aid Njal, but in a way which entails betrayal]. 'I refuse to do that,' said Ingjald. 'I would be an object of contempt to all men if I revealed what they trusted me to keep secret [affirmation of his trustworthiness]. But it is manly to withdraw from this knowing well that vengeance will follow [bravery]. However, tell Njal and his sons that they would be well advised to be on their guard all this summer and keep many men in the house' [reciprocity--Ingjald owes Njal many favors; this is reaffirmed shortly].

Hrodny went to Bergthorsknoll and told Njal this whole conversation. Njal thanked her and said that she had done well--'for Ingjald is the last person who has any just cause to raise his hand against me.'" (ch. 124)

In the second half of the passage almost a complete reversal of Hrodny's and Ingjald's roles takes place; whereas in the first part Hrodny led the discussion, it is now Ingjald who takes over the function of proxy. He proceeds to vindicate his honor by affirming his adherence to the principles of honor above life, trustworthiness, bravery, etc., and becomes the spokesman for the author's latent didacticism. The latter is particularly evident in the phrases "'I would be an object of contempt to all men if I
revealed what they trusted me to keep secret'" and "'...it is manly to withdraw from this knowing well that vengeance will follow.'" The final endorsement of Ingjald's and Hrodny's actions by Njal, the saga hero, signifies even to the reader who is unaware of the author’s manipulation, that Ingjald is to be viewed as a favorably depicted character.

References to the moral and legal responsibilities which kinship and marriage entail are quite frequent in the saga. Prominent among these is the duty of avenging a slaying, which generally falls to the male members of the next of kin. Women exert their influence in matters of moral or ethical significance chiefly by reminding the men of their duty, and by urging them to action. Thus Thorhalla, when persuaded by Njal to leave flaming Berg-thorsknoll, responds with a promise of vengeance: "Thorhalla said, 'This is not the parting from Helgi I had ever expected; but I shall urge my father and my brothers to avenge the killings that are committed here.' 'You will do well,' said Njal, 'for you are a good woman'" (ch. 129). The proxy statement by Njal, commending her for the proposed action, shows clearly the author’s consent and approval, and may as such be considered evidence of didacticism.

How firmly established the feeling of family solidarity is in the Icelandic code of ethics can be seen from the ever-
widening circle of families who are finally involved in avenging the Njallssons. Gizur the White, for instance, who is the uncle of Thorhalla's father, approaches Skapti Thoroddsson in his attempt to gather support against the Burners: "We are now seeking redress for the death of Njal and Bergthora, both burned alive without cause, and for the death of their three sons and many other good men. You surely cannot want to refuse people help; surely you will want to support your kinsmen by blood and marriage." (ch. 139). The constant reiteration of a moral or ethical principle, coupled with the overtly persuasive form of the narration, has a twofold effect on the reader: repetition itself, as has been shown earlier, may have a persuasive function, and if the repeated statement contains a moral or propounds an ethical principle, a didactic element is added to the persuasive one. Secondly, in overt persuasion the proffered argumentation is only in part designed to accomplish the persuasion of one character by another. Indirectly, through the proxy persuader, the author exerts his influence on the reader as well, who follows the proxy's arguments. In the passage quoted above the reader is led to accept the idea that it is desirable and, in the Icelandic context, morally right to support one's kin. Having accepted this premise, he then judges the character who is being persuaded according to the action which this character takes. Since
it is the author who determines the character's actions, he is able to manipulate the reader's judgment.

In contrast to that form of overt persuasion which employs a reasoned argument, the practice of taunting (frýja=to taunt, to challenge) is a persuasive effort which is aimed chiefly from one saga character to another, and takes the form of irrational, abusive comments. Its intent is to persuade or incite the opponent to action by provoking him to anger. Most frequently, taunting takes the form of insult or ridicule. It is practiced by men and women alike, but it proves to be a particularly powerful persuasive device when used by women to urge men to action by insinuating dishonorable behavior or a lack of masculinity. In this context it is frequently found when women attempt to incite male family members to avenge slayings. Often taunting also occurs in combat situations. Taunts may then simply consist of terse remarks exchanged between enemies, insinuating fear or a lack of courage in the opponent, and may immediately be followed by retaliatory action serving to refute the charge. In the confrontation between Gunnar and Starkad of Thrihyrning, taunting is used by Starkad and his men both to rouse the enemy to action and to spur on those within their own ranks: "As they rode past, Kol shouted, 'Are you running away, Gunnar?' Kolskegg replied, 'Ask that when the day is over'" (ch. 62); and "Starkad
turned to Thorir. 'You're an utter coward, Easterner,' he said, 'to sit by idle. Egil, your host and father-in-law, has just been killed.' Thorir jumped angrily to his feet" (ch. 63).

The influence which the author exercises over the reader's judgment in these instances concerns chiefly character depiction: taunting almost always involves some form of ridicule or insult to a man's honor, i.e., an insinuation that the character lacks courage, is reluctant to support his kin, etc. The audience, having accepted such traits as negative, expects the character to immediately vindicate his honor. If, however, his action confirms the insinuation, the reader judges the character negatively. The establishment of morally or ethically right vs. wrong conduct, as exemplified in these situations, constitutes the didactic element.

Perhaps the most malicious taunts include suggestions of perverse behavior. Contrary to other insults concerning manly qualities, such as Hallgerd's equation of Njal's beardlessness with a lack of virility, insinuations of perversion are rare in the saga, however. Skarp-Hedin's confrontation with Flosi provides an example of this type of provocation: when Flosi mistakes Njal's gesture of reconciliation for an insult, Skarp-Hedin carries the verbal battle to the extreme. The object of contention is a fine silk cloak (added by Njal as a gift to the assessed compensation), which, however, could be worn by either a man or
Then he [Flosi] said, 'Does none of you really know who owned this garment? Or does none of you dare to tell me?' [Flosi had not seen that Njal had donated the cloak]

'Who do you think gave it?' asked Skarp-Hedin.

'If you want to know,' said Flosi, 'I will tell you what I think. I think it was your father who gave it, "Old Beardless", for few can tell just by looking at him whether he is a man or woman.'

'It is wrong to mock him in his old age,' said Skarp-Hedin, 'and no real man has ever done that before. You can be quite sure that he is a man, for he has fathered sons on his wife; and we have let few of our kinsmen lie unavenged at our doors.'

He snatched the cloak away and tossed a pair of blue trousers at Flosi, saying that he would have greater need of them than a cloak.

'Why should I need them more?' asked Flosi.

Skarp-Hedin replied, 'You certainly will if you are, as I have heard, the mistress of the Svinafell Tröl, who uses you as a woman every ninth night.'

Then Flosi kicked the pile of money and said he would not take a penny of it; he said they would take no other compensation for Hoskuld than blood-vengeance' (ch. 123).

Such "Frýja"-passages also form an important part in the plot structure, because they contribute to the escalation of the action. They elucidate the didactic elements emphasized by the author, because the taunts correspond exactly to those facets of heroic conduct which form their antonyms (i.e., a taunt of cowardice corresponds to bravery, etc.). The practice of taunting, therefore, helps to establish in the reader's mind a standard of ethical behavior by which the author wishes him to judge saga characters.

Another didactic element is evident in scenes involving pledge-breaking. If the author wishes to depict a character
in the saga favorably, he shows him going to great length to avoid breaking a promise. This could be seen in the above discussion of Ingjald Hoskuldsson's dilemma. Similarly, Gunnar's refusal to abide by those terms of the settlement for Thorgeir Otkelsson's death which demand his absence from Iceland for the period of three years, is a very grave offense, particularly because Gunnar is one of the greatest heroes in the saga. The author does not absolve Gunnar from blame for the act of pledge-breaking, but he prepares the incident with great care, and, in effect, shows Gunnar's fatal mistake as arising from a favorable characteristic, the love of his home.

The prelude to Gunnar's decision to remain at home contains a great deal of overt persuasion, chiefly from Njal and Kolskegg (both unquestionably men of honor). It derives its interest from prefiguration, and its intensification from repetition. The first of these prefigurative arguments comes from Njal in the form of advice, twenty chapters before Gunnar breaks his pledge:

'Never kill more than once in the same family, and never break any settlement which good men make between you and others—particularly if you have disregarded the first of these warnings.'

Gunnar said, 'I would have thought that others were more likely to do that than I.'

'That is so,' said Njal. 'But bear in mind that if you disregard both these warnings, you will not have long to live' (ch. 55).

A repetition of this prediction occurs in a discussion between Mord Valgardsson and Thorgeir Starkadarsson:
"...I can tell you this, that Njal has seen into Gunnar's future and made this prophecy: if Gunnar kills more than once in the same family and then breaks the settlement made for that killing, it will hasten him to his death'" (ch. 67).

Njal's predictive statement and its reiteration by Mord represents the first indication to the reader that the author is preparing a shift in the perspective in which the audience is to view Gunnar. Up to this point Gunnar's behavior has been characterized by an unequivocal adherence to heroic ethics, and the author has depicted him with a flawlessness of appearance and deportment which is typical for the portrayal of the major hero.

The next step in the revelation of Gunnar's tragic flaw by the author occurs in connection with the settlement for the slaying of Thorgeir Otkelsson. "Gunnar gave no sign that he was dissatisfied with this settlement," the author notes (ch. 74). This statement is important, because it indicates Gunnar's acceptance of the punishment as basically just and valid, and precludes his refusal to abide by the settlement terms on the grounds that they were unacceptable to him. Not only Gunnar's honor is at stake if he violates the agreement, but his life as well, according to Njal's prediction. By killing Thorgeir Otkelsson, Gunnar has disregarded the first of Njal's warnings and has slain two members of the same family. The second aspect, that of the loss of his life, is emphasized by Njal's second warning:
"'Take good care, friend, not to break this settlement.... But if you break this settlement, if you don't leave the country, you will be killed here in Iceland....' Gunnar said that he had no intention of breaking his pledges" (ch. 74).

The author's persuasive influence is felt throughout the preparation for the action which is to come—Gunnar's violation of the settlement terms. Through the use of préfiguration and its intensification by repetition, the author has changed the reader's perspective of the hero to include the previously unthinkable possibility that Gunnar might dishonor his pledge. By acknowledging that Gunnar showed no signs of dissatisfaction with the conditions of the settlement, the author effectively eliminates the only other means of making Gunnar's action appear acceptable: the insinuation that the assessed punishment was unjust.

In the narration of the pledge-breaking incident, overt persuasion again plays an important role. The didactic element is elucidated in Kolskegg's final attempt to persuade Gunnar to leave with him: "Kolskegg said, 'Do not make your enemies happy by breaking the settlement, something that no one would ever expect of you.'" But when Gunnar reaaffirms his decision to stay, Kolskegg unhesitatingly divorces himself from his brother's dishonorable attitude: "'I am not going to dishonor my pledge over this nor any other matter I am trusted in. This is the one and only
thing that can separate us'" (ch. 75). Kolskegg, as the proxy persuader, displays a function similar to that of Hrodny in the previously related episode (pp. 71-74 above). Although Hrodny's persuasion of Ingjald involves a different ethical principle, method and persuasive intent are the same. As Hrodny appeals to Ingjald's sense of honor, so Kolskegg appeals to Gunnar's in attempting to dissuade him from his plan; and, like Hrodny, Kolskegg convinces the audience of Gunnar's dishonorable action in refusing to abide by the settlement terms. Unlike Ingjald, Gunnar does not abandon his original plan and thereby vindicate his honor. The fact that Gunnar breaks his pledge remains a blemish (indeed, a tragic flaw) on an otherwise spotless record of heroic deportment.

When settlement violations are referred to in situations other than those involving overt persuasion, they may be regarded as indicators of a person's respectability, or the lack of it; that is, they may form a part of character evaluation techniques. The Njalssons, for instance, are consistently depicted as men who honor their promises. After the slaying of Thord Freedmansson, Gunnar offers Njal self-judgment; Njal accepts, not without noting, however, that his wife and sons would surely disapprove of a monetary settlement. "'But I shall take that risk,'" he continues, "'for I know that I am dealing with a man of
honour, and I do not want to be the cause of any breach in our friendship. 'Do you want to have your sons present at all?' asked Gunnar. 'No,' said Njal, 'for they will not break any settlement that I make. But if they were present, they would refuse to be party to it'" (ch. 43). Shortly thereafter Njal is confronted by Skarp-Hedin, who inquires about the origin of the 200 ounces of silver which Njal is holding, and Njal explains the settlement to him, ending with the words: "'...it is of the greatest importance to me that you do not break this settlement.' 'Then we shall not do so,' said Skarp-Hedin" (ch. 43).

In another episode Hoskuld Hvitaness-Priest comes to Njal to inform him of the slaying of Hoskuld Njalsson: "Hoskuld said to Njal, 'I am here to plead for Lyting, my aunt's husband. He has done you grave injury, broken the settlement, and killed your son note the association of Lyting, depicted previously as a scoundrel, with pledge-breaking ...I want you alone to make the terms,' said Hoskuld. 'I shall do it now,' said Njal, 'since you want me to.' 'Have you any wish to have your sons present?' asked Hoskuld. 'Their presence would not make a settlement easier,' said Njal, 'but they will honour any settlement I make'" (ch. 99). The chapter concludes with the narrator statement that "it should be said that this settlement was never broken."
Hallgerd, on the other hand, is shown to be a person whose word can not be trusted. Thorarin, when asking for Hallgerd's hand in behalf of his brother Glum, makes the fatal mistake of discounting the experience of Hallgerd's first husband: "'One oath abused does not make all oaths worthless. This match can turn out well even though the other one turned out badly'" (ch. 13). That this opinion is erroneous seems to be a tenet of the saga which is evidenced not only in Glum's experience with Hallgerd, but in her subsequent behavior with Gunnar and his friends as well. When Atli returns to Bergthora after carrying out her orders to kill Kol, he is assured by her that a monetary settlement for Kol's death will be made immediately. Nevertheless she finds it necessary to warn Atli: "'But even though a settlement is made, you must be on your guard; for Hallgerd honours no settlements'" (ch. 37). In a similar manner Gunnar warns Thord Freedmannson: "Hallgerd said to Gunnar, 'It is impossible to be satisfied with the hundred ounces of silver you accepted for my kinsman Brynjolf. I'm going to avenge him if I can.' Gunnar said that he refused to argue with her about it, and walked away. He went to see Kolskegg and said to him, 'Go over to see Njal and tell him that Thord had better be on his guard despite the settlement we made, for I suspect that it might be violated'" (ch. 41). In this manner moralistic and stylistic influences are combined by the author to effect a persuasive,
but negative depiction of Hallgerd's character.

Other forms of didacticism are evident in the treatment of theft and arson. Particularly the burning of buildings with the intent to kill the inhabitants is considered a thoroughly dishonorable method of disposing of one's enemies. Once again overt persuasion is the author's prevalent narrative device for contrasting dishonorable suggestion with honorable response in the presentation of his characters. When relating Gunnar's last stand, for instance, he depicts Gunnar as so exceptionally skilled in defensive battle that it seems practically impossible for Gizur and his band to overcome the hero. At this point Mord Valgardsson suggests a way to remedy the situation: "Mord said, 'Let us burn him to death inside the house.' 'Never,' said Gizur, 'even though I knew that my own life depended on it. Someone as cunning as you are said to be can surely think up a satisfactory plan'" (ch. 77). From Gizur's reply it is obvious that Mord's scheme is highly offensive to Gizur's keen moral sensibility. Nevertheless, after Mord's alternate plan of wrenching the roof off the house doesn't immediately achieve the desired result, Mord repeats his earlier suggestion: "Then Mord again suggested that they should burn Gunnar inside his house. Gizur replied, 'I don't know why you keep harping on something that no one else wants. That shall never be done'" (ch. 77).
At the Burning of Njal, a basically identical situation, but with different actors, is related. During their attack on Bergthorsknoll, Flosi and his men are held at bay by the Njalssons:

Kari and Grim and Helgi lunged often with their spears and wounded many men, and Flosi and the attackers were kept at bay.

Flosi said, 'We have suffered heavy losses amongst our men, several wounded and one dead, the one we would least have wanted to lose. It is obvious that we cannot defeat them with weapons; and there are many here who are showing less fight than they said they would. Now we must resort to another plan. There are only two courses open to us, neither of them good: we must either abandon the attack, which would cost us our own lives, or we must set fire to the house and burn them to death, which is a grave responsibility before God, since we are Christian men ourselves. But that is what we must do' (ch. 128).

A comparison of the two episodes reveals, in the different reaction of the two leaders to a similar stress situation, the author's covert didacticism in the moral disapproval with which distinguished saga characters generally view burnings: Gizur, faced with an undefeatable opponent, continues to battle at the risk of his own life ("'even though I knew that my own life depended on it'""). Flosi, however, chooses to set fire to the house and burn the helpless inhabitants rather than accept defeat at the cost of his life ("'we must either abandon the attack, which would cost us our own lives, or we must set fire to the house'""). The value which Flosi puts upon his life exceeds that which he places on honor, and such an attitude is incompatible
with heroic idealism. He leaves himself open to the charge of cowardice and the unwillingness to fight his opponents fairly, as is implied in Kari's refusal to settle with the Burners. After the disastrous trial and the ensuing battle between the litigants, Hall of Sida proposes to settle on even terms, applying a common standard to those who died at the battle at the Althing and those who died in the fire at Bergthorsknoll. Kari, however, is unwilling to partake in the settlement procedure on these terms. Hall of Sida acts as the persuader: "I want to ask Asgrim and those others who are behind these lawsuits, to grant us a settlement on even terms." He pleaded with them eloquently and persuasively. Kari replied, 'Even though all the others accept settlements, I shall never do so. You are trying to equate the Burning with these killings, and that we could never tolerate'" (ch. 145).

When overt persuasion is not involved, arson is often associated with stealing, an equally dishonorable act. Thus Hrapp enriches his infamy with theft and arson: "Meanwhile, Earl Hakon was attending a feast at Gudbrand's home. During the night, Hrapp the Killer went to their temple. Inside it, he saw the statue of Thorgerd Holgi's-Bride enthroned, massive as a gully-grown man; there was a huge gold bracelet on her arm, and a linen hood over her head. Hrapp stripped off the hood and the bracelet. Then he
noticed Thor in his chariot, and took from him another gold bracelet. He took a third bracelet from Irpa. He dragged all three of the idols outside and stripped them of their vestments; then he set fire to the temple and burned it down" (ch. 88). The narrator's disapproval of the act follows shortly thereafter in his registration of public opinion. When four of the earl's men bring him the news that Hrapp has killed several people, he suspects Hrapp immediately of being the arsonist: "'Then he must have been the one who burned down the temple,' said the earl. They thought him quite capable of it" (ch. 88).

The episode of Hallgerd's theft gives the author a chance to contrast her behavior with that of other characters. Gunnar's reaction to robbery introduces the incident: upon Otkel's refusal to sell hay and food to Gunnar, Thrain Sigfusson, Gunnar's companion, remarks "'it would serve him right if we took it by force and paid him what it was worth'" (ch. 47); but Gunnar refuses unequivocally: "'I won't have anything to do with robbery.'" Shortly thereafter Hallgerd incites Otkel's former slave to carry out her retaliatory scheme for Otkel's refusal to aid them: "'I have an errand for you,' she [Hallgerd] said. 'You are to ride to Kirkby.' 'What am I to go there for?' he asked. 'You are to steal from there enough food to load two horses, particularly butter and cheese, and then set fire to the storehouse.
Everyone will think it happened through carelessness, and no one will suspect that there has been a theft." 'I may have done bad things,' said Melkolf, 'but I have never been a thief'" (ch. 48). This indignation of Melkolf, who is himself a scoundrel, illuminates even better than Gunnar's outraged sense of honor the baseness with which the author wishes Hallgerd's characterization tainted. Of necessity, the saga hero divorces himself from Hallgerd's action: "Hallgerd set food on the table, and brought in cheese and butter. Gunnar knew that no such provisions had been in stock, and asked Hallgerd where they had come from. 'From a source that should not spoil your appetite,' said Hallgerd. 'And besides, it's not a man's business to bother about kitchen matters.' Gunnar grew angry. 'It will be an evil day when I become a thief's accomplice,' he said, and slapped her on the face (ch. 48). Similar to Hrapp's arson charge by Earl Hakon, which was supported by the opinion of the earl's men that "they thought him quite capable of it," so Hallgerd's misdeed, too, is publicly condemned: "Kolskegg had a talk with Gunnar, and said, 'I have bad news. Everyone is saying that Hallgerd has committed theft and was responsible for all the damage that was done at Kirkby.' Gunnar said that he thought it all too likely" (ch. 49).

The parallel actions of Hrapp and Hallgerd involving theft and arson, with the intent of elucidating the simi-
larity of character between the two, are typical of the methodical and consequent manner in which the author prepares for their later close association. In chapter 88 the author states: "Next summer Thrain provided him [Hrapp] with a farm at Hrappstead, and Hrapp went to live there, but he spent most of his time at Grjotriver [Hallgerd's place of abode], and caused nothing but trouble there. There were some who said that he and Hallgerd were very close, and that he slept with her; but others contradicted this."

The second category of didactic elements in the saga pertains to the treatment of material wealth and the manipulation of possessions. Money plays an extremely important role in the saga, which can be seen from the fact alone that nearly all of the significant characters described are persons of wealth and elevated social standing. Considerable space in the saga is also devoted to descriptions of compensatory payments for slayings, and the difficulties frequently involved in achieving settlements. Divisions of property, such as occur by reason of marriage or divorce (e.g., Unn's dowry, ch. 2, and its repayment, ch. 24; also Hallgerd's property arrangement with Glum, ch. 13, etc.), and complications arising from legacies (e.g., Hrut's inheritance, ch. 2 to ch. 5) are also discussed in detail.

For the purpose of establishing didactic elements it is important to analyze the custom of gift giving. Gifts
are commonly presented in one of the following three ways: (1) gift exchange among friends, which carries the element of generosity within the act; (2) gifts given in return for an otherwise unpaid act of friendship, such as the mediator in a settlement performs (these are evidence of gratitude); and (3) gifts given as a form of payment for services received or expected. This type of remuneration is frequently a part of overt persuasion and constitutes a bought form of support.

Generosity is one of the marks of a noble character. This is evident from the fact that the exchange of gifts is recorded almost inevitably between favorably depicted characters. Frequently the author hastens to affirm the superior value or excellence in quality of the gifts exchanged. For instance, when Gunnar departs from the residence of the Danish king Harald Gormsson, the author relates that "Gunnar gave the king a longship and much treasure as well. In return, the king gave him his own robes, a pair of gold-embroidered gloves, a head-band studded with gold, and a Russian fur-cap" (ch. 31). Skarp-Hedin's gift to Hoskuld, too, gains greater import than those of the other Njalssons through a separate description: "Skarp-Hedin owned a black four-year-old stallion, a big handsome animal that had never been tested in a fight. Skarp-Hedin gave Hoskuld this horse and two mares as well. The others all gave Hoskuld gifts, and repeated their pledges of friendship" (ch. 109).
Aside from the numerous examples dealing with the exchange of gifts, the social importance attached to generosity is shown by the author's statement that "Gunnar enhanced his prestige by giving many of the guests gifts" (ch. 34), and by the occasional direct mention generosity receives in evaluative statements such as occur in character introductions: "Ingjald was tall and powerful, rather reserved in his own home, a very brave man and open-handed to his friends" (ch. 116).

Greed, on the other hand, is depicted as a characteristic irreconcilable with honorable deportment, and covetous persons evoke either abhorrence or ridicule in the saga. Hrút, for instance, flatly rejects Mord's claim for recovery of Unn's dowry: "'You are pressing this claim concerning your daughter with greed and aggression rather than decency and fairness, and for that reason I intend to resist it'" (ch. 8); and the bizarre decapitation of Kol, designed to evoke mirth, appears rather macabre and even tasteless to a modern audience: "Kol had been keeping company with a rich lady, and it was all but arranged that he should marry her and settle in Wales. Kari went to the town that same morning. He arrived at the place where Kol was counting out the silver and recognized him at once. Kari rushed at him with his sword drawn and slashed at Kol's neck. Kol kept on counting, and his head said 'Ten' as it flew from
his shoulders" (ch. 158).

The efforts of distinguished saga characters expended in arbitration between two hostile parties are often rewarded with gifts for the arbitrator. Such presents are intended to show the gratitude and friendship of the giver, and frequently attest to his generosity as well. Thus Gudmund the Powerful, who through his influence achieves a revocation of the dismissal of the legal action against the Burners, and Snorri the Priest, who is one of the chief arbitrators in the dispute between Flosi's and Kari's supporters, are given valuable presents once a settlement has been reached: "Asgrim and the others gave Snorri the Priest fine gifts. He gained great honour from these proceedings....Gizur the White, Hjalti, and Asgrim invited Gudmund the Powerful to their homes. He accepted the invitations, and each of them gave him a gold bracelet. Then Gudmund rode off north to his home, and was praised by everyone for his conduct throughout the proceedings. Thorgeir Skorar-Geir invited Kari home; but first they accompanied Gudmund all the way north to the mountains. Kari gave Gudmund a gold brooch, and Thorgeir gave him a silver belt, both very valuable, and they parted in warmest friendship" (ch. 145). Similarly, when Thorgeir, who had exempted himself from the settlement with the Burners, is finally persuaded by Kari and Hall of Sida to come to terms
with Flosi and his band, Hall, as the arbitrator, is the recipient of honors and gifts: "...Thorgeir guaranteed Flosi and his men a truce until a peace-meeting could be held, and Hall gave pledges to Thorgeir on behalf of Flosi and the Sigfussons. Before parting, Thorgeir gave Hall a gold bracelet and a scarlet cloak, and Kari gave him a silver necklace with three gold crosses on it. Hall thanked them warmly for their gifts, and rode away in high honour" (ch. 147).

The presentation of gifts is not always associated with idealistic purposes, however; in many ways Icelandic society appears quite materialistic in the saga. Particularly examples of overt persuasion show a frequent use of money or gifts as the final incentive and aid to argument and reason. When Flosi and Bjarni Brodd-Helgason discuss the retainer of a lawyer for the defense of the Burners, Bjarni mentions Eyjolf Bolverksson's name: "'He is the greatest lawyer in the Westfjords Quarter. We would need to pay him a large amount to persuade him to take the case, but we shall not let that deter us'" (ch. 138). In the ensuing attempt to obtain Eyjolf's services, Flosi and Bjarni use various persuasive techniques, including an outright appeal for help, flattery, and, finally, monetary incentive:

...Bjarni said to Eyjolf, 'We have come to you, friend, because we are in great need of your help in everything.' 'There is a wide choice of good men at the Althing now,' said Eyjolf, 'and you will have no difficulty in finding men who would strengthen you
much more than I can.'

'That is not so,' said Bjarni, 'for you have many qualities that make you as great a man as any other here at the Althing. In the first place, you are well-born as all those who are descended from Ragnar Hairy-Breeks. Your forefathers have always played a part in major issues both at the Althing and at home in their districts, and were never on the losing side. Therefore we think it likely that you will have the winning touch of your kinsmen.'

'These are handsome words,' said Eyjolf, 'but I feel that I deserve little part of them.'

Flosi said, 'It is hardly necessary to explain what we have in mind. We want to ask you to support us in our case—to come to court with us, seize on any points of defence that may occur, plead them on our behalf, and stand by us at the Althing in everything that may turn up.'

Eyjolf jumped to his feet in fury and said that no one need think that he could be used as a catspaw to do something he was not obliged to do. 'And now I see,' he said, 'what prompted all these flattering words you used towards me.'

Hallbjorn the Strong took hold of him and set him down again between himself and Bjarni, and said, 'No tree falls at the first stroke, my friend. Just sit here beside us for a while.'

Flosi drew from his arm a gold bracelet and said, 'I want to give you this bracelet, Eyjolf, for your friendship and help, and to show you that I have no wish to deceive you. You would do well to accept it, for there is no man at this Althing whom I have ever given so fine a gift.'

The bracelet was so thick and well-made that it was worth twelve hundred yards of best homespun cloth. Hallbjorn placed it on Eyjolf's arm.

Eyjolf said, 'It is only proper for me to accept this bracelet in the face of such courtesy. And you can fairly expect that I shall take over the defence and do everything that may be required.' (ch. 138)

Nevertheless, Eyjolf doesn't want the fact to be known

"'that you have paid me for my help,'" presumably because little honor is to be gained from services performed through bribery.

Flosi's quest for support among the chieftains prior to the trial is also accompanied by offers of payment for
their efforts. The author relates three possible reactions to such a proposal. The most honorable conduct is displayed by Bjarni Brodd-Helgason: "Bjarni welcomed Flosi with open arms. Flosi offered him money for his support. 'I have never bartered my manhood or my support for bribes,' replied Bjarni. 'Now that you are in need of help, I shall treat you as a friend and ride to the Althing with you, and stand by you as I would by my own brother.' 'You are putting me completely in your debt,' said Flosi, 'but I had expected something like this of you'" (ch. 134).

Less genuinely helpful and selfless is Hallbjorn's reaction, after Flosi has acquainted him with the events at the Burning: "Then Flosi took a purse from his belt and said that he wished to give it to him. Hallbjorn took the money, but said that he had no cause to expect gifts from Flosi--'I would, however, like to know how you want me to repay this.' 'I have no need of money,' said Flosi, 'but I would like you to ride to the Althing with me and give me your support—even though I have no claims on you through blood or marriage ties.' 'I give you my promise,' said Hallbjorn. 'I shall ride to the Althing and give you my support, as if you were my own brother'" (ch. 134).

The most reluctant and most materialistic attitude is expressed by the brothers Thorkel the Sage and Thorvald, the sons of Ketil Thrym. Few times is the persuasive power
of money so succinctly stated in the saga. Flosi's reception, the author states, was cordial. "He told them his mission, and asked for their support; at first they refused, and only finally agreed to help him when he had given them three marks of silver each" (ch. 134). The sale of one's support is frowned upon largely because to the honorable man the merit and righteousness of the cause he champions is of greater importance than the material rewards he is able to gain through the alliance. The fact that Flosi finds himself in a situation in which he is forced to obtain backers through monetary incentives is in itself an indication of the low public esteem in which his cause is held.

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that the chief difference between overt and covert persuasion rests in the fact that open persuaders are clearly recognizable by the audience as performing a suggestive function, and that the acting character's motives are generally made known to the reader. Inasmuch as the author frequently influences the reader's judgment through the rhetoric of an overtly persuasive character who acts as his proxy, overt persuasion forms an integral part of the covert persuasion evident in the saga. The evaluation and correlation of suggestion and motivation as accomplished by the audience reveals certain didactic elements inherent in the form and method
of the author's presentation of the subject. Didactic
elements present in covertly persuasive rhetoric have
generally a descriptive function, that is, they are pertinent
to characterization.
CONCLUSIONS

The application of modern methods of textual criticism to the rhetoric of Íslendingasögur has yielded new insights into the construction of the saga narrative, which render the formerly widely accepted view insupportable, that saga rhetoric is highly objective. Particularly Paul Schach's article on various forms of writer intrusion in the narrative and Lars Lönnroth's study of persuasive techniques in the saga illustrate effectively the actual complexity of the apparently impartial account of people and events which is given by the author.

The present study has focused on persuasive rhetorical devices which were shown to form three basic categories: those containing descriptive, stylistic, or didactic elements. The analysis of descriptive devices has revealed the existence of the author's persuasive influence on the reader through direct and indirect evaluative statements concerning saga characters. Direct evaluation involves value judgments expressed by the author or narrator himself. Such evaluative statements occur frequently in the introduction of characters, but may also be found intermittently in later depictions of the character's actions. Other intrusions of author opinion are evident in insinuations that a character performed certain actions "habitually." Such suggestions by the author help to establish in the reader's mind a personality pattern for a given character.
which is not actually confirmed by the character's actions.

Indirect evaluative statements involve the author's expression of opinions through one of the characters, who then acts as his proxy. They may also take the form of expressions of popular opinion, comments on a character's reputation, or statements made by a character about himself. A number of the author's evaluative techniques, such as the magnification of characters and eulogistical passages exhorting the virtues of deceased heroes, employ descriptive devices of both the direct and indirect type. Magnification, for instance, may include statements made directly by the author as well as judgments expressed by other characters in regard to the person to be magnified. In fact, it is precisely this interaction of various persuasive elements which effectively hides the suggestive content of the individual factors influencing the reader's judgment.

Among the stylistic devices which the author employs in his persuasive rhetoric are polarity, repetition, addition, omission, and prefiguration. Polarity refers to the author's technique of contrasting the actions and characteristics of certain individuals or families and of focusing attention on their positive or negative character traits through comparison with their opponents. The persuasive influence which repetition exerts over the
reader rests chiefly in the tendency of frequently repeated
signals or catch-phrases to circumvent reflective thought
and thereby to produce an automatic response in the reader.
Progressive character delineation by addition is a device
which is used by the author chiefly for the portrayal of
minor characters. It involves the intermittent insertion
of significant descriptive information about a saga
personality, providing additional evidence concerning his
character. Intermittent evaluative statements of this type
take the form of direct or indirect character appraisal.
Diametrically opposed to the technique of addition is a
stylistic device based on the omission of evidence. Its
effectiveness is achieved through the establishment of a
contrastive situation between two or more characters and
the discussion of, for instance, the favorable qualities
inherent in all but one of them. The omission of positive
evaluative information concerning this character leads the
reader to assume that his personality does not contain the
favorable traits described in the others. The persuasive
force inherent in prefiguration is based largely on the
fact that foreshadowed actions are invariably carried to
their predicted conclusion. Because the reader is con-
ditioned to expect the consummation of the announced action
with unquestioning belief, the author may use prefiguration
to achieve a sudden shift in a character's personality or
appearance, which would otherwise lack credibility.

The third category of persuasive devices analyzed in this study deals with didactic elements within the narrative. Saga didacticism can be illustrated through an analysis of passages containing overt persuasion, that is, the attempt of one saga character to persuade another. Didactic elements pertain to characterization inasmuch as the acceptance or rejection by a saga personality of the Icelandic concept of honorable conduct influences the perspective from which the audience views the character. Among the facets of morally and socially acceptable rules of deportment are, on the one hand, those pertaining to incorporeal or intangible aspects. These include the concept of family support and various ethical values evident in the condemnation of pledge-breaking, arson, and stealing. A second group of didactic elements can be found in the manner in which the author describes a character's treatment of his material possessions. To this category belong the elements of generosity, prestige, and gratitude, with which the author endows his favorably depicted characters, and the elements depicting greed and a susceptibility to bribery which distinguish villainous personalities.

The combination and interaction of these various
persuasive techniques in the saga constitutes the author's persuasive influence over the reader in regard to the characterization of the various saga personalities.
NOTES

1 Theodore M. Andersson, The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 32. Although Andersson recognizes that "the term 'objective' only applies to the sagas in a limited sense (the sagas are not free of moralism)", p. 31, he goes on to say that the author "draws no general conclusions and invites his reader to draw none" (p. 32).

2 Peter Hallberg, The Icelandic Saga, trans. Paul Schach (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. 71. Hallberg stresses the impression of "coolness and reserve" (p. 71) created by the saga style, but does not deny the author's opportunity of "masking his own judgment in the form of public opinion" (p. 73).

3 Magnus Magnusson, Introduction to Njál's Saga, trans. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1960), p. 15. Italics are mine. All references to Njál's Saga are taken from this edition. This translation is based on the standard edition of Njál's Saga (ed. E. Ól. Sveinsson) in the Íslenzk Forrit series, No. 12 (Reykjavik, 1954), from which all quotations of the original Icelandic text are taken.

4 For a survey of the most important recent contributions to research in the field of saga literature see P. G. Foote, "Some Account of the Present State of Saga-Research," Scandinavica, 4 (1965), 115-126.


6 Njál's Saga, ch. 159.

7 "Rhetorical Persuasion in the Sagas," Scandinavian Studies, 42 (1970), 157-189. References to "Lonnroth" are to this article, unless otherwise noted.
Lönnroth adopts Wayne Booth's terminology (*Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago, 1961) in distinguishing between three kinds of objectivity: "neutrality"—describing "a completely uncommitted attitude to everything that is related"—is found in purely scientific works, but hardly in fictional or historically related narratives in which the selection of facts presented to the reader depends on the writer's commitment; "impartiality" is defined as the attitude of "giving a fair and equal hearing to all participants in the presentation of a dispute...even though the narrator may himself be committed to one side"; "impassibilité" involves "emotional restraint in the narrator's treatment of his subject matter." To these types of objectivity Lönnroth adds "empiricism," which "describes a tendency to consider facts in terms of the manner in which they were actually observed, and to separate such observed facts from the conclusions that may be drawn from them....When impartiality, impassibilité and empiricism all appear in a text, we may say that it contains a maximum of formal objectivity."

The saga episode which Hallberg treats in this example concerns the slaying of Hallstein. Although the murder is committed by the thrall Thorgils, the narrator's account leads the reader to infer that Thorgils was merely used as an instrument by Helgi and his mother. Hallberg maintains that the reader is led to consider the whole account authentic because of the author's "objective" presentation of facts.


Lönnroth, p. 160. Cf. the initial reference to Andersson (p. 31), and his explanation of the tactical victory achieved in the heroes' last verbal battles: "Gisli, Skarphéðinn, Helgi Droplaugarson, Bolli Þorleiksson, Björn hásteinkappi, Helgi Harðsteinsson, and Þorkell hákr are all practitioners of the dying quip. Their words are equivalent to a moral victory" (p. 90).

Andersson, p. 93. Cf. also his reference to the similarity between lay and saga in pre-battle dialogues: "The tenor of these dialogues is always the same, to undermine the superiority of the victor and re-establish the prestige of the loser, to make clear that the victor emerges as such only because of a numerical advantage... while the loser, even in defeat, enjoys a permanent and intrinsic edge in spirit, which is more real and lasting than the momentary advantage of force.

"The same principle governs the prodigious last stands at impossible odds, which are a feature of saga and lay alike" (p. 91).

Andersson, in chapter one, recognizes six structural parts in the saga: introduction, conflict, climax, revenge, reconciliation, and aftermath. Lonnroth uses a modified version consisting of four parts: introduction, development of conflict, climax, and ending.

Lonnroth is of the opinion that certain stylistic patterns in the sagas (character introduction included) are, at least in part, derived from Latin historiography and French romances. As reference he cites his article "Det litterära porträttet i latinsk historiografi och isländsk sagaskrivning--en komparativ studie," Acta Philologica Scandinavica, 27 (1965), 68-117. He has, however, stressed foreign influence (particularly of the Latin and French type) on the saga in his other articles, too, e.g., "Tesen om de två kulturena: Kritiska studier i den isländska sagaskrivningens sociala förutsättningar," Scripta Islandica, 15 (1964), 1-97; "Studier i Olaf Tryggvasons Saga," Samlaren, 84 (1963), 54-94; and others.

Lonnroth conceives of the introduction of protagonists as "the simplest mode of setting the stage for a saga plot" (p. 8). Concerning genealogical matter in the introduction, Andersson states that it has no proleptic function and "seems rather to spring from the author's historical or antiquarian interest. It is a kind of scholarly preface" (p. 8). In this instance, Lonnroth's observation seems to be the more perceptive.

Lonnroth discusses the subject of the relationship between personality and appearance at length in his article "Kroppen som själens spegel--et motiv i de isländska sagorna," Lychnos (1963/64), but frequently refers to it in his other studies. Others, too, have noted such parallels; among them is Hans E. Kinck, who treats the subject in his work Sagaenes ånd og skikkelser (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1951), p. 13.
19 Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Njáls Saga: A Literary Masterpiece, trans. and ed. Paul Schach (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. 33. Subsequent references to Sveinsson are from this work.

20 The spelling of proper names adopted in this study conforms to that of the translation used. When reference to other sagas is made (e.g., the above-mentioned Egil's Saga), the spelling follows conventional American usage and grammar wherever practical, and not the Scandinavian model.

21 The Icelandic passage "nema hann væri vild" is translated "unless he had taken part in it" by Magnusson and Pálsson. This gives the figure of speech a more comprehensive meaning and comes perhaps closer to the author's intention than Lonnroth's "if he were not present."

22 Sveinsson reaches the same conclusion on p. 47: "...quite commonly, of course, the author's own views are revealed through the voice of the common people or through the words of intelligent individuals..."

23 Lonnroth, p. 168. If Lonnroth's observation is true, then the narrator of Njáls wanted nearly 40% of the text stressed or expressly remembered by his audience. However, the opinion that direct speech has a greater impact upon the reader than indirect speech is debatable, particularly in the context of persuasiveness with which Lonnroth is concerned here. Undoubtedly direct speech commands greater dramatic force and adds an element of active involvement for the reader; but it is precisely the less obvious persuasive devices which provide the bulk of influence over the reader by the narrator. Besides, the percentage of direct speech within the text varies greatly among the Íslendingasögur, and care should therefore be taken in making statements concerning this literary device which would affect the genre as a whole. According to Kurt Schier, Sagaliteratur (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1970), p 35, Reykdæla Saga contains 6-7% direct speech, Bandamanna Saga 47%. Njáls, with 39%, ranks fairly high in this order.

ist sein Verhältnis zum Dichter, ein Verhältnis, das ich... ein rein persönliches nennen möchte. Ein rein persönliches Verhältnis und ein sehr inniges....Der Held ist nämlich gewissermaßen das Auge, durch welches der Autor die Welt sieht...und wenn das zu viel gesagt ist...so ist der Held doch ganz sicher der Gesichtswinkel, unter welchem uns der Autor das Stück Menschentreiben, das er aus dem Ganzen ausschneidet, gerückt hat, unter dem er wünscht, daß wir es betrachten möchten. Außerdem aber--und das ist noch viel wichtiger und damit beginnt seine offizielle Mission--der Held ist der Maßstab, welchen der Zeichner auf seiner Karte notiert."

25 Ulrich Gaier, in an independent study, reaches a similar conclusion: "Sprachliche Form ist wirkendes Mittel, um den Leser oder Hörer in ganz bestimmter Weise zu beeinflussen, nicht nur in der Dichtung, sondern auch in jeder Form der Gebrauchssprache....Sie schafft Einstellungen im Hörer, Blickpunkte auf die Information, einen Hof von Unter- und Obertonen, in dem oft die Entscheidung über die Auffassung des Mitgeteilten fällt"--in Form und Information--Funktionen sprachlicher Klangmittel (Konstanz: Universitäts- verlag, 1971), p. 44.

26 He takes the term from Andersson. Cf. Andersson, p. 60.

27 Cf. also his article "Det litterära porträttet," op. cit., pp. 80 f., and pp. 86 f.

28 The phraseology here is largely mine. Lönroth describes indirect commentary thus: "The comments are made either by 'people' in general, or by selected spokesmen of the established community values, and they usually refer either to some character's status within that community ('Gunnarr was a popular man') or to the outcome of some specific action ('The killing was ill spoken of')" (Lönroth, p. 186).

29 Cf. also Lönroth, p. 187: "The narrators show a remarkable restraint in their use of all these techniques and devices....That is to say that they are not only very frugal in their own use of editorializing and high-flown, emotional expressions, but the indirect comments made by their spokesmen will also be brief and restrained."
For an evaluation of the historicity of Njál's Saga see Sveinsson, ch. 2.

For a discussion of Njál's genesis consult Andersson, pp. 303 ff., and Sveinsson, pp. 10 ff.

The authors of Íslendingasögur are unknown. Even the original manuscript of Njál's Saga has not survived, and the manuscript on which the present text is based is a two or threefold removed copy. Considering the probability that the saga is, at least to some extent, traditional, and the likelihood of scribal interpolation during the process of copying, the word "author" is not applied here in the traditional sense; rather it applies to the aggregate of individual creative talents necessary to present us with Njál in its current form.

Of the rhetorical elements discussed on this and the following pages, 31 instances of direct, and 198 instances of indirect character evaluation were found in Njál's Saga. This number may vary slightly with the edition and the criteria of selection used. The figures cited do not include the formal introductions given to important characters in the saga.

This term is used by Sveinsson to designate "the basic characteristics of an individual [as] revealed through his dealings with others" (Sveinsson, p. 94). Hallberg entitles one of his chapters "Style and Character Delineation" (Hallberg, pp. 70-80), and refers to "the author's direct presentation of a character when introduced into the story" (p. 74).

Cf. Hallberg, pp. 74 ff.; Andersson, pp. 6-11 and pp. 60-64; Lönnroth, pp. 164-170 and pp. 181-184; etc.

Compare Lönnroth's and Gaier's opinions on persuasive techniques: "To boost the hero's cause it is often quite enough to show him in homey everyday situations with which the audience can identify: eating, sleeping, surrounded by children, working on the farm, etc. This method, well known from modern political campaigns, is much practiced in the sagas..." (Lönnroth, pp. 169 f.); "Nicht so sehr zwingend und den Hörrer bis zur Ekstase einschwingend wirkt die Wiederholung mit dem Zweck der intellektuellen Gewöhnung, wie sie in der Werbung, der Propaganda, dem Zitieren von Dichtern und auch überhaupt dem Erlernen von Sprachen vorliegt. 'Wenn man etwas dreimal sagt, glauben's die Leute', wiederholte
Goebbels... Hier erzielt die Wiederholung eine Automatik im Denken, die mit bestimmten Wörtern ohne Nachdenken bestimmte gewünschte Konsequenzen verbindet, eine Automatik, die reflexartig reagiert..." (Gaier, p. 17).

37 Family solidarity is one of the most important principles in saga life (cf. genealogies, blood revenge, etc.). It is also a factor which links the saga with the heroic lays (see Stefán Einarsson on Sigrdrifumál: Sigurðr "is taught the first commandment of family solidarity, that one should not fall foul of his kinsmen and should save his revenge for people not in the family"—p. 37; also Andersson, p. 93). The statement that Mord treated his kinsfolk badly is therefore indicative of the low esteem in which the author holds this character.

38 The technique involved here is that of characterization by association, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

39 Skarp-Hedin's fifth place in line has been emphasized beginning with ch. 119, and is an important stylistic element (repetition) in the course of events described here. In this context note also Lönnroth's observation on the effect of final words in a paragraph (pp. 168 ff.). Italics appearing henceforth in passages quoted from Njal have been added by me for emphasis on certain key words and constructions.

40 For a comprehensive interpretation of Hallgerð see Sveinsson, pp. 117-137. In Appendix B Sveinsson lists an interesting bibliography concerning this character, unfortunately omitting, however, any references to recent literature.

41 Andersson stresses the absence of psychologically analytical factors in the saga: "The point is not psychological portrayal or psychological development; the author is interested only in dramatic psychology, that is, in psychology that is a function of the plot and not of personality" (Andersson, p. 32).

42 Lönnroth accepts the term "narrator spokesman" for the narrator substitute (Lönnroth, p. 168), and finds this type of characterization only infrequently used. The term "spokesman" seems to be somewhat misleading, because it implies a close ideological identification between narrator and spokesman, and this is not always the case in the saga.
Such statements are made also by villainous characters, with whom the narrator does not generally identify. The statement that this method is "sparingly used" (Lönnroth, p. 168) has been found to be erroneous in this study.

43 Pregfiguration is discussed in ch. 3 of this study.

44 This is one of the instances in which a villainous character is given the opportunity to present his view of a situation in direct speech. Compare Lönnroth, pp. 175 ff.

45 Andersson discusses this technique under the heading "Symmetry": "The saga authors have a fondness for the use of pairs and series in their plot structures. The principle is one of matching actions..." etc. (pp. 43-49). The stylistic element of contrast is discussed more fully in the following chapter.

46 A self-evaluative statement of almost identical wording appears in ch. 37. Atli says, when told to kill Kol, "That's very fitting...for we are both of us scoundrels."

47 Cf. ch. 120: "He looked every inch a warrior, and everyone knew him at first sight."

48 In the Magnusson-Pálsson translation, genealogies have been relegated to footnotes. Considering the important role which descent plays in the saga and in the characterization of hero and villain alike, this is an unfortunate practice. Although the accounts of lineage are sometimes tedious to read, it should be emphasized here that they are by no means irrelevant to the subject, and that their inclusion gave important clues to the Icelandic audience concerning the personalities of the characters.

49 Njal shows a distinctly Christian influence. The practice of witchcraft, a heathen custom, must therefore be viewed as a highly undesirable action. Sveinsson views the conflict between Christian ethics and heathen practice "as the basic element of the attitude toward life in the saga" (Sveinsson, p. 35).

50 Examples of direct evaluative statements occur in ch. 144: Flosi and Eyjolf examined the jury carefully, "but they were unable to raise any objections and retired in exasperation," or "Eyjolf Bolverksson and Flosi were alert for any flaw in the proceedings, but could find none."
Otkel's introduction by direct narrator evaluation is not in itself unfavorable, but brief: "A man called Otkel Skarfsson...lived at Kirkby. He was a kinsman of Gizur the White. He was prosperous, and had a son called Thorgeir, who was a promising young man" (ch. 47). It is Otkel's close associates, his friend Skamkel and a slave whom he likes, who shed an unfavorable light on Otkel's appearance.

Contrast this statement with Gunnar's words in chapter 75, where he refers to Hogni as "my son." Cf. the contrastive analysis of Hogni and Grani, pp. 45 f.

The term "pure" refers here to the absence of other stylistic devices such as repetition, or descriptive ones such as association, which can frequently be observed in conjunction with other examples of polarity.

The favorable attitude of Njal's author towards Christianity has been frequently noted. Sveinsson briefly discusses Kristni pátur on p. 52, the author's perspective on pp. 49 f., and touches on the relationship between characterization and ideology on p. 96: "...to a certain degree these persons can be divided into groups according to their attitudes toward life...."

"Escalation" is a term used by Andersson in his analysis of saga rhetoric (pp. 38 ff.). He sees the conflict between the two women, perhaps not quite justifiably so, as merely "a prelude to the main action" of the first part of Njal's Saga (p. 293). Cf. also his outline on p. 299.

Note Lönnroth's opinion on positive audience identification with farmers (pp. 169 f.).

When Bergthora commands Atli to find and kill Kol, Atli replies: "That's very fitting...for we are both of us scoundrels!" (ch. 37).

Cf. notes 13 and 14.

Andersson discusses a form of repetition under the heading Symmetry, which, he states, "can also entail series, in which motifs are repeated for the sake of effect...." (p. 46).

Such tactics are frequently used in political campaigns and speeches for the purpose of rhetorical persuasion (cf. note 36). Conditioned responses are, however, not alien to the saga writer's technique. His skillful use of contemporary ideals and prejudices to condition a certain reaction by the audience to his portrayal of a given character will be discussed in the following chapter under didactic saga elements.

Gaier identifies the unifying aspect of repetition thus: "Sie [die Wiederholung] hängt mit der Eigenschaft der Zeiterfüllung insofern zusammen, als durch die in regelmäßigen Abständen eintretende Wiederholung bestimmter Laute oder Lautgruppen die drei Zeitdimensionen [Gegenwart, Vergangenheit und Zukunft] inhaltlich identifiziert werden und dadurch das zwischen den Wiederholungen liegende Material in den Sog einer einheitbildenden Kraft gerät" (pp. 14 f.).

Further examples of Skarp-Hedin's stress-masking grin are found in chs. 120, 123, and 128. That this habit proved to be irritating to others can be seen from Gunnar Lambason's taunting shout into the holocaust at the Burning of the Njalssons: "Gunnar Lambason jumped up on the wall and saw Skarp-Hedin. 'Are you crying now, Skarp-Hedin?' he asked. 'No,' said Skarp-Hedin, 'but it is true that my eyes are smarting. Am I right in thinking that you are laughing?' 'I certainly am,' said Gunnar" (ch. 130).

The three repeated elements used here for purposes of illustrating the author's technique are not the only instances of repetition evident in the episode; others, such as the request for support, or the exchange of insults between Skarp-Hedin and some of the chiefs, could have been mentioned. Therefore, the numerical order of the examples chosen does not necessarily correspond with the author's arrangement of repeated elements.

For further descriptive references to Gunnar's sons see pp. 45 f.
67 Cf. Schach's discussion of the author's reason for omitting material (p. 139).

68 Andersson has noted, indirectly, this sequence of events in his synopsis of Njal's Saga. He states, that "the prelude to Njáls saga seems to be mismarriage" (p. 291), and, after listing the various marital alliances which he considers to fall into this category, remarks about Gunnar's wedding: "A double wedding is held, in which Gunnar marries Hallgerðr and his relative Þráinn Sigfússon marries Hallgerðr's daughter Þorgerðr. But no sooner have the weddings been celebrated than trouble begins anew..." (pp. 292 f.).

The prefiguration of enmity presented by the author by means of the seating arrangement is borne out by later events: Thráin Sigfusson refuses to pay the Njalssons compensation (ch. 91) and is killed by Skarp-Hedin (ch. 92); Úlf Aur-Priest supports Gizur the White against Gunnar (ch. 51); his son Runolf supports the Valgardssons against Gunnar (chs. 65-66) and supports Flosi (chs. 115, 119, 121); Valgard the Grey joins the attack on Hlidarend (ch. 75), and advises his son Mord regarding the destruction of the Njalssons (ch. 107); Mord Valgardsson prosecutes Gunnar (ch. 66), and plots the destruction of the Njalssons and Hoskuld Hvitanes-Priest (ch. 107); the Sigfussons consistently take side with Gunnar's and Njal's enemies.

69 Hallberg discusses prefiguration in the form of dreams in chapter seven ("Dreams and Destiny"): "As a rule, the dreams in the sagas are of the kind that forbode misfortune; they usually predict strife and death" (p. 82). Cf. also Sveinsson's view on forebodings, pp. 56 f. See also Andersson's excellent discussion of the various premonitory devices in the saga, which he treats under the heading "Foreshadowing" (pp. 49-54).

70 Andersson stresses particularly the suspense factor in prefiguration: "Foreshadowing is therefore, unlike retardation, not a method for creating interest in the outcome, which is prematurely divulged, but a method for creating interest in the preliminary details. The reader of a saga is not likely to leap ahead; he knows what will happen. If he is curious at all, he is curious about how it will happen" (p. 49).

71 Compare also the author's magnification of Kari in his battle with Grani Gunnarsson with the magnification of Gunnar at his introduction: "Kari jammed his shield down into the ground so hard that it stood upright by itself, caught
the spear in flight, hurled it back at Grani, and then caught hold of his shield again—all with his left hand" (ch. 150). "He [Gunnar] could strike or throw with either hand, and his sword-strokes were so fast that he seemed to be brandishing three swords at once" (ch. 19).


73Already Mord's introduction foreshadows his career as troublemaker, sealing his fate as a scoundrel with the author's remark that "when he grew up he treated all his kinsfolk badly, but Gunnar worst of all" (ch. 25); and it is Hallgerd's unforgivable sin that she fails to aid her husband Gunnar in his last battle by refusing him a strand of her hair to repair his bow.

74Not only is a similarity of physical and mental traits to be expected among kinsmen, but correlated actions, both aggressive and retaliatory, result from clannish behavior patterns. The individual's choice of action is severely curtailed by the family considerations to which it is subordinated.

75Cf. van den Toorn's discussion of "incitations," pp. 114 f.

76Magnusson and Pálsson record in a footnote that "this particular insinuation, that a man behaved like a woman every ninth night, was specifically forbidden in the laws, and must have been not uncommon" (p. 256).

77Cf. Gunnar's exclamation upon preparing to leave Iceland with Kolskegg: "Just then Gunnar's horse stumbled, and he had to leap from the saddle. He happened to glance up towards his home and the slopes of Hlidarend. 'How lovely the slopes are,' he said, 'more lovely than they have ever seemed to me before, golden cornfields and new-mown hay. I am going back home, and I will not go away!'" (ch. 75). One of the rare and poetic emotional outbursts in the saga, it depicts Gunnar as a man who loves his home above anything else, and willingly and knowingly is prepared to accept the consequences. The author thus tempers Gunnar's transgression against honorable conduct by presenting it as the lesser of two evils between which Gunnar is forced to choose.
Cf. ch. 45: "Gunnar and Njal pledged each other always to settle by themselves any matters which might crop up between them. They never broke this pledge, and always remained firm friends."

Along with a number of other devices, already discussed earlier, the reader's perspective in the revenge killings initiated by Hallgerd and Bergthora is influenced by proxy and narrator comments, which tend to incriminate Hallgerd while exonerating Bergthora. Whereas, for instance, Bergthora's statement that Hallgerd "honours no settlements" is left standing without any subsequent modifications, Njal's admission to Gunnar that "this is bad, that my wife should have broken our settlement and had your servant killed" (ch. 37), is immediately qualified by Gunnar's reply: "She shall not be blamed for that." The author then proceeds to portray Bergthora's reaction to the settlement as one of cool calmness, whereas Hallgerd flies into a rage when she hears about the agreement: "When Njal returned home he reproached Bergthora, but she said that she would never give in to Hallgerd. Hallgerd scolded Gunnar fiercely for having made a settlement over the killing, but Gunnar said that he would never break with Njal and his sons. Hallgerd stormed at him, but Gunnar paid no attention" (ch. 37).

Note that it is Gizur the White, together with Hjalti Skeggjason, who brings Christianity to Iceland (chs. 104 and 105).

The mixture of heroic and Christian ideals evident in Flosi's remark that burning (rather than killing the Njalssons in some other fashion) "is a grave responsibility before God, since we are Christian men ourselves," is typical of the philosophy exhibited by major saga characters (e.g., Njal). Note also Flosi's penance, a pilgrimage to Rome: "...Flosi sailed south across the Channel and started on his pilgrimage. He walked all the way to Rome, where he was accorded the great honour of receiving absolution at the hands of the Pope himself; he paid a large sum of money for it" (ch. 158). A subsequent reconciliation with Kari is strengthened by the bond of marriage: Flosi gives Kari his niece Hildigunn to wife.

The saga begins, for instance, with Mord Fiddle, who was a "powerful chieftain" (ch. 1). The sons of Olaf Hjalti "were all men of great distinction and wealth" (ch. 13).
Gunnar Hamundarson, among his other outstanding qualities, was "prosperous" (ch. 19). Njal himself was "wealthy" as well as handsome (ch. 20). Other examples could be cited.

The settlement after the trial specifically states that "no compensation should be paid for Eyjolf Bolverksson, because of his unfairness and dishonesty" (ch. 145).
LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED


"Studier i Olaf Tryggvasons Saga." Samlaren, 84 (1963), 54-94.


