Poetry and Landscape in the *Íslendingasögur*

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ABSTRACT

In spite of a recent surge of interest in space and place in saga scholarship, there has been no sustained study of the presentation of landscape in skaldic poetry. This thesis seeks to establish that there is, in fact, a highly sophisticated poetry of landscape preserved in the *Íslendingasögur*, and that study of these verses is crucial to any assessment of the relationship between people and land in these texts. I identify and discuss various poetic treatments of landscape in the sagas with particular attention to the associations of certain topographical features, and examine the function of these verses within the larger context of the narratives in question. Each of the three chapters deals with a different type of landscape: Chapter 1 is concerned primarily with poetic depictions of the Icelandic highland, and discusses the central role of the poet in engaging with the land; Chapter 2 examines the use of coastal landscapes and seascapes, and considers the varied responses that these verses demonstrate to littoral space and its inherent tensions; and Chapter 3 considers poetry composed about agricultural landscapes, with particular reference to expressions of ownership and the use of verses in the context of legal disputes and physical conflicts. Over the course of this study, I demonstrate the range and power of medieval Icelandic landscape poetry, the broader function of these verses in the *Íslendingasögur*, and the various ways in which these verses represent the experience of engaging with the natural world.

CONTENTS

CONVENTIONS

In most instances quotations of primary sources are taken from the *Íslenzk Fornrit* editions of those texts; however, in some instances, I have referred to more recent editions. In the case of *Egils saga*, quotations are taken from Bjarni Einarsson's 2003 edition of the text, and I make additional reference to the Arnamagnæan editions of the variant manuscripts of the saga where relevant (2001, 2006). For *Vafþrúðnismál,* I refer to the 2008 edition by Tim William Machan. I cite Anthony Faulkes' editions of the *Prose Edda*, divided into three volumes: *Prologue and Gylfaginning* (2005), *Skáldskaparmál* (2007) and *Háttatal* (2007). All quotes from *Grágás* are from the Konungsbók manuscript as edited by Vilhjálmur Finsen (1852).

Where I refer to particular chapter numbers, these refer to the chapters of the edition cited—even where, as in *Egils saga*, the numbers of the chapters vary between manuscripts. Likewise, all quotations follow the orthography and editing practices of the edition used unless otherwise indicated. As in the case of *Grágás,* where the Old Norse is not standardised I have quoted it is as it is rendered in that edition. All proper names and place names in my analysis are given in Old Norse nominative form.

All translations are my own. For each verse, I give a parallel, line-by-line translation followed by the proper word order in English in square brackets, with referents of kennings and *heiti* provided there. The intention was to maintain line divisions where possible in the parallel translation, and to ensure that kennings were properly explicated without obscuring the literal translation of the line. Occasionally this approach results in the repetition of translations, but for the sake of consistency and clarity I have applied the same conventions throughout.

In-text citations are formatted according to MLA referencing guidelines. My bibliography is a list of works consulted in the course of this study, rather than simply works cited.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university. All sources are acknowledged as references, and all works consulted in the course of this study are included in the bibliography.

INTRODUCTION

Accounts in *Landnámabók* of the first settlers to reach Iceland are concerned with two actions in particular. The first is a visual survey of the land, assessing its quality, topography and any distinguishing features; the second is the naming of the new land based on this initial assessment. Of the group who come ashore in the Austfirðir, for example, we are told that their first act is to go up "á fjall eitt hátt ok sásk um víða, ef þeir sæi reyki eða nǫkkur líkindi til þess, at landit væri byggt, ok sá þeir þat ekki [onto a high mountain and look around widely, to see if they could see from smoke or something like this that the land was inhabited, but they did not see anything]" (34). Afterwards, as they are sailing away, "fell snær mikill á fjǫll, ok fyrir þat kǫlluðu þeir landit Snæland [a lot of snow fell in the mountains, and for that they called the land Snæland]" (34). We find a similar description of high ground used to assess—and subsequently name—the land in the account of Flóki Vilgerðarson: "Þá gekk Flóki norðr á fjǫll ok sá fjǫrð einn fullan af hafísum; því kǫlluðu þeir landit Ísland [Then Flóki went north into the mountains and saw a fjord full of sea-ice; thus they called the land Iceland]" (39). This visual component in the context of accounts of the Icelandic *landnám* occurs repeatedly, recalling not only the process of mapping unfamiliar space, but also Denis Cosgrove's discussion of landscape as "the external world mediated through subjective human experience" (13). Cosgrove emphasises the importance of distance and perspective as a means of appropriation: "in an important, if not always literal, sense the spectator *owns* the view because all of its components are structured and directed towards his eyes only" (26). The fact that this act of viewing in *Landnámabók* is followed by the similarly proprietary act of naming further underlines the priorities of the text.

Our understanding of landscape in relation to medieval Iceland is naturally strongly informed by this process of settlement. The opening chapters of *Landnámabók* establish a clear sense of the bounds of the space with which they are concerned. The account of Garðarr Svávarsson, for example, includes his circumnavigation of Iceland whereby he "sigldi umhverfis landit ok vissi, at þat var eyland [sailed around the land and knew that it was an island]" (35), a performative act which effectively brings the island into being through physical exploration. The anthropologist Tim Ingold argues in *The Perception of the Environment* (2000) that landscape is

something actively created through direct engagement, which acts as "an enduring record of … the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves" (189). In the Icelandic settlement narratives, landscape is created as it is experienced, as its limits are established and it is made known to its inhabitants. The fact that the land is established to be empty at the time of settlement ensures that the landscape is created first through that process of *landnám*. That the discovered island is known subsequently as Garðarshólmr is not only another example of naming as a process of connecting person with place, of establishing and recording human presence, but also evokes a sense of the landscape as bounded, which of course is necessary to the enforcement of ownership. In the Hauksbók manuscript of *Landnámabók*, this episode concludes with an attempt to reconcile the landscape of settlement-age Iceland with its present appearance, and thus to establish a sense of continuity with the time of writing: we are told that "var þá skógr milli fjalls ok fjǫru [there was then forest between mountain and shore]" (36), a description which may have been influenced by the account of settlement in the earlier *Íslendingabók* of Ari Þorgilsson (5). Here, too, boundaries are drawn: the sense is created of mountains and sea as the limits of the landscape in question.

Establishing boundaries in this way is part of the process of exploration, making an unfamiliar space comprehensible and thus drawing it within the sphere of human knowledge and influence. Here we must move beyond purely aesthetic, visual concepts of landscape to the idea of it as created in practice. Interpretative archaeologist Christopher Tilley argues in *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (1994) that this practice can encompass physical exploration: "In the process of movement," he argues, "a landscape unfolds or unravels before an observer" (31). Exploration is, unsurprisingly, a major component in these *landnám* narratives—not only in establishing the bounds of the land to be settled, but in establishing which land is likely to be most valuable, whether due to the fertility of the soil or the presence of certain useful natural resources. For the cultural geographer Kenneth Olwig, walking in particular is intimately tied to the ongoing process of viewing and experiencing landscape, which in turn creates a sense of belonging:

> The walker experiences the material depth of the proximate environment through binocular vision and through the effect of motion parallax created by the blurring of near objects in contrast to those further away. The touched,

> smelled and heard proximate material world is thereby woven into the walker's sensory field, leading him or her to experience the landscape as a topological realm of contiguous places. (84)

Walking is not only central to this process of surveying the landscape, but also involves direct engagement with it. It is a means of bringing the landscape into being, as well as a process by which the topography may be physically shaped and altered. Paths are formed, consciously and unconsciously, by this process, serving simultaneously as visible inscriptions of human action and as signifiers of familiar, known space.

Shaping Land in the Sagas

The idea of landscape is, undoubtedly, just as central to our understanding of the *Íslendingasögur*. A number of these texts begin with comparable foundation narratives, recounting the settlement of Iceland in the ninth century and details of the lives of the settlers and their descendants. The particular sense of Iceland as previously *óbyggð*, uninhabited, that is underlined in the opening sections of *Landnámabók*, strongly informs the depiction of landscape in the sagas. Settlement in this instance involves different processes than would land-taking by conquest; these *landnám* narratives are above all concerned with forging a connection between people and land. Consequently, we find depicted in the sagas various processes by which that connection is established and reinforced: first and foremost, through physical exploration, visual survey, and the naming of land, and then through subsequent actions that ascribe meaning. One of the best-known settlement narratives is that of Skalla-Grímr, preserved both in *Landnámabók* and in *Egils saga*, in which we are told that he and his men first "kǫnnuðu landit með sæ, bæði upp ok út [explored the land along the sea, both up and out]" (*Egils saga* 38), and the process of naming various areas according to features of the landscape are subsequently described at great length (39ff.). In the case of Skalla-Grímr's own settlement, names for parts of the surrounding landscape are derived from the name of his farm: we are told that he "setti þar bœ ok kallaði at Borg, en fjǫrðinn Borgarfjǫrð, ok svá heraðit upp frá kenndu þeir við fjǫrðinn [established a farm there and called it Borg, and the fjord Borgarfjǫrðr, and so they knew the district above it from the fjord]" (39). Land is thus given meaning according to human presence.

There is certainly evidence of a historicising impulse in responses to the landscape, and attempts to draw a clear line between Iceland past and present. "The sagas civilised the landscape," Gísli Sigurðsson argues, "by imparting some meaning to it through their events and place names, many of which refer back to the settlement period, thus establishing a direct link through the land" (43-44). These narratives work to establish a sense of continuity between the period of settlement and the time that the sagas were written down, through references to place names or topographical features of which "sér enn merki … í dag [you can still see marks today]" (*Gísla saga* 60).

Tilley emphasises that landscapes "are experienced in practice, in life activities" (23); in the *Íslendingasögur*, these practices are evident not only in the accounts of settlement, but extended through the actions of the saga protagonists and their contemporaries, generations later. The Icelandic landscape in these texts is not a stable entity, but is constantly created and recreated. Place names are applied not only as part of the initial land-taking, but are produced anew to reflect and record more recent events, as in Chapter 19 of *Laxdæla saga* when a valley is named Orrostudalr following a particular conflict (46), or in Chapter 16 of *Kormáks saga*, when Bersi slays his brother-in-law, Váli "ok heitir þar síðan Válafall er hann var drepinn [and afterwards the place where he was killed was called Valafall]" (263). Burial practices and the construction of *haugar*, mounds, likewise physically and visually transform the landscape in a way that inscribes human meaning: the erection of a burial mound for Þorgrímr in Chapter 17 of *Gísla saga* is a particularly good example (56). Similarly, we find the construction of other physical markers in the landscape that serve as records of saga action—for example, the great stone in Chapter 16 of *Grettis saga* that is lifted by the protagonist and "nú heitir Grettishaf [is now called Grettishaf]" (48). Certain sagas recount instances of—often supernatural—figures inciting natural phenomena, like storms or tectonic activity, which transform the landscape: in Chapter 35 of *Laxdæla saga*, for example, Kotkell and his family incite a storm and raise hidden rocks a short way from land, and in the resultant shipwreck several new place names are formed (99-100). Elsewhere, visual signs of changes in the landscape are identified as evidence of and in relation to human habitation, as when Glúmr Eyjólfsson's home is reported to have been

destroyed in a landslide (*Víga-Glúms saga* 90). As will become clear, the function of landscape in these texts is practical and rhetorical as much as aesthetic.

My choice of terminology does, of course, require some consideration. The English term 'landscape' is derived originally from the Dutch *landschap* (*OED,* 'landscape, n.'), and is often considered to have particular pictorial connotations. To talk specifically about 'landscape' with regard to the texts of medieval Iceland, however, we must allow some distinction from the term as it relates to artistic techniques developed in Flanders and northern Italy in the fifteenth century, both schools of which later influenced English landscape painting (Cosgrove 20-21). The Icelandic landscape tradition, both in art and in literature, must be considered separate from those that emerged in Britain and on the continent. There are, however, several comparable terms in Old Norse which bear review here. Edda Waage has discussed some distinctions between the concept of 'landscape' in the English language and that of its closest analogue in Icelandic, *landslag* (Old Norse: *landsleg*), which she traces back to its earliest recorded usages in certain *Íslendingasögur* and determines to mean "a human-land relationship that is grounded in surface features of the land" (189). Significantly, in three of the eight instances that Waage identifies of the use of this term in the sagas, the quality of *landsleg* is a determining factor in the process of settlement (*Vatnsdæla saga* 34, 41; *Eiríks saga rauða* 224); in another, it determines a man's burial place (*Reykdæla saga* 198). This speculative aspect of the term is particularly evident in the protracted episode in *Vatnsdæla saga*, where Ingimundr Þorsteinsson has the condition of the land described to him prior to journeying to Iceland. Unconvinced by the prospect of living in "eyðibyggðir þær [those wild lands]" (29), he asks some seers to visit Iceland in a vision, and then to "segja mér frá landslegi [speak to me of the lay of the land]" (34). They respond with an account of its physical features:

> Þar komu vér á land, sem þrír firðir gengu af landnorðri ok vǫtn váru mikil fyrir innan einn í fjǫrðinn. Síðan kómu vér í dal einn djúpan, ok í dalnum undir fjalli einu váru holt nǫkkur; þar var byggiligr hvammr ... (35)
>
> [We came to land where three fjords stretched to the north-east, and there were great lakes within one of the fjords. Afterwards we came to a deep

> valley, and in the valley under one of the mountains were some woods; there was a habitable slope …]

Upon his eventual arrival in Iceland, Ingimundr names various local landmarks and then sends his men up a high mountain to view the area, where they determine that in Vatnsdalr "eru landkostir miklu betri [the qualities of land are much better]" (40-41).[1] Subsequently, on the approach to Vatnsdalr, Ingimundr declares that "nú kenni ek landsleg at frásǫgn þeira [I now recognise the lie of the land from their description]" and concludes that "hér sé vel byggjanda [it would be good to live here]" (41).

Interestingly, the word *landskipan* is used interchangeably with *landsleg* in Chapter 12 of *Vatnsdæla saga*: when speaking to the king, Ingimundr declares his intention to request an account of "heraðs vǫxt ok lands skipan, þar sem ek skal vera [the size of the district and the arrangement of the land where I will be]" (33). The same term is also used in Chapter 19 of *Grettis saga*, when Eiríkr jarl "stefndi … til sín lendum mǫnnum ok ríkum bóndum; tǫluðu þeir mart um lǫg ok landskipun [summoned to him landed men and powerful farmers; they talked much of law and the arrangement of the land]" (61). Alone, the term *skipan* can mean the 'order', 'arrangement' or 'position' of something; in relation specifically to land, Cleasby and Vigfússon render it as 'geography' ('skipan, f.'). In this instance, however, there is clearly a legal dimension to the assessment of land. The cognate 'landskip' in English is, of course, also related to 'landscape': Chris Fitter has discussed the popularity of 'landskip' in the seventeenth century as a technical term in painting or poetry "for naturalistic, pictorial effects and the 'composed' view" (10).

The existence of the Old Norse term *landsskapr*, which the *OED* identifies as the Old Norse cognate for the modern English term ('landscape, n.'), also merits some attention here. While it does not occur in any of the *Íslendingasögur*, it is employed in several of the *biskupasögur* and in *Oddaverja þáttr*, where the term is invoked in the context of defence of property: "Sigurðr tók þesso fiarre; ok sagðez eige mundo iá undan ser því sem hann hafðe áðr frialslega haldet saker landz-skapar ok fornar

[1] There are a number of terms employed in the sagas to indicate the physical condition of surveyed land and its appeal, whether aesthetic or practical. *Landkostr*, meaning 'quality of land'—usually in the context of settlement—for example occurs in *Kormáks saga* (205), *Grettis saga* (13), *Grænlendinga saga* (251, 261), *Laxdæla saga* (5), *Vatnsdæla saga* (40-41, 76), *Reykdæla saga* (151), *Valla-Ljóts saga* (238) and *Eiríks saga* (223, 230).

hefðar [Sigurðr denied this flatly, and said he would not consent to yield what he had previously freely held with regard to the division of land and ancient claims] (*Oddaverja þáttr* 570). In this context, *–skapr* seems to be best translated as a 'shaping' or 'division' of land—terms of ownership that have been previously agreed. This suffix is used widely in Old Norse for abstract nouns, but in certain instances denotes a specific act of creation: an obvious example is the word for 'poetry', *skáldskapr*, which in referring to the poetic form evokes the actual process of composition. The verb *skapa*, to which the second element of the compound noun is presumably related, means 'to shape, or make'. Where the *leg* of the land may most accurately be translated as its 'lay' or topography, *–skapr* additionally implies division or creation, thus is more deliberately suggestive of active processes by which people and land are connected. The Modern English term 'landscape', as we can see, usefully encompasses various aspects of the human experience of place as it is presented in the saga literature in a way that 'land' and 'topography' alone do not.

Landscape in Saga Scholarship

Until the twentieth century at least, scholarly discussions of landscape in the *Íslendingasögur* were largely informed by broader attempts to identify 'saga places' with real locations, driven in part by nineteenth-century Icelandic nationalism and popular travel narratives. Andrew Wawn identifies a number of British travellers, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, who frame their accounts of the Icelandic landscape specifically in terms of its depiction in the medieval texts (294ff.), of which William Morris' *Journals of Travel in Iceland* (1871-1873) and *A Pilgrimage to the Saga-Steads of Iceland* by W. G. Collingwood and Jón Stefánsson (1899) are perhaps the best-known. The so-called 'Icelandic school' of saga scholarship, which emerged toward the middle of the twentieth century with the work of Sigurður Nordal and the scholarly editions of Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Jón Jóhannesson, represented a scepticism surrounding the historical validity of the texts, and movement away from historicising tendencies.[2] Paul Schach's 1949 doctoral thesis was perhaps the first example of a study of saga settings in terms of their literary function, discussing "the depiction of such features of the natural surroundings as are

[2] Jesse Byock discusses at length the significance of Nordal's scholarship to arguments for Icelandic cultural uniqueness in the years leading up to and following Icelandic independence in 1944: "The literary basis of the sagas," he argues, "equipped Iceland with a cultural heritage worthy of its status as an independent nation" ('Modern Nationalism' 181).

necessary for an understanding of the following action" ('The Use of Scenery' 1). Schach summarised the conclusions of this study in a 1955 article, where he emphasises "the skilful and consistent use of the anticipatory literary setting" in relation to several sagas ('The Anticipatory Literary Setting' 13).

Structuralist readings in the second half of the twentieth century took a different approach to the spaces of these texts, drawing parallels between the 'real' world of medieval Iceland as presented in the sagas and models of Norse cosmology. In a 1969 article, Aron Gurevich argued that "Scandinavian topography is not characterized by purely geographical coordinates; it is permeated by emotional and religious sense, and geographical space is at the same time religious and mythical space" (45). For some time, the most influential scholarly discussion of the Icelandic landscape was Kirsten Hastrup's anthropological study of cosmology and society in medieval Iceland, beginning with *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland* (1985), in which she discusses vertical and horizontal models of space as structural categories in Icelandic texts (145ff.). Hastrup draws on the cosmological distinctions between Miðgarðr and Útgarðr in order to argue for a dichotomy in the Icelandic worldview between 'inside' and 'outside'—*innangarðs* and *útangarðs*—which places the home/farm at the civilised centre and conceives of the space beyond the *garðr*, the fence or boundary, as wild and unpeopled (*Island of Anthropology* 26ff.). The limitations of this binary model of Norse cosmology have since been discussed by a number of scholars including Margaret Clunies Ross (*Prolonged Echoes* II, 79-81), Ian Wyatt ('Form and Function' 62-63), and Gro Steinsland (139-142). Most recently, Kevin J. Wanner has observed that in spite of "its long-standing popularity and seeming naturalness, the concentric vision of the Norse cosmos has surprisingly little support from the sources" ('Off-Center' 39).

Recently, we have seen a much greater interest in the literary functions of landscape in the *Íslendingasögur*. Vésteinn Ólason discusses topography in the *Íslendingasögur* only briefly, but observes that "the sagas exhibit a powerful sense of place as regards the parts of the country in which the actions occur, … even when … settings are used primarily to serve the plot of the saga rather than as narrative decoration" (*Dialogues* 82). Margaret Clunies Ross has examined the processes by which the Icelandic settlers legitimise their land-taking and compared male and female settlement paradigms (*Prolonged Echoes* II, 122ff.; 'Land-Taking and Text-

Making' 176). P. S. Langeslag's *Seasons in the Literatures of the Medieval North* (2015) incorporates some discussion of seasonal—specifically, winter—landscapes in Norse mythology and law codes (100ff.), and briefly surveys depictions in some of the *Íslendingasögur* (151-154). Gillian Overing and Marijane Osborn's *Landscape of Desire* (1994), which gives an account of travels in Iceland and Scandinavia to sites of literary interest, also contains assessments of the characters of Gunnarr in *Njáls saga*, Grettir in *Grettis saga*, and Guðrún in *Laxdæla saga* in light of the authors' experiences of the landscapes described in those texts (64-79).

Most notably, Ian Wyatt has emphasised the need to read saga landscapes as "literary devices that function as elements within the narrative grammar of the sagas", and further that "specific topographic terms have clear and identifiable literary functions" ('Landscape of the Icelandic Sagas' 62). His 2001 doctoral thesis emphasises the centrality of landscape to the construction of saga narratives, beginning with a detailed statistical analysis of the distribution of topographical vocabulary in the sagas ('Form and Function' 19-31). The three chapters of his study concern themselves with the various narrative functions of specific landscape 'types': woods, in relation to ideas of concealment; rivers, as boundaries and retardation devices; and ice, as a transformation of landscape and thus a potential site of action. In subsequent articles Wyatt has drawn upon and developed the central tenets of his thesis ('Landscape of the Icelandic Sagas'; 'Narrative Functions') and examined the role of descriptions of landscape and weather in a particular episode of *Eyrbyggja saga* ('Landscape and Authorial Control').

Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough's doctoral thesis (2011), meanwhile, explores what she refers to as the "spatial and cultural paradox … that lay at the heart of medieval Norse-Icelandic culture"—"being conceptually both at the centre and the edge of the world"—and its impact on the construction of Norse identity in these texts ('Landscape and the Semiotics of Space' 4). In the first chapter of her study Barraclough discusses the importance of testing and establishing boundaries, both physical and social, in the Vínland sagas; in the second chapter, she discusses the role of geography in solidifying the relationship between a society and a new land with reference to *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*; and in the third and final chapter, she concludes with a discussion of problematic saga protagonists in the outlaw sagas. In a subsequent related article, Barraclough has also discussed the

significance of place names in *Egils saga* and *Landnámabók*, arguing that the naming process effectively "traces the physical geography of the area through a process of semantic 'mapping', creating a visually vivid, narratively coherent impression of the topography" ('Naming the Landscape' 84). Her analysis of outlawry in *Grettis saga* and *Gísla saga* likewise involves a discussion of the function of the Icelandic landscape in these texts, and particularly of the use of the physical environment "to illustrate [the protagonist's] position within and outside of the social world" ('Inside Outlawry' 370).

Emily Lethbridge's 2011 project 'The Sagasteads of Iceland: A 21st-century Pilgrimage' represents a different approach to the texts, in which, inspired by and drawing upon nineteenth-century travelogues, she travelled around Iceland reading the *Íslendingasögur* in the context of the physical landscapes described, recording her progress and experiences in a blog. Subsequently, Lethbridge has developed the on-going Icelandic Saga Map project, which currently displays digitised, hyperlinked versions of the texts of the *Íslendingasögur*, enabling users both to track saga locations on a digital map and to identify where they appear in multiple texts. In a recent article, Lethbridge identifies manuscripts and landscape as related "material contexts for the transmission and reception of the *Íslendingasögur*" ('Icelandic Sagas' 52), and discusses the role of place names in the creation of saga narratives as well as some of the problems of identifying places in the real landscape with 'saga places' ('Icelandic Sagas' 54ff.).

The surge in interest in the field of ecocriticism from the end of the twentieth century has, meanwhile, foregrounded the idea of human engagement with landscape in literary studies.[3] In the last ten years there has been a noticeable increase in the number of ecocritical readings of medieval texts, and this is beginning to be true also of saga studies.[4] Carl Phelpstead has underlined the great potential of Icelandic

[3] For an overview of the development of ecocriticism and its different 'traditions', see Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (2012); on importance to literary studies in particular, see *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996). Jonathan Bate, notably, heavily influenced the application of ecocritical theory to British Romantic literature, and particularly to John Clare studies, in his seminal work *The Song of the Earth* (2000).

[4] On early medieval Irish and Welsh literature as "a model for empathetic human interaction with the environment" (6), see Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Literature* (2009). For ecocritical readings of Old English literature, see Matt Low's article 'Ecopoetry and the Anglo-Saxon Elegy' (2009) and Corinne Dale, *The Natural World in the Exeter*

sagas and related settlement narratives as a source for ecocritical readings, and analysed depictions of the relationship between the human and the non-human—comprising both the physical environment and non-human forms of life—in *Eyrbyggja saga* (3ff.). Arguably the most famous example of a consciousness of environmental change in the literature of medieval Iceland is the aforementioned assertion that the land was heavily forested at the time of settlement (*Íslendingabók* 5, *Landnámabók* 36); Christopher Abram has discussed this depiction of deforestation and the centrality of trees in Norse culture ('Felling Trees' 10ff.), in an article in the forthcoming collection *Nordic Naturecultures: Ecocritical Approaches to Film, Art and Literature*. Michael Bintley, in his work on trees in Anglo-Saxon England, similarly emphasises the need to take into account the natural world in our attempts to understand past societies and social practices (6-7). Kevin J. Wanner, meanwhile, has utilised theories of waste and pollution to inform his analysis of a particular episode of *Eyrbyggja saga* ('Purity and Danger' 213ff.). Ecocriticism is, of course, also a field in which poetry as a medium has received considerable attention, the significance of which has been articulated most forcefully by Jonathan Bate: "a poem is not only a making of the self and a making of the world, but also a response to the world and a respecting of the earth" (282).

Landscape and Poetic Language

In spite of this renewed interest in landscape in saga scholarship, there has, prior to this point, been no comparable sustained study of the role of landscape in the skaldic poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*—a significant oversight, since the verses of these texts contain varied and striking depictions of and responses to their environment. A consciousness of the connection between people and land is clearly embedded in the vocabulary and techniques of skaldic verse: poetic language and the mythology from which it is derived encourage this association through the body of kennings that conceive of the human body explicitly in terms of landscape features. Verse 4 of *Víga-Glúms saga* renders the head as "hattar felli [the mountain of the hat]" (4.6); Verse 16 of *Eyrbyggja saga* describes the hand as "haukaness [the headland of hawks]" (16.2); and in Verse 45 of *Egils saga*, "ennis … þvergnípur [the cross-peaks

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Book Riddles (2017). For similar studies in Middle English literature, see for example Gillian Rudd, *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval Literature* (2007) and *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser (2008).

of the forehead]" (23.1-4) are the eyebrows. Guðrún Nordal has reviewed some of the types of landscape used as base-words in kennings to describe parts of the body: head, arms and chest conceived of in terms of high land and promonitories, but also more generally in terms of ground or land, and stones most commonly used in reference to the eyes (*Tools of Literacy* 296-308). The precedent for this association of the physical body with landscape surely lies in part with the myth of Ymir, recounted as follows in Stanza 21 of *Vafþrúðnismál*:

Ór Ymis holdi	From Ymir's flesh
var iǫrð um scǫpuð,	was the earth shaped,
en ór beinom biǫrg;	and from his bones the rocks,
himinn ór hausi	heaven out of the skull
ins hrímkalda iǫtuns,	of the rime-cold giant,
enn ór sveita sjór.	then from his blood the sea.

This account of creation as a 'shaping' of land—from the verb *skapa,* 'to shape'—out of Ymir's body is expanded further by Snorri Sturluson in *Gylfaginning* to include more details regarding the formation of features like *grjót* and *urð,* gravel and stones (11-12). Nordal argues that "kennings that depict the human body in terms of the natural landscape have deeper roots in Icelandic skaldic poetics" than in the Neoplatonic influence to which she attributes the use of cosmological imagery in poetic circumlocution (*Tools of Literacy* 296). In several instances, we find kennings of this type used to form extended poetic conceits, as in Verse 11 of *Gunnlaugs saga*:

Munat háðvǫrum hyrjar	It will not, for the shame-wary handler
hríðmundaðar Þundi	of the storm-embers of Þundr,
hafnar hǫrvi drifna	suffice to associate with the
hlýða jǫrð at þýðask,	holding-ground of snow-driven linen,
þvít lautsíkjar lékum	since I played, when I was younger,
lyngs, es vǫ́rum yngri,	on the headlands of the arm's jewel,
alnar gims á ýmsum	each in turn, of that land of the
andnesjum því landi.	heather of the hollow-salmon.

[It will not, for the shame-wary warrior (handler of the battle {storm-embers of Óðinn}), suffice to associate with the woman (holding-ground of snow-

> driven linen), since I played, when I was younger, on the fingers (headlands of the ring {arm's jewel}) of that woman (land of gold {heather of the snake <hollow-salmon>}), each in turn.]

Here we find the kenning for 'woman', "hǫrvi ... jǫrð [linen-ground]" (11.3-4)—in this instance referring to Helga, the object of the protagonist's affections—transformed further by the qualifier "drifna [of driven snow]" (11.3), which successfully evokes not only the image of a lady dressed in white, but also a snow-covered landscape. This conception of woman as land in the first *helmingr* is, moreover, sustained through to the final lines, where her fingers are described as "alnar gims ... andnesjum [headlands of the arm's jewel]" on "því landi [that land]" (11.7-8). There is a strong resonance in this verse between the body of the lady and the topographical features evoked—it is not difficult to make the connection between fingers and headland, both in terms of shape and extremity. The extended kenning in the second half of the verse is also comprised of natural features: alongside *land,* we find *laut,* 'a hollow place', and *lyng,* 'heather'. Thus a snake is *lautsíkr*, 'salmon of the hollow'; 'heather of the snake' means gold; and 'the land of gold' is the woman. The idea of landscape is in this instance used to great poetic effect.

There is clearly a well-developed vocabulary of landscape utilised in the composition of skaldic verse, something that is equally clear when we look at the versified lists of poetic synonyms preserved in the *Prose Edda*. These are listed at the end of *Skáldskaparmál* as another resource for the effective composition of skaldic verse (109), though the *þulur* themselves are composed using eddic metres. Clunies Ross suggests that such lists are likely to have developed in response to "the need oral poets felt to have access to versified aide-mémoires which functioned somewhat like rhyming dictionaries" (*A History of Old Norse Poetry* 31). Elena Gurevich has recently edited and translated these *þulur* in the edition of *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics* (2017), and grouped them usefully according to subject. A number of these pertain particularly to landscape vocabulary: we find, for example, *heiti* for the sea (833-837), rivers (838-849), earth (877-880), trees (880-884), islands (972-982), and fjords (982-984). Especially interesting are the associations drawn in the verses themselves between these broad landscape 'types' and more specific topographical features: in one of the *sjóvar heiti*, for example, we find the expected synonyms "flóð ok brim [flood and surf]" (2.2) alongside more evocative terms like

"grœðir [grower]" (2.3)—but also "sund [sound]" (2.1) and "ǫgr [inlet]" (2.1), which refer to particular types of seascapes. This same technique, whereby the part may stand for the whole, is borne out in the kennings we see in skaldic poetry: the kenning for hand might be simply 'the land of the hawk', but it might also be rendered as "hólms … hauks [the hawk's holm]" (*Víga-Glúms saga* 2.1-2), or "haukaness [the headland of hawks]" (*Eyrbyggja saga* 16.2), or even "haukaklifs [the cliff of hawks]" (*Egils saga* 23.3). The language of landscape is, evidently, very much embedded in medieval Icelandic poetics; it is unsurprising, then, that we should find poems about real landscapes—as well as metaphorical ones—among the skaldic corpus. It is these verses that will be the focus of my thesis.

The Functions of Skaldic Poetry

Bjarni Einarsson's 1974 article on the role of verse in saga literature encouraged a conception of the *Íslendingasögur* as texts in which prose and poetry are both integral components of the narrative, and in which the verses may serve a function beyond the merely corroborative ('On the Role' 122). This has been identified as the major difference from the use of verse in the *konungasögur*, in which the poetry is presented more explicitly as source material (Tulinius, 'The Prosimetrum Form' 191-2, Meulengracht Sørensen, 'The Prosimetrum Form' 176). Diana Whaley, in her discussion of the distinction between what she calls 'situational' and 'authenticating' verses, observes that the former—composed "in response to an event, a situation or a verbal cue" with the potential to "affect the course of events or the ensuing conversation" (251)—predominate in the *Íslendingasögur* (254). There is certainly a strong alignment between the priorities of the verses in the *Íslendingasögur* and those of the prose narratives; a keen awareness of the Icelandic landscape and local detail is one example of this. The "powerful sense of place" to which Vésteinn Ólason refers in relation to the sagas as a whole (*Dialogues* 82) is as present and evident in the poetry as it is in the prose. Paul Bibire, considering reasons for the inclusion of skaldic verse in the *Íslendingasögur,* argued that "verses will cluster round points or themes of importance within the saga, and … the verses will therefore serve both to reinforce and mark these" (3). There are a large number of verses in the *Íslendingasögur* which must be considered as more than straightforward expressions of internal thoughts or feelings, since they are in addition concerned either wholly or in part with the external world. In some

instances, the external world is depicted in conjunction with an expression of deep feeling: in the case of *Sonatorrek* in *Egils saga,* for example, grief at the tragic loss of sons is expressed in terms of a vivid seascape, while a sequence of verses in *Víglundar saga* express separation from a loved one in terms of physical distance. In *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative*, Heather O'Donoghue has distinguished between verses presented as evidence and those presented as dialogue (3-4), and discussed the effects of these different techniques in relation to the major themes of several sagas. The prose context of these verses is, of course, crucial to our understanding of their function in the text as a whole. In what contexts, then, do we find examples of landscape poetry in the sagas?

Many of these verses are, according to the saga narratives, composed explicitly in the context of particular landscapes: as we will see, a number of verses in *Grettis saga, Bergbúa þáttr* and *Eyrbyggja saga* are recited in caves; in *Víglundar saga* and *Kormáks saga* we find some composed by the coast or while out at sea; in *Njáls saga* and *Harðar saga* verses are even spoken within *haugar*, burial mounds. In this respect, the verses in question seem to align well with Whaley's description of the 'situational' function. There is, moreover, in some cases a strong visual component to the passages that introduce these verses, with the verbs *sjá,* 'to see', and *líta,* 'to look', often preceding *kveða,* 'to speak, compose'. Verse 9 of *Heiðarvíga saga* is not only composed specifically in the context of agricultural land, but is preceded by the assertion that the poet "sá á, er þeir ætluðu at slá [looked out, where they intended to mow]" as he spoke (293). *Víga-Glúms saga*, meanwhile, contains a number of verses which are composed while surveying owned land (20, 30-31, 71, 89-90). In the case of Verse 20 of *Gunnlaugs saga*, we are told that the poet "leit þá aptr yfir ána ok kvað vísu þessa [then looked back over the river and composed this verse]" (97). There are stanzas which combine the act of looking with poetic composition explicitly in the context of land-taking or a desire for land, as in Verse 5 of *Grettis saga,* when Ǫnundr views Kaldbak (22), or in *Bárðar saga,* when Helga Bárðardóttir performs a poetic survey of Snæfellsnes and we are told that she "stóð úti ok litaðist um ok kvað vísu [stood outside and looked around and spoke a verse]" (115). Verse 1 of *Droplaugarsona saga,* meanwhile, presents a heavily forested landscape as a problematic site for settlement due specifically to the fact that the speaker's view is heavily impeded (167). On two occasions in *Gísla saga,* poets are

described as having "leit til haugsins [looked towards the burial mound]" immediately before composing verses (50, 58). Verse 23 of *Eyrbyggja saga* is spoken at the burial of *berserkir* in a pit in the lava-field (75). In the case of *Þórðar saga hreðu*, we are told that the poet "hurfu … um hauginn [walked around the mound]" before composing his verse (213).

In these verses there is often a strong sense of landscape features as a visual cue, holding certain memories or associations and serving as a prompt to poetic composition. Landscape scholarship often intersects with the field of memory studies, which is certainly worth considering here. The 2014 collection *Minni and Muninn*, edited by Pernille Hermann, Stephen Mitchell and Agnes Arnórsdóttir, has underlined the usefulness of memory studies in the study of Old Norse literature, and of poetry in particular: Margaret Clunies Ross' article discusses the importance of the concept of memory to presenting skaldic verse as 'authentic' ('Authentication' 60), while Kate Heslop notes that "skaldic memory discourse is at times self-referential, describing the poem itself as a reminder, act of remembrance or memorial" ('*Minni* and the Rhetoric of Memory' 85). Erin Goeres in *The Poetics of Commemoration* (2015) examines the function of skaldic commemoration of kings in the *konungasögur*, though she does note that "much commemorative verse was not composed about royal figures", and that "the *Íslendingasögur* contain numerous examples, particularly of poetry about the deaths of family members" (173). Interestingly, a number of the memorial verses preserved in the *Íslendingasögur* also involve references to or contemplations of the landscape—one way in which we see the forging of identity between people and land enacted through verse. Verse 17 of *Egils saga*, in which the protagonist mourns the loss of his brother in battle, is an excellent example of commemorative verse that also incorporates landscape: following a description of the circumstances in which Þórólfr fell, he declares that "Jǫrð grœr … Vínu nær of mínum … ágætum barma [Earth grows near Vína over my excellent brother]" (17.5-8).

I have observed already the historicising impulse in these texts, and it bears repeating here. In his discussion of the relationship between myth and ritual, Stefan Brink has noted the significance of connecting myth "with certain physical features in the landscape, objects that, owing to their perpetual presence, make the mythical stories not only memorable but enable them to function as sanctions or witnesses to these

myths" ('Myth and Ritual' 34). Similarly, this tendency in the *Íslendingasögur* to frame verses in terms of looking at a particular landscape feature suggests an attempt to associate collective memory with local detail. This process of reinforcement is reciprocal: the landscape feature has the potential to act as a prompt to composition or aid to memory for the poem, just as the poem may serve as a record of stories attached to that place, imbuing it with meaning. This process resonates particularly well with Ingold's notion of the 'temporality' of the landscape: "To perceive the landscape," he argues, "is … to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past" (189).

"In saga literature," Jürg Glauser claims, "it is first and foremost the landscape and the events localized in it which play the decisive roles as guarantors of memory" (20). By this dialectic of reinforcement and through the emphasis placed in the sagas on the idea of permanence and preservation in relation to poetry, the medium gains particular resonance. Identifying a certain verse with a certain location has the potential not only to reinforce the sense of belonging, but, as we will see, may also function as a means of asserting ownership. Judith Jesch has discussed the potential function of runic inscriptions in the context of land ownership as a physical monument to and record of inheritance ('Runic Inscriptions' 31ff.); elsewhere, she has compared the figure of the *skáld* with that of the rune-carver and emphasised the similarity as lying in "the job of recording essential information to preserve it" ('Skaldic Verse' 192). Interestingly, this connection between runes and verse is made explicit in *Egils saga* and *Grettis saga*, both of which contain instances of verses recited and then inscribed as runic carvings (*Egils saga* 59 and 136, *Grettis saga* 203 and 216). In the same way that we find physical inscriptions of inheritance and possession of land on rune stones, a number of the saga verses concerned with landscape represent assertions of ownership. In this respect, we might consider topographical features in terms of what Joseph Harris refers to in his discussion of *Sonatorrek* as "the physical 'monuments', the furniture of the poem" ('Old Norse Memorial Discourse' 128).

Considering skaldic poetry in this light, moreover, holds some significance for our understanding of the relationship between law and poetry in Old Norse literature.

Jesse Byock's *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (1982) prompted a reassessment of the structure of these texts in light of their construction and placement of legal conflicts and feuds, and drew attention to the centrality of land in these conflicts (143-160). Subsequently, the work of William Ian Miller has underlined the significance of an understanding of law and legal process to our readings of the sagas (*Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* 221-259). Hannah Burrows, meanwhile, has discussed "the way legalities function as part of the framework of saga narratives, and … the literary and stylistic uses to which they are put by saga authors" ('Cold Cases' 36ff.). In the course of this consideration of the literary functions of legal detail, she observes that the inclusion of legalities and of skaldic verse in these texts may be productively compared ('Cold Cases' 48). Burrows develops this comparison in another article to trace "the correlation between the poetic and the legal in Commonwealth-period Iceland", in the course of which she observes that "the linguistic, performative, and memorization skills implied in the job description of the lawspeaker … are surely also the skills required of the successful skald" ('Rhyme and Reason' 216).

Poetry occupies a somewhat contradictory position in the *Íslendingasögur*, where it is presented as a medium with the potential to either improve or undermine social standing. Since poetry and poets lie at the centre of so many of the conflicts of these texts, it follows that their role in those conflicts merits consideration. Stephen Mitchell has emphasised the advantages of a performance-oriented approach to Old Norse poetry (191-2), and Thomas Bredsdorff has discussed the relevance of speech act theory to saga studies (36ff.), but there has been limited discussion of saga verse in this respect. Studies of performance in relation to skaldic poetry have tended to focus on context and reception, though Stefanie Würth briefly expands the definition in order to consider the potential for the composition of a verse to constitute a performative speech-act (268). Perhaps most useful in this regard has been Heslop's discussion of the application of the standards of expressive lyricism to *Sonatorrek* and its consequent popularity; she proposes, in conclusion, that the concept of performativity is one "alternate emphasis which could be brought to bear on some other skaldic poems" ('Gab mir ein Gott' 162). Certainly, the performative potential of skaldic verse as a medium, and the importance of that potential in the context of the sagas, should not be overlooked.

Landscape Poetry in the Sagas

Those verses contained in the *Íslendingasögur* which depict the Icelandic landscape are not only vital to our understanding of these texts as a whole, but also demonstrate that there is a distinct poetry of place in medieval Iceland—one that is central to the identity of its people with the land they inhabit and own. The inclusion of vivid topographical detail and a well-developed vocabulary of landscape (as discussed above); the place names embedded in verses as points of reference (for example, in *Víga-Glúms saga* 31 and *Bárðar saga* 115); the use of verses to express loss of direction (as in *Eyrbyggja saga* 111, when Bjǫrn Breiðvíkingakappi accounts for his absence) or to give directions (*Grettis saga* 176-177, *Bárðar saga* 124); and to record events that took place in a particular location (*Heiðarvíga saga* 292ff., *Svarfdæla saga* 179-181), all combine to create a keen sense of the local landscape in these texts. Specificity is part of the poetry of place, and poetry, as will become clear, is a way for people to engage and identify with the land they inhabit. If, as the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan suggests, place is characterised by feelings of attachment (*Space and Place* 3-4), then poetry is one means of expressing and reinforcing that attachment—as well as another process by which unpeopled land is imbued with human meaning. While this study will not be explicitly ecocritical, there is evidently some application for my research in this field, since my definition of landscape encompasses processes by which people relate to their environment.

With all this in mind, this thesis seeks to identify and examine depictions of landscape in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*, first and foremost with regard to the level of topographical detail and the strong sense of place that they demonstrate. In doing so, I also analyse the range of effects—social, legal, and literary—to which these landscape verses are used in the sagas, and discuss the implications of these verses in the broader context of the narratives in question. I examine ways in which saga poets articulate an appreciation for and connection to the Icelandic landscape, lament loss of land and/or banishment from Iceland, and negotiate their position in society by means of these verses. Perhaps most significantly, I consider the role of the poet and the function of verse in the context of legal conflicts and claims, and where relevant make reference to the Icelandic law codes, *Grágás,* to discuss the use of certain topographical features. For the purposes of this study, I divide the corpus of landscape poems in the *Íslendingasögur* and related *þættir* broadly into three

groups, dealing with mountainous, coastal, and agricultural landscapes. Naturally, texts do not always fall neatly into one of these over the others: in some cases, a verse may depict or make reference to topographical features from more than one of these categories, and the sagas themselves of course contain poetic depictions of various different types of landscape. Nevertheless, I have selected for discussion and grouped together those sagas which best exemplify the landscape-types in question, and which use them to particularly interesting effect.

My first two chapters deal with the physical and conceptual boundaries of owned land. Chapter 1 explores some vivid depictions of the Icelandic highland in saga verse, and discusses certain topographical features of that landscape. An understanding of this space is especially relevant to readings of texts like *Bergbúa þáttr* and *Grettis saga*. Ideas of 'civilised' and 'wild', as we will see, are foregrounded in these works: the poets associated with the interior highland often stand apart somewhat from Icelandic society, but demonstrate a particularly strong affinity with the land. There is, moreover, an association of hills with *haugar*, burial mounds, which—particularly when combined with the motif of 'dying into the mountain' that emerges in texts like *Grettis saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*—demonstrates a strong consciousness of the relationship between people and landscape. Chapter 2, by contrast, represents a movement outwards, from the geographically central but socially marginal highlands to the inhabited coastline, to examine the initial act of settlement and the role of poetry and the saga poet in the process of *landnám.* Here I consider the particular problems and dangers of the Icelandic coastal existence and their representation in saga verse, and offer readings of verses from *Víglundar saga*, *Egils saga* and *Kormáks saga*. A discussion of littoral landscapes serves to problematise the traditional land/sea dichotomy applied to these texts, as well as to underline the specific position of Icelandic settlements. Chapter 3 deals more explicitly with land ownership, exploring the particular appeal of agricultural landscapes in the sagas and the use of poetry in a performative sense. I examine the centrality of ownership to the narrative of *Víga-Glúms saga* and the extent to which the verses of this text reflect that imperative. The final section of this chapter discusses the preoccupation with physical boundaries evident in the *Íslendingasögur*, with reference particularly to *Svarfdæla saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*, and the potential of skaldic verse to defend—both legally and physically—claims to land. In my

conclusion, I consider these three categories of landscape verses together, assess their significance to our understanding of the functions of skaldic verse in the *Íslendingasögur*, and end finally by discussing the role of these medieval poetic landscapes in the context of the development of nineteenth-century Icelandic Romanticism and national identity.

CHAPTER 1

HILLS, *HELLAR* AND *HAUGAR*

In his discussion of the human fascination with mountains, Robert Macfarlane emphasises that these features of the landscape are essentially "a collaboration of physical forms of the world with the imagination of humans" (19). Where scholarship has examined literary treatments of mountains, there has been a tendency to distinguish broadly between modern and pre-modern approaches to this type of landscape, and consequently to dismiss representations in medieval literature as either derivative of and obscured by inherited traditions or merely overwhelmingly negative. This distinction was articulated most clearly by Marjorie Hope Nicolson in *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (1963), where she posited that there was a turning point in literary attitudes towards mountains which took place in the late seventeenth century (27). Prior to this, Nicolson argued, depictions were largely characterised by conventions inherited from "the negativistic influence of the Latin classics and Christian allegorization" (47). More recently, Edwin Bernbaum and Larry Price (2013) have suggested that "there are few favourable references to mountains" in medieval literature, though they cite Leonardo da Vinci's observations of mountains in the fifteenth century as one of the first instances of "a new interest in natural beauty and natural phenomena" (257-258). Yi-Fu Tuan, meanwhile, has observed that the "medieval cosmic model … gave rise to conflicting attitudes about the mountain", noting a tension between concepts of spiritual elevation and ascent and the idea of jutting landscapes as a ruin or deformation of God's design (*Romantic Geography* 41).

Previous studies of depictions of mountains in medieval literature have thus focused generally on their allegorical or spiritual function—most noticeably in the case of Dante's *Purgatorio* and Petrarch's *Epistolae Familiares*.[5] Albrecht Classen, in recent articles and as part of a larger survey of rural space in the Middle Ages, has however sought to establish that "medieval poets and writers were not blithely ignorant of mountains, and did not deliberately leave them out" ('Discovery of the Mountain' 11). He has discussed, for example, the mountain climb in Marie de

[5] For recent analyses of mountains in Petrarch and Dante, see for example Unn Falkeid, 'Petrarch, Mont Ventoux and the Modern Self' (2009), and Peter S. Hawkins, 'The Religion of the Mountain: Handling Sin in Dante's *Purgatorio*' (2012).

France's *Les deus amanz* ('Introduction' 37-39), Petrarch's spiritual contemplations in his *Ascent to Mont Ventoux* ('Discovery of the Mountain' 3-18), and Emperor Maximilian's use of the mountain as "staging ground" in *Theuerdank* ('Mountains as a Novel Staging Ground' 11-17). Classen challenges the notion that mountains in the Middle Ages constituted "nothing but a challenge, a danger, a barrier, and a threat to all travelers and others" ('Discovery of the Mountain' 3); I would argue, similarly, that the images of highland landscapes we find in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* are far more prominent and complex than has generally been acknowledged.

Nicolson attributed the perceived shift in attitudes towards mountains—from 'mountain gloom' to 'mountain glory', as she put it, adopting terms from John Ruskin—to the development of aesthetic concerns, the most significant of which she identified as the discovery of the 'Sublime' in Nature (27). The concept has, of course, emerged often in discussions of mountains in literature, since those conditions of 'obscurity' and 'vastness' outlined by Edmund Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry* (1757) as fundamental to the Sublime experience are particularly applicable to mountainous landscapes: "an hundred yards of even ground," Burke asserts, "will never work such an effect as … a rock or mountain of that altitude" (66). Interestingly, Emily Brady has recently outlined the suitability of various features of Iceland's landscape to a discussion of the Sublime ('The Sublime, Ugliness' 127). Brady has on several occasions emphasised the continued relevance of the concept for negotiating human relationships with the natural world (*Sublime in Modern Philosophy* 2; 'The Environmental Sublime' 182), arguing that it "presents an aesthetic moment in which we come to some greater awareness of our relationship to the natural world and our inability to control its astonishing qualities" ('The Sublime, Ugliness' 134). This idea of the mountainous landscape as a point at which awareness of the natural world is heightened is certainly relevant to our analysis of the verses of the *Íslendingasögur*, which—as I will demonstrate in this chapter—show a particular fascination with this space. For now, however, let us consider treatments of mountains in the sources more broadly.

What, then, do mountains constitute for the medieval Icelander? With regard to Iceland's geography, elevated terrain makes up most of the interior of the island. These are not dizzying Alpine peaks, certainly, but they are an inescapable aspect of

the physical space inhabited—a constant, looming presence to be confronted. As a starting point, we might examine representations of highland landscapes from two perspectives, the first of which is their depiction in the context of narratives of settlement. We have seen already that one of the first acts of the settlers in the process of *landnám* is to seek higher ground in order to perform a visual survey of the land. Thus the primary function of the mountain in settlement narratives is as a point of prospect: the viking Nadodd, Flóki Vilgerðarson, Steinólfr inn lági and Helgi inn magri are all reported in *Landnámabók* as having employed this technique (34, 39, 156, 250), and the image occurs likewise in certain accounts in the *Íslendingasögur* (for example, in *Vatnsdæla saga* 40). The term *fjall*, moreover, forms one of the conceptual boundaries of settled land in the literature, as the limit of the land that may be taken "milli fjalls ok fjǫru [between mountain and shore]" (*Egils saga* 39).

Secondly, we should consider their treatment in legal texts. A consciousness of mountains permeates medieval Icelandic society to the extent that they emerge in various sections of the law codes. We are told, for example, that when a horse is borrowed without permission, it merits *skóggangr*, full outlawry, "ef maðr riðr um fiöll þau er vatn föll deilir af a millom heraða [if a man rides over mountains which divide the waters between districts]" (*Grágás* 61). Mountains are natural boundaries enforced as legal ones. "Eigi er scylt at ganga a merki þar er fioll þau ero er vatn föll deilaz amillom heraða [It is not necessary to walk the boundaries where there are mountains that divide the waters between districts]," we are told; nor is it "scyllt at ganga ór búfiár gangi afiall. qveþa scal þar amerki [necessary to go up a mountain beyond the range of livestock, boundaries there will be stated]" (*Grágás* 80-81). Laws of ownership are moreover complicated here. The highlands require their own set of rules regarding found objects, distinct from those in settled areas: "Nu fiðr maðr a heiðom uppi þa scal hann selia þeim manne at varðveita er næstr byr göto. hann scal uphalda þa. En sa eignaz er land á næst fialleno [If a man finds something up on the heath, then he should hand it over to the man to keep who lives nearest the road; he should then declare it, but it belongs to whoever owns land nearest the mountain]" (*Grágás* 186). We know that mountains signified the limit of settled land; this is uninhabitable space, but it is nonetheless one with which people engaged. For some, making the necessary journey to Þingvellir for the general

assembly, the most direct route was through the highlands. Mountainous terrain as we find it in the *Íslendingasögur* is rooted in certain social realities: not only is it a space through which people must have travelled, but certain highland landscapes functioned as a supplementary part of the Icelandic agricultural system—as pasture land, for grazing livestock. As will become clear over the course of this chapter, this is a space in which the very boundaries of society are negotiated. We find all these aspects, moreover, reflected strongly in the verses of the sagas.

With all this in mind, it is unsurprising that the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* should demonstrate a keen awareness of highland landscapes, and of the features that are particularly associated with this space. As I have already observed, saga verse in general demonstrates a rich vocabulary of landscape, and this is true too of mountainous landscapes in particular. Terms like *fjall*, *bjarg*, *heiðr*, *berg* and *hamarr* all emerge repeatedly, as well as more specific topographical features that emerge in the context of the Icelandic interior, like *jökull* and *hraun.* *Hellar*, caves, as we will see, seem to be the object of a particular poetic fascination, and *haugar*, mounds, will likewise be considered in light of the connection between highland landscapes and memory of the dead. In this first chapter, I will consider texts which demonstrate a clear preoccupation with mountainous terrain and its inherent tensions—foremost among them, *Grettis saga*, where poetic constructions of landscape are crucial to our reading of the protagonist, as well as episodes from *Eyrbyggja saga* and the other 'outlaw sagas'. In each case, I will discuss the functions of these poetic depictions of highland landscapes within the narrative in question and demonstrate some of the particular associations of the topographical features evoked. I will begin my analysis, however, with a discussion of *Bergbúa þáttr*, a text which presents a particularly vivid image of the Icelandic highland, and which at its centre addresses the question of the relationship between poetry and landscape.

Dwelling in the Mountains

Any study of literary depictions of the Icelandic landscape would benefit from discussion of the twelve-verse poem preserved as part of *Bergbúa þáttr*. *Hallmundarkviða*, as it is generally known, presents a particularly powerful image of the Icelandic landscape—of a landscape that is characterised primarily by instability,

dominated by falling rocks, shifting ground and volcanic activity.[6] Until quite recently, the work had received surprisingly little attention in literary scholarship, with most interest focused on identification of the real location of the landscape in question. Several scholars have recently discussed the text: Oren Falk (2007) touches on it briefly in the course of his article on volcanoes in Icelandic folklore ('Vanishing Volcanoes' 7-8); Mathias Nordvig (2013) refers to it, again in the context of mythic images of volcanism, at several points in his unpublished doctoral dissertation (122ff.); and Miriam Mayburd (2014) includes it as part of her article on post-mortem mountain dwelling (140-141). John Lindow (2014) and Daniel Sävborg (2014, 2018) have also both discussed *Bergbúa þáttr* briefly in their work on trolls (Lindow, *Trolls* 30-31; Sävborg, 'Scandinavian Folk Legends' 80-82 and 'The Icelander and the Trolls' 200-201). *Hallmundarkviða*, as we will see, is a poem which benefits from sustained attention to its use of landscape features and presentation of tectonic activity, as well as its consciousness of poetic form.

Bergbúa þáttr is preserved in the fragmentary Pseudo-Vatnshyrna manuscript (AM 564a 4to), and in paper copies of Vatnshyrna made by Árni Magnússon and Jón Eggertsson in the seventeenth century before the original codex was destroyed in a fire of 1728 (Þórhallur Vilmundarson cciii-cciv). Pseudo-Vatnshyrna has been dated between 1390 and 1425, while Vatnshyrna was copied at the end of the fourteenth century, and the manuscript hands have been traced to the same area, though their contents differ somewhat (*ONP* 34, McKinnell 689-690). In Vatnshyrna, the text was transmitted alongside at least three other shorter tales with a number of the *Íslendingasögur*; in Pseudo-Vatnshyrna we find in addition a version of *Landnámabók*, as well as copies of *Bárðar saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga* and two outlaw sagas (*Gísla saga* and *Harðar saga*)—some of which, we will see, provide interesting points of comparison or reference for aspects of *Bergbúa þáttr*. Datings of the prose tale have tended to range between the twelfth and mid-thirteenth century, though it has been suggested that the poem may be older than that (Þórhallur Vilmundarson ccv, ccix).

[6] There are, in fact, two poems that I will be discussing in this chapter which are known as *Hallmundarkviða*—the second being a sequence of verses contained in Chapter 62 of *Grettis saga*. For clarity's sake, all references to *Hallmundarkviða* in this thesis will denote the poem in *Bergbúa þáttr*.

The tale itself recounts a strange meeting in the mountains: travelling to a remote church to attend Mass, Þórðr and his *húskarl* are forced by a sudden snowstorm to take shelter overnight in a nearby cave. The text's preoccupation with landscape is very much evident in the details of the passage that follows:

> Þá gerði á drífu mikla. Þórðr sagði, at þeir fóru rangt, ok kvaðst eigi vilja ganga í myrkri, en kvað þá skammt af veginum enn farit. ... Þeir leituðu sér þá skjóls ok gengu undir hamar einn brattan, þann er engi var snjór undir. Þeir hittu þar loksins hellismunna, þann er Þórðr vissi eigi ván til. ... En á inum fyrsta þriðjungi nætr þá heyrðu þeir, at nökkut fór innan eptir hellinum ok útar at þeim. (441-442)
>
> [Then a great snowstorm began. Þórðr said that they were going astray, and said he did not want to go on in the dark, and said that they had still only travelled a short part of the way. ... They looked around for shelter and went under a steep crag, under which was no snow. They found there, at last, the mouth of a cave, which Þórðr had not expected. ... And in the first third of the night they heard something move inside the cave and out towards them.]

Reluctant to venture too far in, the two men are predictably alarmed to hear something coming towards them out of the darkness. "Því næst [Next]," we are told, "herðu þeir kveðandi harðla ógurliga með mikilli raust. Var þar hafit upp kvæði ok kveðinn tólf vísna flokkr, ok kvað sá ávallt tysvar niðrlagit [they heard a terrible recitation in a great voice. A poem was begun, a *flokkr* composed of twelve verses, and he always spoke the end twice]" (442). The speaker, of course, is Hallmundr, the rock-dweller of the title, and the verses that follow offer an ideal opportunity to trace the relationship between poetry and landscape. Hallmundr is not only a *bergbúi*, but also acutely conscious of his role as poet, and in many ways these two identities inform one another.

Hallmundarkviða itself is immensely rich in its construction, and offers a particularly vivid depiction of the effects of a volcanic eruption on the landscape. This is a poem which benefits from detailed close analysis, but retains most impact when read in its entirety. I include my full translation here for reference:

1. Hrynr af heiða fenri;	It falls down from Fenrir of the heaths;
hǫll taka bjǫrg at falla;	the sloping mountains begin to fall;
fátt mun at fornu setri	there will [be] little peace at the old
fríðs aldjǫtuns hríðar;	giant's ancient seat of the storm;
gnýr, þás gengr enn hári	it roars, when the hoary warrior
gramr um bratta hamra;	goes through steep crags;
hátt stígr hǫllum fœti	steps loud with sloping feet
Hallmundr í gný fjalla,	Hallmundr in the clash of the mountains,
Hallmundr í gný fjalla.	Hallmundr in the clash of the mountains.

[It falls down from the giant (wolf {Fenrir} of the heaths); the sloping mountains begin to fall; there will be little peace at the mountain (the old giant's ancient seat of the storm); it roars, when the hoary warrior goes through steep crags; Hallmundr steps loud with sloping feet in the clash of the mountains.]

2. Hrýtr, áðr hauga brjóti	It falls—before the hard-worker
harðvirkr megingarða,	breaks the mounds of main enclosures,
gnýr er of seima særi	the din is over the swarthy conjuror
sáman, eldrinn kámi;	of riches—the dark fire;
eimyrju læt ek áma	I let dark embers
upp skjótliga hrjóta;	fly swiftly up;
verðr um Hrungnis hurðir	it comes around the doors of Hrungnir
hljóðsamt við fok glóða,	silently, against the drift of embers,
hljóðsamt við fok glóða.	silently, against the drift of embers.

[The dark fire falls, before the giant (hard-worker) breaks the mounds of main enclosures, the din is over the swarthy man (conjuror of riches); I let dark embers fly swiftly up; it comes silently around the doors of the giant (Hrungnir), against the drift of embers.]

3. Laugask lyptidraugar	Raised logs of the limb-fire
liðbáls at þat síðan,	bathe themselves after that—
vǫtn koma heldr of hǫlda	the waters come over men rather
heit, í foldar sveita;	hot—in the sweat of the earth;
þat spretta upp und epla	it spurts up beneath the nation of

aur-þjóð vitu jóða;	the children of clay-apples, they know;
hyrr munat hǫldum særri	fire will not, to men, [be] more painful
heitr, þars fyrða teitir,	hot, there where it gladdens men,
heitr, þars fyrða teitir.	hot, there where it gladdens men.

[Men (raised logs of the limb-fire) bathe themselves, after that, in the sweat of the earth, the waters come over men rather hot; they know it spurts up beneath the nation of giants (children of stones {clay-apples}); hot fire will not be more painful to men, there where it gladdens men.]

4.	Springa bjǫrg ok bungur	Cliffs and bulges of rock burst,
	bergs, vinnask þá, stinnar	strong [and] great, they harm each other
	stór, ok hǫrga hrœrir	then—and the battle-hill
	hjaldrborg, firar margir;	of cairns stirs—many men;
	þytr er um Þundar glitni;	there is noise in Þundr's shining hall;
	þrammak á fyr skǫmmu,	I trudge over the river briefly,
	en magna þys þegnar	but the men increase the uproar—
	þeir hvívetna fleiri,	they more than anything,
	þeir hvívetna fleiri.	they more than anything.

[Cliffs and bulges of rock burst, strong and great, many men harm each other then, and the battle-hill of cairns stirs; there is noise in Óðinn's (Þundr's) shining hall; I trudge over the river briefly, but the men increase the uproar—they more than anything.]

5.	Þýtr í þungu grjóti,	It rushes in heavy stones,
	þrír eskvinar svíra;[7]	three of the neck of the earth,
	undr láta þat ýtar	men declare that a wonder
	enn, er jǫklar brenna;	still, when glaciers burn;
	þó mun stórum mun meira	though the murder-grove will
	morðlundr á Snjógrundu	in Snjógrund a greater
	undr, þats æ mun standa,	wonder, that always will stand,

[7] This line is obscure; Þórhallur Vilmundarson in notes to the *ÍF* edition of the text discusses the possibility of emending *eskvinar* to *eskjunnar*, from *eskja*, which is listed as a name for Jǫrð in *Skáldskaparmál* (130). This would give 'neck of the earth' as a kenning for 'mountain'.

annat fyrr um kannask,	soon recognise another,
annat fyrr um kannask.	soon recognise another.

[It rushes in heavy stones; three men of the mountain (neck of the earth) declare that a wonder still, when glaciers burn; though the man (murder-grove) will soon recognise in Iceland (Snjógrund) a greater wonder, that always will stand.]

6. Spretta kámir klettar;	Dark cliffs spurt forth;
knýr víðis bǫl hríðir;	willow's bale drives storms;
aurr tekr upp at fœrask	wonderful clay begins to bring itself
undarligr ór grundu;	up out of the ground;
hǫrgs munu hǫldar margir,	many men of the cairn will
himinn rifnar þá, lifna;	come to life, heaven is then rent;
rignir mest; at regni	it rains the most; with the rain
røkkr, áðr heimrinn sløkkvisk,	it darkens, before the world is put out,
røkkr, áðr heimrinn sløkkvisk.	it darkens, before the world is put out.

[Dark cliffs spurt forth; fire (willow's bale) drives storms; wonderful clay begins to bring itself up out of the ground; many giants (men of the cairn) will come to life, heaven is then rent; it rains the most; with the rain it darkens, before the world is put out.]

7. Stíg ek fjall af fjalli,	I climb the mountain from the mountain
ferk opt litum, þopta;	of fellows, I move often with twilight;
dýpst ferk norðr et nyrðra	I travel to the deepest north, the most
niðr í heim enn þriðja;	northerly, down into the third world;
skegg beri opt sás uggir	the dark one who fears my coming
ámr við minni kvámu,	often bears a beard,
brýtk við bjarga gæti	I force against the keeper of cliffs
bág, í Élivága,	conflict, in Élivágar,
bág, í Élivága.	conflict, in Élivágar.

[I climb the mountain from the mountain of fellows, I move often with twilight, I travel to the deepest north, the most northerly, down into the third

world; the dark one who fears my coming often bears a beard, I force conflict against the giant (keeper of cliffs) in Élivágar.]

8. Várum húms í heimi,	We were in the region of twilight—
hugðak því, svás dugði,	I think thus that the field-bed helped,
vér nutum verka þeira,	we enjoy those works
vallbingr, saman allir;	—all together;
undr er, hví ǫrvar mundi	it is a wonder how the arrows
eitrhryðju mér heita,	of the poison-sleet would heat me,
þó ef ek þangat kœma,	even if I were to come to that place
þrekrammr við hlynglamma,	courageous against the maple-wolf,
þrekrammr við hlynglamma.	courageous against the maple-wolf.

[We were all together in the region of twilight, I think thus that the cave (field-bed) helped, we enjoy those works; it is a wonder how the arrows of the poison-sleet would heat me, even if I were to come to that place courageous against the fire (maple-wolf).]

9. Sendi mér frá morði,	They bore to me from death—
mun ván ara kvánar,	there will be hope of the eagle's wife—
handan Hrímnis kindar	a hoary-bearded sender of Hrímnir's
hárskeggjaðan báru;	kind from beyond;
en steinnǫkkva styrkvan,	but a strong stone-boat,
stafns plóglimum grǫfnum,	the stern's engraved plough-limbs
járni fáðan Aurni,	gilded with iron, to Aurnir,
auðkenndan réðk senda,	easily known, I had sent,
auðkenndan réðk senda.	easily known, I had sent.

[They bore to me from death a hoary-bearded sender of giants (Hrímnir's kind) from beyond; there will be hope of the raven (eagle's wife); but I had sent to Aurnir a strong stone-boat, gilded with iron, easily known by the stern's engraved plough-limbs.]

10. Sterkr, kveða illt at einu	Strong—they say there is only evil
oss við þann at senna,	for us to speak against that—
Þórr veldr flotna fári;	Þórr causes mischief to mariners;

felldr er sás jǫklum eldir;	fallen is he who sets fire to glaciers;
þverrðr er áttbogi urðar;	diminished is the lineage of stones;
ek fer gneppr af nekkvi	I go stooped for a reason
niðr í Surts ens svarta	down to Surtr the black's
sveit í eld enn heita,	district in the hot fire,
sveit í eld enn heita.	district in the hot fire.

[Strong Þórr causes mischief to mariners, they say there is only evil for us to speak against that; fallen is he who sets fire to glaciers; diminished is the lineage of stones; I go stooped for a reason down to Surtr the black's district in the hot fire.]

11. Veðk sem mjǫll í milli,	I wade between worlds—much is
mart er eimmyrkligt, heima;	smoke-darkened—as if through snow;
springr jǫrð, því at þangat	the earth bursts, since to that place
Þór einn kveðk svá fóru;	I say Þórr alone travelled thus;
breitt er und brún at líta	broad it is to look under the brow
bjargálfi, mér sjálfum,	for the cliff-elf, for me myself,
heldr skek ek hvarma skjǫldu,	rather, I shake the shield of the eyelids,
harmstríð, er ek fer víða,	grief-strife, when I travel widely,
harmstríð, er ek fer víða.	grief-strife, when I travel widely.

[I wade between worlds as if through snow, much is smoke-darkened; the earth bursts, since I say Þórr alone travelled thus to that place; it is painful (broad grief-strife) to look under the brow for the cliff-elf, for me myself; rather, I shake the shield of the eyelids when I travel widely.]

12. Einn ák hús í hrauni,	I alone have a house in the lava-field,
heim sóttu mik beimar,	men seldom sought me at home,
fimr vark fyrðum gamna	I was never before
fyrr aldrigi, sjaldan;	quick to amuse men;
flokk nemið it eða ykkat,	remember the poem, snow-hardeners,
élherðar, mun verða,	or there will come to pass your
enn er at Aurnis brunni	—yet it is at Aurnir's well
ónyt, mikit víti,	useless—great punishment,
ónyt, mikit víti.	—useless—great punishment.

> [I alone have a house in the lava-field, men seldom sought me at home, I was never before quick to amuse men; remember the poem, warriors (snow-hardeners), or your great punishment will come to pass, yet it is useless at Aurnir's well.]

Hallmundarkviða opens with images of "hǫll … bjǫrg [sloping mountains]" and "bratta hamra [steep crags]" (1.2, 1.6). This is Iceland's mountainous interior—its wild, uncivilised centre, the province of landless outlaws and the *landvættir* identified by Jamie Cochrane in his analysis of *Landnámabók* and accounts of the settlement of Iceland (192ff.). It is perhaps unsurprising that the poem is preoccupied with ideas of ownership, since this is a space to which no Icelander has laid claim. The title of the tale in itself underlines the significance of the speaker to bridging the gap between the Icelandic people and the land: this *bergbúi*, this 'rock-dweller', as he is identified, has made a home for himself in the hostile landscape beyond the reaches of society. The giant in the first line of the poem is conceived of as a 'wolf of the heaths' (1.1), associated decisively with the highland landscape, and the mountain in which he dwells as "fornu setri … aldjǫtuns hríðar [the old giant's ancient seat of the storm]" (1.3-4). The sense is thus created of a space of refuge from the elements, in keeping with the idea of the cave as providing shelter from the blizzard that cut short Þórðr's journey.

This first stanza moreover opens with the assertion that "hǫll taka bjǫrg at falla [the sloping mountains begin to fall]" (1.2), which serves both as witness to the beginning of tectonic activity, and as an announcement of the beginning of the poem itself, since the opening line attributes this fall to the giant—to Hallmundr himself. The verb *hrynja* here is of particular interest: it means 'to fall down', or 'to tumble down'—but in reference to liquids might mean 'to stream' or 'to pour' (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'hrynja'). Its use in line 1 is thus suggestive both of the collapse of the mountain, and of the flow of poetry. The equation of poetry with the flow of water as part of the myth of the Mead of Poetry is, of course, a well-established technique—and one to which I will return in my discussion of *Sonatorrek* in Chapter 2—but the idea of the image of falling rocks being used to the same effect here is quite evocative, and suggests a more tangible connection between landscape processes and poetic composition. The same sense is created in the opening of

Stanza 5, which begins with the declaration that, "Þýtr í þungu grjóti [It rushes in heavy stones]" (5.1).

In *Hallmundarkviða,* the landscape is aligned with the space of the poem from the outset, and retains that parallel through to the final stanza. This association is underlined by the description of "gný fjalla [the clash of the mountains]" in the refrain of the first verse; the echo of Hallmundr's footsteps is effectively mirrored in the poetic form through repetition of the line (1.8-9). This deviation from the standard *dróttkvætt* metre is significant enough to merit notice in the prose narrative: we are told specifically that the speaker "kvað … ávallt tysvar niðrlagit [always said the end twice]" (442). It seems, moreover, particularly fitting for a poem composed in a cave, where echoes are to be expected. Interestingly, the technique of a repeated last line emerges also in the context of a *dalr* in Verse 15 of *Svarfdæla saga*, which opens with the assertion that "Dynr er um allan / dal Svarfaðar [A din is all through the dale of Svarfaðr]" (15.1-2). Sound is, in general, prominent throughout *Hallmundarkviða*: we find repeated references to the noises created through the shifting landscape, with verbs like *hrynja* (1.1), *gnýja* (1.5, 1.8, 1.9, 2.3), and *þjóta* (4.5, 4.7, 5.1) along with their related nouns reiterated. The sense here is of an awareness of poetry as something that resounds as much as flows. Crucially, the association of poetic composition with this space is by no means an isolated case: we find in *Landnámabók*, for example—one of the texts with which *Bergbúa þáttr* was transmitted—reference to Þorvaldr holbarki, who "fór … upp til hellisins Surts ok færði þar drápu þá, er hann hafði ort um jǫtuninn í hellinum [travelled up to the cave of Surtr and then composed a *drápa* there, when he had spoken to the giant in the cave]" (240). The idea of the cave as a potential location for the composition or recitation of poetry is certainly a compelling one. Poets in caves moreover figure prominently in *Grettis saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*, as I will discuss at greater length later in the chapter.

Hallmundr not only immortalises himself through verse, but actively *creates* as he does so. The significance of his movements to this process of creation is suggested by the application of the same qualifier—*hǫll*—to both feet and mountain (1.2, 1.7). The verb *stíga*, 'to step' or 'to tread', emerges both in the opening stanza and in Stanza 7, and invites comparison with Stanza 14 of *Arinbjarnarkviða,* in *Egils saga*. There Egill declares the intention to walk "bratt stiginn / bragar fótum [the steep path

with poetic feet]" (14.3-4). The resemblance to *Hallmundarkviða*, where Hallmundr "hátt stígr hǫllum fœti [steps loud with sloping feet]" (1.7) and moves "um bratta hamra [through steep crags]" (1.6), is highly suggestive. In both cases composition of poetry is conceived of in terms of movement, expressing a clear trajectory. The speaker's initial introduction of himself as Hallmundr is at the same time tied inextricably to the physical landscape, the "gný fjalla [clash of the mountains]" ascribed to the steps he takes (1.8). Hallmundr's introduction is thus combined with a physical and verbal assertion of presence: he is simultaneously announcing himself, locating himself, and actualising the landscape through the act of speaking verse.

The next few stanzas are very much extensions of the first, each beginning with a verb in the third-person present that indicates some sort of movement of the landscape, but also continuing to emphasise the poet's part in that process. In Stanza 2, for example, we have the first clear indication of a volcanic eruption, with a fall of dark fire in the opening lines (2.1-4). The second *helmingr* meanwhile establishes Hallmundr as complicit in this eruption: "eimyrju læt ek áma / upp skjótliga hrjóta [I let dark embers fly swiftly up]," he declares (2.5-6). It is, moreover, the *harðvirkr* of line 2—a term listed in *Skáldskaparmál* alongside Hrímnir and Hrungnir as one of the *heiti* for giants (110)—who "hauga brjóti … megingarða [breaks the mounds of main enclosures]" (2.1-2). Where *landsmegin* would be the mainland, and *hafsmegin* the open sea, the *megingarðr* seems here to refer to the ground as it is broken by tectonic activity. Since the image occurs specifically in the context of fire and embers, moreover, the 'mound of main enclosures' might be read as a kenning for a volcano. This conception of tectonic activity as an act of mound-breaking would seem to be part of a larger tendency in the literature toward associations of mounds with highland landscapes. The reference to a "seima særi [conjuror of riches]" (2.3) as a kenning for man feels very much in keeping with the idea of burial, particularly when combined with the images of fire—which, as we will see, emerge in the context of both mountains and mounds in the sagas.

Similar imagery is moreover evoked in Stanza 3, which describes scalding waters that "spretta upp [spurt up]" (3.5) from beneath the earth. The kennings here seem to be consciously constructed to maintain the poetic frame of reference as centred around burials: the construction of 'gold' as 'fire of the arm' in line 2, for example,

specifically uses *bál* as a base-word, which as a term often describes a funeral pyre (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'bál, n.'). The word *draugr* (3.1), meanwhile, must be translated as 'log' in order to function as the base-word in the kenning for 'man' ('tree of gold'), but of course may also refer to a spirit. That the reference is specifically to *lyptidraugar* seems to indicate physical elevation, which might be intended to create the same sense of the dead awakening as we find in Stanza 6 (6.5-6), but would also be very appropriate to the landscape in question. There is perhaps another kenning for giants here—and certainly a vivid image of dwelling in the landscape in the description of them bathing themselves in the hot waters.

In Stanza 4, meanwhile, we find a conception of the mountain as "hǫrga … hjaldrborg [the battle-hill of cairns]" (4.3-4); the reference to cairns is consistent with the rocky landscape, and the term *hjaldr* underlines the heightened sense of conflict. Here the destruction of the landscape is aligned explicitly with the idea of physical confrontation: this is both the place where "Springa bjǫrg ok bungur [Cliffs and bulges of rock burst]" (4.1) and the point at which men "vinnask [harm each other]" (4.2). This idea of men making more noise on the mountain again recalls that verse in *Svarfdæla saga* which has conflict resounding through the valley (15.1-2). The noises created by Hallmundr's movements, it is clear, are far less disruptive than the conflicts created by intruders—it is the men who "magna þys [increase the uproar]", he insists—"þeir hvívetna fleiri [they more than anything]" (4.7-8). The assertion that "þytr er um Þundar glitni [there is a noise in Óðinn's shining hall]" (4.5) is, moreover, particularly interesting: firstly, in that it positions a distinctly social space in the context of a wild and destructive landscape, and secondly, in its use of the term *glitni*. The concept of 'the din of Óðinn' is, of course, a well-known kenning for 'battle'; the inclusion of 'Þundr', another name for Óðinn, in the genitive form in conjunction with *þytr*—'noise'—is surely suggestive of the same conflict expressed in the stanza's opening lines. The term *glitni,* meanwhile, seems to be a reference to Glitnir, the golden hall of Forseti, described in *Gylfaginning* as "dómstaðr beztr með guðum ok mǫnnum [the best place of judgment among gods and men]" (26). According to Snorri, "allir er til hans [Forseta] koma með sakarvandræði, þá fara allir sáttir á braut [all who come to Forseti with legal disputes then go away reconciled]" (26). When combined with the frequent constructions of the mountain in domestic terms, it seems plausible to interpret this as an equation of

Hallmundr's home in the landscape with Glitnir itself. The noise and the reference to a hall seem to echo descriptions in the first stanza of "fornu setri … aldjǫtuns [the ancient seat of the old giant]" (1.3-4) and "gný fjalla [the clash of the mountains]" (1.8, 1.9). If this is the case, then Hallmundr can be read as a figure passing judgment on the conflicts of men, a second Forseti. Since, as we will see, the conflicts in *Hallmundarkviða* occur almost exclusively at boundaries, we might reasonably interpret them as disputes over land.

The poem's concern with ownership becomes increasingly clear as it progresses. In Stanza 5, we are provided with an image of the landscape of settlement in its reference to 'Snjógrund' (5.6), where, we are told, "undr láta þat ýtar / enn, er jǫklar brenna [men declare that a wonder still, when glaciers burn]" (5.4-6). The use of this name in particular—a variation of which emerges in the opening chapters of *Landnámabók* as an early name for Iceland, applied by Nadodd and his companions (34)—is surely intended to evoke that initial act of land-taking, and the first experience of an unfamiliar landscape. The use of *ýtar*—from the verb *ýta*, 'to push out', 'to launch'—as the term for 'men' is likewise suggestive of setting out on a voyage, perhaps on that first journey to Iceland. Hallmundr himself, I would suggest, invites comparison with the *landvœttir*—inhabitants of the landscape with whom the early settlers are said to have communicated. We find other comparable instances of these beings in saga verse. In the second verse of *Víga-Glúms saga*, for example, the image of a giantess as an embodiment of the landscape, standing among the mountains, is employed as part of the protagonist's claim to land (2.7-8); Hallmundr, similarly, steps "fjall af fjalli [from mountain to mountain]" (7.1). In a verse contained in *Landnámabók*, meanwhile, similar phrasing is employed by a *trǫllkarl* who attributes landscape processes—in this case, waves crashing against the cliffs—to his own actions, and seems to suggest in his boast that giants in general actively engage in the creation of their environment (2.5-8).[8]

The fact that Hallmundr is denied a physical, recognisably human body certainly encourages a reading of the poems in which he can be seen as an embodiment of the landscape. He positions himself among "Hrímnis kindar [Hrímnir's kind]" (9.3), and draws upon "Aurnis brunni [Aurnir's well]" (12.7) as his source of poetic

[8] I discuss both these verses at greater length in subsequent chapters.

inspiration. The names of both these giants seem deliberately chosen to evoke aspects of the landscape's formation: they are, respectively, 'rime' and 'clay', materials very much inscribed in the poetic process of *Hallmundarkviða.* The image of *aurr* emerges first as part of an extended kenning for 'earth' in Stanza 3 (3.5-6), and then again vividly in Stanza 6. When combined with that image of Aurnir's well, the assertion that "aurr tekr upp at fœrask / undarligr ór grundu [wonderful clay begins to bring itself up out of the ground]" (6.3-4) is surely another conception of poetic composition in terms of a process of the landscape. *Hallmundarkviða* reuses images in a way that lends the poem as a whole real coherence: the verb *spretta* is also used again here, this time in the context of the emergence of dark cliffs (6.1). The fire of Stanza 2 meanwhile gains force (6.2), and we are informed that "hǫrgs munu hǫldar margir … lifna [many men of the cairn will come to life]" (6.5-6). Since the "hǫrga … hjaldrborg [the battle-hill of cairns]" (4.3-4) in Stanza 4 was the mountain, these men of the cairn are most likely giants, and this conception of them specifically as *hǫldar*, land-holders, again underlines the idea of ownership.

Stanza 6 concludes with the ominous declaration that "at regni / røkkr, áðr heimrinn sløkkvisk [with the rain it darkens, before the world is put out]" (6.7-8). There is undoubtedly some apocalyptic imagery in play here, but the idea of twilight would also seem to be particularly connected to the cave, as we see in Stanza 8. *Hallmundarkviða* is concerned not only with boundaries but more generally with transitional spaces, which are presented in this text as particularly ripe for creation. Stanza 8 extends the storm imagery of previous stanzas to something more explicitly volcanic: the "ǫrvar … eitrhryðju [arrows of the poison-sleet]" (8.5-6) that heat the speaker evoke both the falling embers of Stanza 2 and the cloud of poisonous gas that might follow a volcanic eruption. Perhaps most interesting here, however, are the poetic constructions used of the cave. For the first time in the poem, we gain a sense of the cave as a place of shelter from the storm, conceived of as a *vallbingr*—literally, a 'field-bed'—which the speaker believes provided assistance (8.2-4). The 'works' that he claims they enjoy together (8.3) might be the physical creation of the landscape, or his own poetic composition—or, indeed, the two together. This consciousness of the poem as a form of entertainment, something to be enjoyed, is certainly consistent with ideas expressed in the final stanza of the poem, as we will see. In the opening line of this stanza, meanwhile, the cave is positioned particularly

"húms í heimi [in the region of twilight]" (8.1). Again, the sense of a transitional period between light and dark is maintained, but is specifically constructed as a place of dwelling. Hallmundr exists explicitly in this intermediary space, as we find in Stanza 7 when he declares that he moves "opt litum [often with twilight]" (7.2).

This is a poem in which a consciousness of movement emerges strongly—Hallmundr, by his own account, travels widely (11.8), and his journeys take place more often than not along or across boundaries. At various points he wades between worlds, steps between mountains, and crosses bodies of water. Rivers, like mountains, serve as natural and legal boundaries: in *Grágás* it is stated that "Þar er eigi scylt at ganga til merkia er firðir ganga fyrir eða ár deila [It is not necessary to walk the boundaries where firths go along or rivers divide (the land)]" (80). It is at these boundaries that we most often find suggestions of conflict: in Stanza 4, for example, Hallmundr's river crossing is followed by the assertion that "magna þys þegnar [men increase the noise]" (4.7). In Stanza 7, too, the poet forces "við bjarga gæti / bág, í Élivága [conflict against the keeper of cliffs, in Élivágar]" (7.7-8)—a reference to the eleven rivers that flow from Niflheimr in *Gylfaginning* (9-10). Bodies of water are particularly prominent: in Stanza 4, Hallmundr trudges "á fyr [over the river]" (4.6), while the fact that he subsequently wades "í milli … heima [between worlds]" (11.1-2) is suggestive of water existing as the bounds between worlds as well as between land-holdings. There is a mirroring of sorts in the two actions, the latter representing a widening of the scope of the poem beyond local detail to a larger mythological landscape.

The section of *Grágás* devoted to land claims emphasises the need to walk the boundaries (*ganga merkja*) of owned land in order to enforce them (80). Having already observed the impulse toward ownership in this text, it is perhaps unsurprising that *Hallmundarkviða* as a whole is preoccupied with shifting boundaries, with defining and then redefining them. This is expressed primarily through repeated use of the first person and verbs of movement: "þrammak [I trudge]" (4.6), "Stíg ek [I tread]" (7.1), "ferk [I travel]" (7.3), "brýtk [I force]" (7.7), "ek fer [I travel]" (10.6), and "Veðk [I wade]" (11.1). There are, moreover, various instances of deictic and directional vocabulary—for example, *handan* (9.3), *þangat* (8.7, 11.3), and *niðr* (7.4, 10.7)—which mean that the stanzas are frequently positioning. We find in this poem an image of a concept expressed by Michel de

Certeau in *The Practice of Everday Life*—that the walker actualizes space by his very movements (98). The landscape of *Hallmundarkviða* effectively unfolds simultaneously with the actions of the poet, as it is explored and described.

Perhaps most significant in terms of Hallmundr's movements, however, are the journeys that take place in Stanzas 7 and 10, which benefit from direct comparison to one another. In Stanza 7, we are told, Hallmundr travels "dýpst … norðr et nyrðra / niðr í heim enn þriðja [to the deepest north, the most northerly, down into the third world]" (7.3-4), where he finds Élivágar. Subsequently, in Stanza 10, he ventures "niðr í Surts ens svarta / sveit í eld enn heita [down to Surtr the black's district in the hot fire]" (10.7-8). The description of descent in each case encourages us to align these two journeys. Though the worlds to which Hallmundr travels are not explicitly named, the allusions seem clear: references to the Élivágar (7.8) and to "dýpst … norðr [deepest north]" (7.3) are consistent with accounts of Niflheimr, while Surtr's district is perhaps more easily identifiable as Muspell. Bertha Phillpotts identified Surtr as both a "chief agent in the destruction of the world" (14) and a figure particularly associated with Icelandic volcanism (29)—in light of this, his emergence in Verse 10 of *Hallmundarkviða* is perhaps unsurprising. His presence here, however, serves also to foreground again the notion of land claims and inheritance. Snorri says of Muspell in *Gylfaginning*: "Sú átt er logandi ok brennandi, er hann ok ófœrr þeim er þar eru útlendir ok eigi eigu þar óðul [That district is blazing and burning and it is not passable for those who are outlanders and do not have property there]" (9). It is Surtr, crucially, "er þar sitr á lands enda til landvarnar [who sits there at the border to defend the land]" (9); like Hallmundr, he exists at a boundary, drawn in parallel perhaps to his counterpart in Niflheimr, that elusive "bjarga gæti [keeper of cliffs]" (7.7).

In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri constructs these two primordial worlds in direct contrast to one another. "Svá sem kalt stóð af Niflheimi ok allir hlutir grimmir [Just as from Niflheimr arose coldness and all things grim]," he says, "svá var þat er vissi námunda Muspelli heitt ok ljóst [so that which faced near to Muspell was hot and bright]" (10). It is between Niflheimr and Muspell that the void, Ginnungagap, stretches. Of Ginnungagap, we know that "þat er vissi til norðrs ættar, fyltisk með þunga ok hǫfugleik íss ok hríms [the part that faces in a northerly direction was filled with the weight and heaviness of ice and rime]", while "hinn syðri hlutr … léttisk

móti gneistum ok síum þeim er flugu ór Muspellsheimi [the southerly part was cleared by the sparks and embers that flew out of Muspellsheimr]" (10). In *Gylfaginning*, crucially, the act of creation occurs at the confluence of the two, where ice meets fire: "er mœttisk hrímin ok blær hitans svá at bráðnaði ok draup, … af þeim kvikudropum kviknaði [when the rime and the blowing of the heat met so that it melted and dripped, from the drops of fluid it was kindled]" (10). Ymir, the being from whose body the earth is subsequently created, is the result. It is Ymir's blood that becomes the sea, his flesh the earth, his bones the rocks (11ff.); what follows is, effectively, the emergence of the landscape of Miðgarðr. Hallmundr's declaration that he wades between worlds (11.1) gains new resonance if the worlds between which he wades are Niflheimr and Muspell. This is a movement between cardinal points and opposing elements—ice and fire, respectively. By making this crossing, Hallmundr is positioning himself in yet another 'between' space, at the very point of creation.

The destruction of the current landscape and the formation of a new one are thus established simultaneously. There has been some attention to volcanic imagery in the accounts of Ragnarǫk in *Vǫluspá*—Falk, for example, has compared presentations of volcanoes in that text and *Bergbúa þáttr* ('Vanishing Volcanoes' 7-8)—but the similarities between the account of creation in *Gylfaginning* and the convergence of ice and fire in *Hallmundarkviða* are as useful to our assessment of this poem. These references to Niflheimr and Muspell are underlined, moreover, by the juxtaposition of fire and ice elsewhere in the poem. We are told in Stanza 5, we might recall, that "undr láta þat ýtar / enn, er jǫklar brenna [men declare that a wonder still, when glaciers burn]" (5.3-4). In Stanza 8, the idea of 'a natural wonder' is applied again in the context of a storm, at the prospect that the precipitation should be hot (8.5-6). Stanza 2 closes with a description of "fok glóða [the drift of embers]" (2.8)—notable in that the term *fok* may also be used to describe a snow-drift (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'fok, n.'). In the opening lines of Stanza 11, meanwhile, ashes and snow are aligned through juxtaposition of *eimr* and *mjǫll* (11.1-2). Most significantly, in Stanza 10, we find reference to an obscure figure who "jǫklum eldir [sets fire to glaciers]" (10.4)—who actually initiates the process.

According to Snorri, the Élivágar "váru svá langt komnar frá uppsprettunni at eitrkvikja sú er þar fylgði harðnaði svá sem sindr þat er renn ór eldinum, þá varð þat

íss [had come so far from their source that the poisonous fluid that followed hardened like slag that runs from a fire, and then became ice]" (*Gylfaginning* 9-10). It is the build-up of rime in Snorri's account that ultimately bridges Ginnungagap, the negative space between (10). This description of layers of rime forming, interestingly, seems to evoke the process by which Hallmundr's *hús í hrauni* is formed. The *eitrkvikja*, the 'poisonous fluid', described by Snorri in relation to the Élivágar might be read as lava flow; in Verse 8 of *Hallmundarkviða*, similarly, we have an *eitrhryðja*, a 'poison-storm' (8.6). These processes, as we have seen, run as an undercurrent through the poem, building to its conclusion. In light of this, it seems significant that the term *hraun* only emerges for the first time at the poem's end. *Hallmundarkviða* outlines various processes by which a lava-field might be created—the shifting rock formations, shooting embers, ash clouds, poisonous gas, and flow of lava—and concludes by naming it, effectively bringing it into being. Hallmundr actively creates his home.

If we accept that the meeting of fire and ice here is intended to evoke the act of creation, then we might identify "sás jǫklum eldir [he who sets fire to glaciers]" (10.4) as the poet, as Hallmundr himself, in which case his "felldr [fallen]" (10.4) state feels very much consistent with the sense of loss that pervades the final stanzas of the poem. That the fall of this figure is followed immediately by the declaration that "þverrðr er áttbogi urðar [diminished is the lineage of fallen stones]" (10.5) seems to confirm this. We have seen already the frequent association of dwellers in the landscape with images of rocks and stones; this 'lineage of fallen stones' is surely the line of giants. There is, moreover, a concern with lineage, continuation, and inheritance expressed here that seems tied again to land and possession. The desire for something permanent in the face of shifting ground, for something "þats æ mun standa [that always will stand]" (5.7) emerges first in Stanza 5, but is compounded in the last three stanzas. The sense of grief is, however, expressed most forcefully in Stanza 11, in which the use of the first person is particularly evident. The movements with which the poem has been concerned now cause the speaker to weep: "skek ek hvarma skjǫldu [I shake the shield of the eyelid]," he declares, "er ek fer víða [when I travel widely]" (11.7-8). The adjective *breitt* here is attached specifically to *harmstríð* in order to convey the greatness of the speaker's grief, but its position in the stanza in addition creates the sense of broadness of space, and of

the landscape surveyed. This act of surveying is conceived of as 'looking under the brow' (11.5)—interestingly, an instance in which the *brún* might as easily refer to the brow of a hill as to the facial feature. The sense of something lost, perhaps, drives the need to preserve what has been created. In *Hallmundarkviða* the composition of poetry and creation of the landscape occur simultaneously; speaking verse is inextricable from the creation of landscape, and by extension from laying claim to that space.

It becomes clear, even as we are presented with an unfamiliar and threatening landscape, that human experience colours the depiction. Much of the vocabulary employed alongside topographical detail serves simultaneously to ground the poem in the familiar, to make the unknown known, as if it is mapping or claiming the space. This is not only a mountain, but a *setr* (1.3)—a term which in a basic sense indicates a seat or residence, but may also be used in reference to a mountain pasture (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'setr, n.'). Later, the cave occupied by the speaker is described as a "vallbingr [field-bed]" (8.4). There are "hurðir [doors]" (2.7) associated with this space in Stanza 2, and a "bjarga gæti [keeper of cliffs]" (7.7) emerges in Stanza 7. Even as the ground shifts, as lava flows and "spretta kámir klettar [dark cliffs spurt forth]" (6.1-4), the spirits who rise from the unstable landscape are *hǫldar* (6.5)—land-holders. Finally, we have the *megingarðr* (2.2), a term which by the use of *garðr* evokes enclosed, owned land as opposed to a wilderness. This apparent impulse toward possession or ownership of land culminates in the final stanza with the speaker's identification of the space as his own: "Einn ák hús í hrauni [I alone have a house in the lava-field]," he declares (12.1). The assertion sets him apart from society, physically isolated and unique in his position, yet continues to employ its vocabulary and customs—demonstrates the conflicting impulses we might expect from an inhabitant of this problematic space. By this point we have progressed from *vallbingr* to *hús*, with the prominent image one of Hallmundr at home (12.2), conscious of his duties as host to be amusing to men (12.3). The possessive verb *eiga* is crucial (12.1). The poem constructs its landscape in a way that is simultaneously natural and familiar, retaining distinct characteristics and topographical terms while simultaneously bringing this 'wild' space into the domestic, 'civilised' social sphere. *Hallmundarkviða*, I would argue, is on one level at least a claim to land.

Skaldic poetry is often reflexive, conscious of its own creation, and this is certainly true of these verses. The constant reference to feet and steps is in itself suggestive of rhythm, which again encourages association of speaking verse with creating a sense of place. Hallmundr's sense of his obligations as host, meanwhile, is expressed in terms of his poetic prowess. A consciousness of his duty to entertain emerges first in Stanza 8 with the reference to collective enjoyment of these 'works' (8.3-4) but most clearly in Stanza 12 when he declares, "fimr vark fyrðum gamna / fyrr aldrigi [I was never before quick to amuse men]" (12.3-4). *Hallmundarkviða* is, in fact, littered with references to its own poetic process, culminating finally in the declaration that "er … Aurnis brunni / ónyt [Aurnir's well is useless]" (12.7-8), which forms part of the refrain of the final stanza. This reference is surely intended to evoke the well of Mímir as it is described in *Gylfaginning*: of the three roots of the ash Yggdrasil, Snorri tells us, the second is located "þar sem forðum var Ginnungagap [where Ginnungagap once was]" (17). Yet again we return to the initial point of creation. It is under this root that we find a well "er spekð ok mannvit er í fólgit, ok heitir sá Mímir er á brunninn [in which wisdom and understanding are hidden, and he who owns the well is called Mímir]" (17). According to Snorri, Mímir "er fullr af vísindum fyrir því at hann drekkr ór brunninum [is full of knowledge because he drinks out of the well]", and in the section of *Vǫluspá* subsequently cited we find that it is *mjǫðr*, mead, that he drinks (17). There are obvious associations between this well and the myth of the Mead of Poetry, which Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* identifies as the source of poetic skill (3ff.).

In *Hallmundarkviða,* Mímir's well becomes Aurnir's, associating the creation of poetry with this landscape and this speaker in particular. The use of the term *ónyt* in this context is particularly suggestive, since *nyt* may indicate both 'enjoyment' and 'use', and in the latter sense may be applied to land and pasture (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'nyt, f.'). *Ónyt* thus has the double sense of the conclusion of entertainment via poetry, and the land itself running dry. With the image of the dry well, Hallmundr thus announces the poem's imminent conclusion, and combines that declaration with a command and a warning: "flokk nemið it [remember the poem]" (12.5), or suffer "mikit víti [great punishment]" (12.8). This punishment is exacted in a literal sense in the conclusion to *Bergbúa þáttr*: Þórðr remembers the poem and prospers, where his *húskarl* fails to heed Hallmundr's warning and dies a year later

(450). In this manner, Lindow observes, "the tale … enforces the value of oral tradition" (*Trolls* 31). More than this, however, the impulse to remember and thus preserve the verses he has spoken serves as an inscription of the process of oral transmission. The command demonstrates a particular consciousness on the part of the poet—not only of the method of composition, but also the means of perpetuation of his medium.

Cochrane emphasises that "the connection between the early Icelandic farmer, the land, the livestock and the land-spirits was a tenuous one that needed to be carefully preserved" (195). He observes, moreover, that the "relationship between Icelander and land-spirit was a reciprocal one" (192); in this respect, poetry as presented in the sagas seems a particularly suitable medium for communication, since ideas of reciprocity and exchange are so often foregrounded in the skaldic verse. This idea of poetry as a means of engaging with the landscape is particularly evident in the case of *Hallmundarkviða*, where a depiction of the creation of landscape also inscribes the processes of settlement and ownership. While the idea of the cave as a space is well foregrounded in the prose narrative of *Bergbúa þáttr*, there is otherwise no great overlap between poetry and prose with regard to the topographical details contained—and the richest images of the landscape are undoubtedly to be found in the poem itself. To remember the poem, in this instance, is also to remember the landscape it contains. This memorial function, as I have observed, may moreover work both ways: the association of a poem with a particular locale ensures that the landscape itself serves as a reminder of that work.

Lindow concludes his brief discussion of *Bergbúa þáttr* with the suggestion that the poem might be describing a specific volcanic eruption that took place c. 940-50, and formed the area now known as Hallmundarhraun (*Trolls* 31).[9] Kevin Smith, in a recent paper on archaeological surveys of Surtshellir, the largest lava cave in Hallmundarhraun, called it "easily one of the most feared places in the Icelandic landscape" ('Of Monsters and Men'). There certainly seems to be evidence in the literature of medieval Iceland of a particular fascination with that area, and

[9] On the proposed connection between the text and Hallmundarhraun, see Heimir Pálsson, 'Surtur og Þór' (2013) and Árni Hjartason's discussions in 'Hallmundarkviða: Áhrif eldgoss' (2015) and 'Hallmundarkviða: Eldforn lýsing' (2014). Guðmundur Finnbogason also discussed the possibility that the poem might draw rather on an eruption that took place in more recent memory—that of Sólheimajökull in 1262 (174).

association of the figure Hallmundr with it that merits further investigation: we find in Chapter 9 of *Bárðar saga*, for example, reference to a "Hallmund ór Balljökli [Hallmundr from Balljökull]" (131). In *Grettis saga*, too, the figure of Hallmundr emerges prominently in relation to this area (177, 184). Sävborg, in a recent article on place and the supernatural, distinguishes between more 'distanced' depictions of the supernatural abroad, and those located in Iceland, which he suggests are characterised by their proximity and associated with particular places ('The Icelander and the Trolls' 203). This would certainly seem to be an instance of heightened awareness of a highland landscape, and one which the repeated presence of this *bergbúi* serves to highlight.

Clearly, *Hallmundarkviða* has important bearings on our consideration of the relationship between poetry and landscape, and contains many of the topographical features and motifs associated specifically with highland landscapes that we find in other texts. This text is, moreover, particularly relevant to a reading of the poetic topographies of *Grettis saga*, and to our understanding of the protagonist's construction of himself in relation to the landscape. It is to *Grettis saga* that I will turn next.

Settling in the Mountains

Given the social standing of its protagonist and the text's clear preoccupation with the nature of poetic composition, it is perhaps unsurprising that *Grettis saga* includes some of the most interesting examples of landscape poetry in the saga corpus. This is a work which places at its centre an outlaw and a poet—a figure forced to tread, like Hallmundr, an ambiguous line between 'civilised' and 'wild'. This text is, moreover, crucial to our consideration of highland terrain in this chapter, in that it not only concerns itself primarily with Iceland's mountainous interior, but is also particularly preoccupied with the function of this space in relation to the rest of the landscape. Depictions of landscape in *Grettis saga* have received more attention, perhaps, than those in any other saga: Helen Damico (1986), for example, has examined setting as a "symbolic articulation of dramatic action" (2), and Gillian Overing and Marijane Osborn (1994) have similarly discussed ways in which "the 'wild', and specifically the wild as place, the places of the wild, gives shape, force, and motivation to his persona as a peculiarly Icelandic hero" (73). More recently,

Marijane Osborn (2007) has analysed the influence of folktale motifs on the waterfall episode of the saga, and Eleanor Barraclough (2010) has underlined the literary functions of landscape in the outlaw sagas. This is clearly a productive line of enquiry in *Grettis saga*, though the use of landscape in verse has received less notice than its depiction in the prose narrative.

The text itself has traditionally been dated between the late thirteenth and the early fourteenth century (Guðni Jónsson lxviii-lxx), though more recently several scholars have suggested dates at the end of the fourteenth or even the beginning of the fifteenth century (Örnólfur Thorsson 918-919; Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 39ff.; Heslop, 'Grettisfærsla' 76-77 and 'Grettir in Ísafjörður' 221-222). The verses have likewise been considered to be relatively late compositions (Guðni Jónsson xxxi-xlii). *Grettis saga* has been transmitted variously with *Gísla saga* and *Harðar saga*—the other so-called 'outlaw sagas'—as well as with *Bárðar saga, Bergbúa þáttr, Landnámabók* and *Víglundar saga*, among others.[10] *Grettis saga* is a work which engages deliberately and consciously with the saga tradition, both in its tendency to cite other texts directly, and the subtler ways in which it subverts expectation. This tendency towards citation, as we will see, is central also to the way in which landscape is used in the verses of the saga—and to the protagonist's construction of himself through these compositions. With all this in mind, I will begin by identifying some of the ways in which the protagonist is located in and identifies with the highland landscape through verse, and then move on to consider Hallmundr's role in this text and its relationship to *Bergbúa þáttr*.

As is the case in many of the *Íslendingasögur*, the opening chapters of *Grettis saga* are concerned primarily with establishing the initial process of settlement in Iceland—undertaken, in this instance, by the protagonist's great-grandfather, Ǫnundr tréfótr. The threat of outlawry is quickly foregrounded with reports of "ágætir menn [excellent men]" fleeing their lands because Haraldr "gerði alla útlæga, þá sem í móti honum hǫfðu barizk [made them all outlaws, those who had fought against him]" (6). Ǫnundr, meanwhile, demonstrates many of the qualities we will subsequently find in Grettir: he too is a poet, and the importance of physical prowess is expressed

[10] For discussions of the particular regional provenance and popularity of the oldest extant *Grettis saga* manuscripts, see Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, 'Grettir vondum vættum' (2000) and Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'Identity and Ideology' (2014).

consistently in his narrative. His *landnám*, however, is presented as problematic in a number of respects. Initially, his unwillingness to leave Norway is emphasised. Þrándr, his companion in earlier campaigns, prepares to depart for Iceland and asks Ǫnundr to accompany him; Ǫnundr, however, "kvezk áðr vilja finna frændr sína ok vini suðr í landi [said he first wanted to find his kinsmen and friends in the south of the land]" (16). He departs only when forced by circumstance, warned that they "ekki mundu duga at vera þar í landi, þegar konungr mætti sér svá við koma [would not do to be there in the land when the king might thus come against them]" (19).

Ǫnundr declares his intention to finally make the journey from Norway to Iceland in Verse 4 of the saga, where the necessary act of settlement is set against the urge to perform heroic deeds (4.1-4), effectively underlining the tension between conflicting lifestyles. The poetry of *Grettis saga* demonstrates the potential for speaking verse to serve as a means of laying claim to land. Ǫnundr's determination "stíga / út með einum fœti / Íslands á vit [to step out with one leg to visit Iceland]" (4.6-8) in this verse is curiously reminiscent of the line in *Hallmundarkviða* in which Hallmundr "hátt stígr hǫllum fœti [steps loud with sloping feet]" (1.7). I have already observed that composition of poetry may be conceived of in terms of movement (cf. also *Arinbjarnarkviða* 14.3-4 in *Egils saga,* in which we find the noun *stigr*). It is interesting that the verb *stíga*—'to step'—emerges in both cases, and here specifically in the context of the settlement of Iceland. The closing assertion that "skaldi sígr … þvísa [it sinks for this poet]" (4.6-8), which through the arrangement of the lines frames that declaration of movement, simultaneously underlines the belatedness of Ǫnundr's journey and associates his role as *skáld* with the process.

Upon arrival, it becomes clear that this delay has cost him choice land. He is greeted by Eiríkr snara, who informs Ǫnundr that "lítit þat, er eigi væri numit áðr [there was little that had not already been taken]" (22), but nevertheless accompanies him to survey what land remains. When Ǫnundr expresses dissatisfaction with the prospects, Eiríkr is not optimistic about his chances of attaining anything more central: "hygg ek ok, at numin sé flest ǫll lǫnd í meginheruðum [I think almost all land is taken in the main districts]," he warns, "kann ek því eigi at fýsa þik heðan í brott [so I cannot encourage you to leave this place]" (22-23). The preoccupation with genealogy and settlement that we find in the openings of the *Íslendingasögur* serves on one level to establish the social standing of the protagonist; Ǫnundr's

claim is late and made largely by default—chosen simply because "heðan frá er ónumit ok inn til landnáms Bjarnar [from this place over to Bjǫrn's settlement is unclaimed]" (22). Consequently, Grettir's position is effectively precarious from the outset.

This account is also, crucially, punctuated by the first instance of a poetic treatment of landscape in this text. Verse 5 of *Grettis saga* is positioned explicitly as part of Ǫnundr's land-taking:

> Fóru þeir þá inn yfir fjǫrðu, ok en þeir kómu inn til Ófæru, mælti Eiríkr: "Hér er á at líta; heðan frá er ónumit ok inn til landnáms Bjarnar." Þar gekk fjall mikit fram þeim megin fjarðanna, ok var fallinn á snær. Ǫnundr leit á fjallit ok kvað vísu þessu. (22)
>
> [Then they travelled in across the fjords, and when they came in at Ófæra, Eiríkr said, "Look out from here; from this place over to Bjǫrn's settlement is unclaimed." There a great mountain went out from that side of the fjords, and it was fallen with snow. Ǫnundr looked at the mountain and composed this verse.]

The verse in question is interesting to us in several respects: first and foremost, in that it is presented explicitly in the context of *looking* at the mountain, as a poetic response to a particular feature of the landscape. That act of looking is in turn contextualised as part of a visual survey of the quality of the land in the process of *landnám*, following Eiríkr's instructing Ǫnundr to look out—*á at lita*—over the area in question. We have seen already the potential for high ground to be presented as a useful point of prospect in settlement narratives, but what does it mean to actually lay claim to and live on mountainous land? This question is central to Ǫnundr's response to this space, as expressed in the verse that follows:

Réttum gengr, en ranga	Life goes by right, when the
rinnr sæfarinn, ævi,	steed of the ribs runs, sea-travelled,
fákr, um fold ok ríki	an age from field and rule,
fleinhvessanda þessum;	for this shaft-sharpener;
hefk lǫnd ok fjǫlð frænda	I have lands and many kinsmen
flýt, en hitt es nýjast,	fled, but this is newest:

krǫpp eru kaup, ef hreppik	narrow are the bargains, if I obtain
Kaldbak, en ek læt akra.	Kaldbak, but I give up crops.

[Life goes by right for this warrior (shaft-sharpener), when the ship (steed of the ribs) runs, sea-travelled, from field and rule; I have fled lands and many kinsmen, but this is newest: narrow are the bargains, if I obtain Kaldbak, but I give up crops.]

Once again, Qnundr's opinion of this new land is coloured by a consciousness of what he has left behind: his relocation to Iceland has meant abandoning "fold ok ríki [field and rule]" (5.3), "lǫnd ok fjǫlð frænda [land and many kinsmen]" (5.5). These are old grievances, however, by comparison to the reality of his current circumstances: "krǫpp eru kaup [narrow are the bargains]," he concludes, "ef hreppik / Kaldbak, en ek læt akra [if I obtain Kaldbak, but I give up crops]" (5.7-8). The description of the circumstances as *krappr* is particularly appropriate in this context, since it imparts dissatisfaction with the situation in terms of limited space. Qnundr is clearly very much conscious of the practicalities of this landscape, and feels keenly the unfairness of the exchange.

Akr is a term that I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3 of this study; here, it is most significant in that it is established in opposition to a mountainous region, and that it is relinquished by Qnundr in the process of his *landnám.* This reference to *akrar*—'fields' or 'crops'—effectively sets Kaldbak in opposition to fertile, agricultural land, and finds it wanting. The implication is that this mountainous landscape has no great potential as farmland, and is thus less valuable. Jesse Byock outlines the problems faced by the first settlers in Iceland in the course of his discussion of feud in saga narrative: he notes "the limitations placed on habitation by the climate" and "the finite amount of productive land available" due to the fact that "the inhospitable interior of the island precluded internal expansion" (*Feud* 144-5). Verse 5 thus underlines the idea of highland landscapes as in some sense marginal—in keeping with that idea of mountains and coastline as the boundaries or limits of settled land, which we find articulated most clearly in descriptions of land being taken *milli fjalls ok fjǫru*. This consideration of the consequences of settling and residing in a mountainous region thus establishes one of the major preoccupations of the text.

The concern with mountainous terrain that we find in *Grettis saga* is not merely a consequence of its outlawed protagonist—though the outlaw's relationship to the landscape is certainly of interest to its author—but written into Grettir's history, his ancestry, and thus his connection to Iceland. We find a tendency in the *Íslendingasögur* to use genealogy and accounts of settlement to foreshadow later events and underline important themes, and *Grettis saga* is no exception to this. Grettir, when he finally enters the saga, demonstrates a particular consciousness of this space: the poetic compositions in which he recounts his exploits are littered with references to the landscape. The major conflicts of *Grettis saga* are expressed in verse, and these verses, as we will see, tend to demonstrate a strong sense of setting. When in Chapter 16 Grettir kills Skeggi, for example, he speaks a verse ascribing the man's death to a "hamartroll [a crag-troll]" (11.1), effectively aligning himself with a supernatural embodiment of the landscape—and one linked specifically to mountainous terrain. This technique would seem also to echo Ǫnundr's first verse, in which the term "gýgi / galdrs [troll-woman's song]" (1.3-4) is used as a kenning for axe.

Heather O'Donoghue has discussed the tendencies of both Grettir and Ǫnundr to express themselves primarily through verse, observing that this "linguistic isolation is soon physically realized in Grettir's outlawry" (*Skaldic Verse* 97). The protagonist's tendency to construct himself through his poetic compositions in relation to the landscape would certainly seem to contribute to this. His identification with highland terrain is particularly evident in Verse 26, which is framed as a response to a question: when asked about the reason for his quarrel with Auðunn, Grettir's explanation is that the man "bannaði … ákall þinul fjalla [prohibited the claim of the rope of the mountains]" (26.5-8). Two aspects of the last line are particularly interesting. The first is the phrase *þinul fjalla*, which is a variation on a kenning for 'snake'—in turn, a play on Grettir's name, which means 'dragon' or 'snake'. The word *þinull*, meaning 'the edge rope of a net', is used elsewhere in kennings like *moldþinull* (literally, 'earth-rope') and presumably finds its origin in the Jǫrmungandr myth; the variation here is interesting in that is locates Grettir specifically in the mountains. He actively *identifies himself* in terms of that space. The second aspect of the line which is of interest is the term *ákall*, the meaning of which Cleasby and Vigfússon give as a "calling upon" or "invocation"

('á-kall, n.'). Russell Poole translates the term as 'outcry' ('The Riddle of *Grettis saga*' 30), and certainly the sense is intended as a literal silencing—Grettir is accusing Auðunn of physically choking him, hence the reference to his swollen throat in the same stanza (26.3-4)—but the significance of the spoken word in this text is undeniable, and the use of the term in conjunction with a kenning associating Grettir with a particular space is evocative. Cleasby and Vigfússon give as a secondary meaning "claim" or "demand", with the note that it can have legal applications ('á-kall, n.'), and it is in this respect that it is used in Chapter 9 of *Egils saga* (26). This sense of the word is, I feel, as important to our understanding of Grettir's motivations as his physical silencing at Auðunn's hands, particularly in light of the fact that in this same verse he describes being "heima [at home]" (26.6).

That Grettir identifies himself specifically in relation to the mountains serves to create a sense of continuity with that original point of settlement. Ǫnundr's *landnám* is by no means the only inheritance with which *Grettis saga* is concerned, though it certainly goes some way to establishing Grettir's inherent marginality in the text. It is through verse, too, that Grettir expresses his outlawry and state of dispossession (30.1-2), which necessitates greater interaction with the landscape. He is not the only character in the saga to define himself primarily in terms of his location; identity in *Grettis saga* is rooted strongly in place. Hallmundr's function in the narrative is similarly important to our understanding of the protagonist, who, as we will see, positions himself explicitly in the same space through the verses he composes. Traditions surrounding the figure of the mountain-dweller as we find him in *Bergbúa þáttr*, as I have noted, are clearly known and of interest to later saga writers; in *Grettis saga*, Hallmundr emerges as a fully conceived character with real narrative significance. Of the seventy-three verses included in *Grettis saga*, twenty-six are spoken by someone other than Grettir. Of these twenty-six, nine are attributed to Hallmundr—after Grettir himself, Hallmundr is responsible for the largest share of verses in the text.[11] Grettir meets him first under a pseudonym in

[11] Three are anonymous or attributed to an unidentified group; four are spoken by his great-grandfather, Ǫnundr; one by his father, Ásmundr; one by the merchant Hafliði; one is a quotation of a stanza by Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld included also in *Fóstbrœðra saga*; four are spoken by the farmer Sveinn at Bakki, after Grettir steals his horse; nine by Hallmundr; one by Þorbjǫrn ǫngull following Grettir's death; one by his mother Ásdís; and one by his brother Þorsteinn. After Grettir himself, Hallmundr receives the largest share of verses; Hallmundr and Þormóðr alone are attributed more than a single verse at a time, and Þormóðr's *drápa* is only alluded to, not included in full. Bjǫrn Hítdœlakappi speaks no verses at all.

Chapter 54, where Hallmundr identifies himself in verse primarily through reference to the landscape.

The fact that we meet the Hallmundr of *Grettis saga* first under the alias 'Loptr' is interesting on a number of levels. The name itself can be translated as 'air' or 'sky', but might also be intended to suggest height, both with regard to his stature and the location of his home. The use of a pseudonym and the deliberately obscure means of Hallmundr's introduction into the narrative force both Grettir and the audience to prioritise place in their assessment of his identity. Of the two questions posed in the course of this interaction—'who are you?' and "Hvert ætlar þú nú at fara? [Where do you intend to go now?]" (176)—only the latter receives a satisfactory answer. Consequently, we find that place names and features of the landscape are most prominent in Verses 43 and 44, which Hallmundr composes in response to Grettir's questions:

Ætlak hreggs	I intend to go to the storm's
í hrunketil	lava-cauldron
steypi niðr	fallen beneath
frá stórfrerum;	the great frost;
þar má hœngr	there might the salmon
hitta grundar	of the ground meet
lítinn stein	a small stone
ok land hnefa.	and the land of the fist.

[I intend to go to the cave (storm's lava-cauldron) fallen beneath the great frost; there might the snake (salmon of the ground) meet a small stone and the hand (land of the fist).]

Esat mér dælt	It is not easy for me
at dylja þik,	to hide from you,
ef þú vill	if you want to
vitja þangat;	visit that place;
þat's ór byggð	it is beyond the region
Borgfirðinga,	of the Borgfirðingar,
þars Balljökul	there where men
bragnar kalla.	call Balljökull.

> [It is not easy for me to hide from you, if you want to visit that place; it is beyond the region of the Borgfirðingar, there where men call Balljökull.]

When describing his home, identifying both his destination and point of origin, Hallmundr does so first in terms of identifiable topographical features—notably, the "hrunketil [lava-cauldron]" (43.2) and "stórfrerum [great frost]" (43.4). I have translated *hrun* in line 2 as 'lava-field', taking *hrun* as a variant for *hraun*, which combined with *ketill* forms an evocative construction for 'cave'—and is very much in line with the idea of Hallmundr's "hús í hrauni [house in the lava-field]" (*Hallmundarkviða* 12.1) as it is presented in *Bergbúa þáttr*. The 'great frost' is meanwhile suggestive of a glacier—particularly in conjunction with the subsequent reference to Balljökull (44.8)—another feature that emerges repeatedly in *Hallmundarkviða* (5.4, 10.4). The juxtaposition of the two as the primary identifying features of Hallmundr's home in *Grettis saga*, moreover, recalls the constant convergence of ice and fire that we saw in *Hallmundarkviða*; the fact that he intends to travel *niðr* (43.3)—'down', 'beneath'—recalls the descents to Niflheimr and Muspell respectively in Stanzas 7 and 10 of that poem. The idea of descent in order to reach a cave is, as we will see, one that emerges again later in the saga. This initial meeting seems intended to make the character known to us specifically by means of the place he inhabits. Even the veiled reference to the name Hallmundr in Verse 43 breaks it down into components that evoke landscape: the "lítinn steinn [small stone]" (43.7) may also be referred to as a *hallr*, and another name for "land hnefa [the land of the fist]" (43.8), the hand, is *mund.*

Poole identifies "the prominent use of *ofljóst*"—the form of wordplay used in skaldic poetry to obscure meaning—as characteristic of verses in *Grettis saga* ('Myth, Psychology and Society' 4). Loptr's use of the technique here encourages a parallel with the hero, yet the fact that Grettir requires him to speak more plainly suggests that Loptr's skill in composition is—in this respect, at least—superior. The trope of disguise or hidden identity often presumes some knowledge on the part of the audience in order to increase impact. Where Grettir disguises himself, for example, the entertainment lies in the audience possessing knowledge that the characters do not—Grettir's true identity. In this case, if the character of Hallmundr were recognisable to the audience, then the eventual reveal in Chapter 57 would have greater narrative impact. It would be fitting for a saga whose plot involves the

appropriation of so many well-known narratives if Grettir's rival were another figure familiar to its audience. But is the intention to evoke the same Hallmundr we find in *Bergbúa þáttr*? The fact that two lines from the first stanza of *Hallmundarkviða* are quoted later in the saga would suggest so, particularly in view of the text's numerous citations of and allusions to other works.

Laurence de Looze has noted a perhaps detrimental tendency to separate *Grettis saga* from the so-called *skáldasögur*, observing that "both the protagonist within the story and the saga text which contains him are obsessively citational" ('The Outlaw Poet' 85-86). In addition to the many direct references to sagas, Grettir positions himself frequently in relation to other poet-protagonists—most notably, to the heroes of *Fóstbræðra saga* and *Bjarnar saga*. "Í þenna tíma [At this time]," we are told, "var uppgangr þeira fóstbræðra sem mestr, Þorgeirs Hávarssonar ok Þormóðar Kolbrúnarskálds [the ascent of those sworn brothers, Þorgeirr Hávarsson and Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld, was at its peak]" (88), and "Þá bjó í Hólmi Bjǫrn Hítdœlakappi [Bjǫrn Hítdœlakappi lived at Hólmr then]" (186). As Grettir's narrative intersects with theirs, he becomes embroiled in their respective conflicts—he is not only witness to, but also an active participant in, their stories. Grettir, Þorgeirr and Þormóðr, all outlawed, are hosted by Þorgils at the same time and ultimately come to blows. We find in the course of Grettir's visits to Hólmr, meanwhile, reference to Þórðr Kolbeinsson, the rival poet of *Bjarnar saga*: we are told not only that "hann var skáld gott [he was a good poet]" and that "var fjándskapr mikill með þeim Birni ok Þórði [there was great hostility between Bjǫrn and Þórðr]" but also that "þótti Birni eigi verr en hálfneytt, þó at Grettir gerði óspekð mǫnnum Þórðar eða fé [Bjǫrn did not think it was less than half-good if Grettir were to cause trouble to Þórðr's men or livestock]" (187). Grettir is explicitly aligned with Bjǫrn against Þórðr.

That Grettir's encounters with Hallmundr, Bjǫrn and the foster-brothers take place in quick succession invites comparison between them, and the question of poetic rivalry is certainly pertinent to our consideration of Hallmundr in *Grettis saga*. I am inclined to follow de Looze in his argument that Grettir "very much belongs to the subculture of poets" ('The Outlaw Poet' 98); he is, moreover, part of a larger poetic genealogy, following not only his great-grandfather but also his maternal uncle, Jǫkull Bárðarson, with whom he stays in Chapter 34 (*Grettis saga* 117ff.). *Grettis*

saga is filled with accounts of feats of strength and physical prowess, but also with the sorts of poetic accusations of cowardice and exchange of verses that we find elsewhere in the *skáldasögur*. In Verse 3, for example, Ǫnundr claims of his defeated enemy that "esat þegn í þrautir / þrekvanðr [the man was not in hard tasks accustomed to strength]" (3.7-8). These two forms of conflict—physical and poetic—are by no means distinct from one another. Sveinn's pursuit of Grettir after the latter steals his prized horse, for example, is enacted primarily through verse, with Grettir always a few steps ahead. Grettir's encounter with Þorgeirr and Þormóðr meanwhile culminates in a wrestling match with a surprisingly amicable conclusion, during which Grettir proves himself against each man in turn. Likewise, we are told that Grettir and Bjǫrn "reyndu … margan frœknleik [tested one another at many feats]": "vísar svá til í sǫgu Bjarnar, at þeir kallaðisk jafnir at íþróttum. En þat er flestra manna ætlan, at Grettir hafi sterkastr verit á landinu [it is indicated in *Bjarnar saga* that they called themselves equal in skill. But most people believe Grettir to have been the strongest in the land]" (187).

It is interesting in light of this that Grettir's first meeting with Hallmundr involves a similar show of strength—and one that, for once, does not go Grettir's way. After Hallmundr, disguised as Loptr, warns Grettir that he will not be robbed, Grettir insists that the claim "mun nú reynt verða [will now be tested]" (176). Hallmundr's victory is then recorded twice in verse. "Sér Grettir þá, at hann hefir ekki afl við þessum manni [Grettir sees then that he has not strength against this man]" (177), and composes a verse recounting the moment that Loptr "ófælinn álar / endr dró mér ór hendi [dauntless pulled the reins again out of my hands]" (45.5-6). Later, in the course of recounting the great deeds of his life, Hallmundr opens Verse 51 with the declaration that, "Þóttak gildr / es ek Gretti strauk / nógu fast / niðr af taumum [I was thought great when I struck Grettir down from the reins hard enough]" (51.1-4). This first meeting between Hallmundr and Grettir thus serves to establish the former as superior—first in his use of poetic techniques, and then in terms of physical strength. Poole has noted the uncharacteristic nature of Grettir's friendship with Hallmundr in light of the protagonist's general "reluctance to form homo-social associations" ('Myth, Psychology and Society' 12). In fact, as we will see, Hallmundr seems to function primarily as a poetic model for Grettir, who in his compositions and his actions demonstrates a conscious attempt to imitate him.

While *Grettis saga* is written in dialogue with a number of texts, the impact of Grettir's encounter with Hallmundr can be seen clearly in subsequent episodes—and particularly in Grettir's approach to poetic composition.

Poets in Caves

The idea of the cave as a space inhabited by outlaws has long held resonance, and *hellar* certainly emerge prominently in *Grettis saga* as a feature of the mountainous terrain. Frederic Amory, in his discussion of the folkloric elements in the sagas that shaped storytelling about outlaws in later Icelandic traditions, discusses the *Hellismenn* of *Landnámabók* as among the earliest references to cave-dwelling in this context (195). While in a 2010 article Guðmundur Ólafsson, Kevin Smith and Thomas McGovern discussed the findings of their archaeological survey of Surtshellir as evidence of the habitation of caves by outlaws (285-295), in a recent keynote speech Smith revised his view of the possibility ('Of Monsters and Men'). Even if these were not the places that outlaws lived, they certainly seem to have held a certain fascination for contemporary poets. Grettir, of course, is both poet and outlaw, and thus unsurprisingly engages repeatedly with this space—sometimes as a place of refuge where he might most effectively conceal and defend himself (186-187), and in two instances as a site of conflict in which he is tested (74ff., 215ff.). Crucial, however, in terms of our assessment of Grettir's poetic construction of identity is the cave as it relates to Hallmundr.

In Chapter 57, after Grettir is attacked and Hallmundr comes to his aid, he invites Grettir to visit him at Balljǫkull. "Nú [Now]," we are told, "fóru þeir báðir suðr undir Balljǫkull; þar átti Hallmundr helli stóran … Þar dvalðisk Grettir lengi um sumarit [they travelled together south beneath Balljǫkull. Hallmundr owned a great cave there … Grettir dwelt there for much of the summer]" (184). It is in the course of Grettir's stay in this cave that the saga actually cites a variation on part of the refrain from Stanza 1 of *Hallmundarkviða*—but, interestingly, attributes its composition to Grettir himself. "Hann kvað flokk um Hallmundr [He composed a *flokkr* about Hallmundr]," the saga tells us, "ok er þetta þar í [and this is in it]" (184):

Hǫtt stígr hǫllum fœti	Steps loud with sloping feet
Hallmundr í sal fjalla.	Hallmundr in the hall of the mountains.

[Hallmundr steps loud with sloping feet in the hall of the mountains.]

The shift from *gnýr fjalla* in *Hallmundarkviða* (1.8) to *salr fjalla* here in *Grettis saga* (46.2)—from the clash of the mountains to the hall of the mountains—interestingly suggests a shift in focus from the sound of footsteps to his place of dwelling. In the same poem, we are informed, Grettir includes a verse praising "hvatr Hallmundr ór helli [bold Hallmundr from the cave]" (47.7) for his assistance in battle. Here Hallmundr is identified specifically with the space of the cave, rather than with Balljǫkull more generally, as he is for example in *Bárðar saga* (131). This ascription of *Hallmundarkviða* to Grettir would seem to be part of a conscious attempt in the text to align the two figures. Hallmundr is later attributed his own long poem, composed on his death bed, in which he recounts various feats he performed that parallel Grettir's (203ff.). There is a keen sense of reciprocity and exchange in their encounter, whereby Grettir and Hallmundr each compose verses praising the other.

In Hallmundr, the text presents an eminently suitable model for Grettir: a poet skilled in negotiating the landscape beyond the reaches of society. It is, in fact, remarkably easy to draw parallels between the two characters, since Grettir's actions—particularly following their meeting—seem at various instances to consciously echo Hallmundr's. In Chapter 64, for example, Grettir travels to Bárðardalr only to adopt his own disguise and pseudonym, 'Gestr', in what seems a deliberate imitation of his first meeting with Hallmundr. Where the details of Hallmundr's existence in *Grettis saga* diverge from those we find in *Bergbúa þáttr*, I would suggest, the alterations are intended as part of Grettir's appropriation of the narrative—for example, the attribution of lines from *Hallmundarkviða* to Grettir himself. In Verse 47, recounting Hallmundr's assistance in battle, Grettir opens with the statement "Varð í Veðrafirði [It happened in Veðrafjǫrðr]" (47.1)—a line that he echoes from an earlier verse establishing his status as outlaw (38.1). Grettir applies this particular turn of phrase to Hallmundr's deeds as well as his own, aligning their actions and drawing Hallmundr further into his narrative arc.

With all this in mind, I will now consider two poetic depictions of caves in *Grettis* saga, both of which are composed by the protagonist, and which serve in some sense to locate Grettir in relation to this space. The first of these verses is composed in the

context of the well-known episode in Chapter 21, in which Grettir's host, Þorkell, tracks a bear that has been attacking his livestock back to its lair in a cave in the cliffs. After Þorkell's kinsman, Bjǫrn, fails to kill the bear—and issues a challenge to Grettir's reputation in the process—Grettir defeats it in a great show of strength. While confronting Bjǫrn about his insults, Grettir recites Verse 20:

Opt kom heim í húmi	Often came home in twilight
hræddr, þás engum blœddi,	afraid, when no one bled,
sás vetrliða vitja	he who made to visit the winter-
víg-Njǫrðr í haust gørði;	follower in autumn, battle-Njǫrðr;
sá engi mik sitja	no one saw me sit
síð hjá bjarnar híði;	late near the lair of the bear;
þó komk ullar otra	though I came out from the jutting
út ór hellis skúta.	rocks of the wool-otters' cave.

[The warrior (battle-god), he who made to visit the bear (winter-follower) in autumn, often came home afraid in twilight, when no one bled; no one saw me sit late near the lair of the bear, though I came out from the jutting rocks of the bears' (wool otters') cave.]

There is some familiar imagery in the opening line here: Stanza 8 of *Hallmundarkviða*, we might recall, opens with the line "Várum húms í heimi [We were in the home of twilight]"—which, like *vallbingr* in the same verse, would appear to refer to the cave in which the poem is composed (8.1-2). This use of similar phrasing in the context of the same landscape feature is notable in light of the apparent familiarity of the author with a version of *Hallmundarkviða.* Equally interesting is Grettir's depiction of himself in this particular verse—first and foremost, by contrast to Bjǫrn, as someone who is more comfortable engaging with this space. The parallel movements at the beginning and end of the poem, aligned through use of the same verb, underline this contrast. This is not only a record of the poet's feat of strength, but is actively positioning—Grettir uses this verse to undermine Bjǫrn while simultaneously establishing and locating himself in relation to the cave. Bjǫrn visits; Grettir *inhabits.* The phrase *ór helli* that Grettir applies like an epithet to Hallmundr occurs here in relation to his own movements: "komk … út ór hellis skúta [I came out from the jutting rocks of the cave]," he declares

(20.7-8). The evocation of the cave in the protagonist's verses is one of the narrative techniques by which he aligns himself with Hallmundr.

The most resonant depiction of a cave in the verses of *Grettis saga*, however, is undoubtedly to be found in the course of the Sandhaugar episode in Chapter 66. Here, following a battle with a *trollkona*, Grettir proposes to explore the cliff she inhabited:

> Grettir kafaði undir forsinn, ok var þat torvelt, því at iða var mikil, ok varð hann allt til grunns at kafa, áðr en hann kœmisk upp undir forsinn. ... Þar var hellir mikill undir forsinum, ok fell áin fram af berginu. Hann gekk þá inn í hellinn, ok var þar eldr mikill á brǫndum. (215)
>
> [Grettir dived under the waterfall, and it was difficult, because the eddy was great, and he had to dive all the way to the ground before he could come up under the waterfall. ... There was a great cave under the waterfall, and the river fell from the cliff. He went into the cave, and there was a great fire burning there.]

This account of Grettir's descent into the cave of the troll-woman he has defeated has often been compared to the battle with Grendel's mother in *Beowulf* (see, for example, Jorgensen 55ff. and Osborn 197ff.), but also bears comparison with the account of the cave in *Hallmundarkviða*, in which various bodies of water are likewise presented as boundaries to be crossed.[12] Verses 60 and 61, which are composed in this space, are moreover particularly evocative:

Gekk ek í gljúfr et døkkva,	I went into the dark ravine,
gein veltiflug steina	the tumbling precipice of stones gaped
við hjǫrgœði hríðar	at the endower of the pole of the
hlunns úrsvǫlum munni;	sword's storm with cold, wet mouth;

[12] The similarities between *Grettis saga* and *Beowulf* have been frequently discussed: for other proposed connections between the two texts see, for example, Margaret Arent, 'The Heroic Pattern' (1969); Richard Harris, 'The Deaths of Grettir and Grendel' (1974); Joan Turville-Petre, '*Beowulf* and *Grettis saga*' (1977); R. W. McConchie, 'Grettir Ásmundarson's Fight' (1982); Arthur Wachsler, 'Grettir's Fight with a Bear' (1985); Joyce Tally Lionarons, 'Bodies, Buildings' (1994); and Dean Swinford, 'Form and Representation' (2002). The arguments and principal points of comparison (the fight with Kárr, the fight with the bear, Glámr, Sandhaugar, and the confrontation on Drangey) are summarised and discussed by Andy Orchard in *Pride and Prodigies* (1995). Magnus Fjalldal, in *The Long Arm of Coincidence* (1998), has argued rather that distinctions between the accounts "indicate different concepts of what constitutes heroic prowess" (21).

fast lá framan at brjósti	hard lay forth against my breast
flugstraumr í sal Naumu;	the falling stream in the hall of Nauma;
heldr kom á herðar skaldi	comes over the poet's shoulders rather
hǫrð fjón Braga kvánar.	hard the hatred of Bragi's wife.

[I went into the dark ravine, the tumbling precipice of stones gaped with cold, wet mouth at the warrior (endower of the sword {pole of battle <the sword's storm>}); the falling stream lay forth hard against my breast in the hall of the woman; the hatred of the eddy (Iðunn {Bragi's wife}) comes over the poet's shoulder rather hard.]

Ljótr kom mér í móti	The ugly friend of the giantess
mellu vinr ór helli;	came to meet me out of the cave;
hann fekksk heldr at sǫnnu	truly he struggled rather
harðfengr við mik lengi;	hardily against me at length;
harðeggjat létk hǫggvit	I struck his hard-edged
heptisax af skepti;	hilted-sword from its shaft;
Gangs klauf brjóst ok bringu	bright battle-flame clove
bjartr gunnlogi svarta.	Gangr's breast and black chest.

[The ugly friend of the giantess came to meet me out of the cave; truly he struggled rather hardily against me at length; I struck his hard-edged hilted-sword from its shaft; bright sword (battle-flame) clove the giant's (Gangr's) breast and black chest.]

Here the function of the cave is as a site of conflict, rather than shelter, but the imagery employed is particularly evocative. The opening line serves again as a declaration of movement, of entrance into the space itself: "Gekk ek í gljúfr et døkkva [I went into the dark ravine]," he declares, where "gein veltiflug steina … úrsvǫlum munni [the tumbling precipice of stones gaped with cold, wet mouth]" (60.1-4). The verb *geina*—'to gape' or 'to yawn'—occurs also in Grettir's earlier verse about Skeggi's killing, where he conceives of his own actions as that of a *hamartroll* (11.2) with gaping mouth poised to crush his victim's skull (11.5). The description of the mouth here as gaping or yawning plays deliberately on the equation of topographical feature with facial feature. In *Bergbúa þáttr*, we might recall, the mouth of the cave is identified as the point at which the men hear

Hallmundr's composition; here, it is the initial point of physical contact and engagement. This idea of movement against, *við*, is one that emerges strongly in both verses—and one that likewise appears repeatedly in *Hallmundarkviða* in the context of the same space (2.8-9, 7.6-7, 8.8-9). Verse 61 serves to create a sense of symmetry between the movements of Grettir and the giant he fights—and thus between the two verses—as the giant, Grettir says, "kom mér í móti … ór helli [came to meet me out of the cave]" (61.1-2).

The image of mouths in the landscape is really quite suggestive, and seems to comprehend some idea of poetry as in some sense a product of the land as well as the people. Interestingly, it is in the first verse the *flugstraumr*, the falling water, which presses hard on Grettir's breast and "kom á herðar skaldi [comes over the poet's shoulders]" (61.7). This not merely a *limen*, a point of crossing, but a foe in its own right according to Grettir's poetic construction of the feature. This flow of water combined with that initial description of falling stones moreover strongly recalls the same images in *Hallmundarkviða*—the landscape in flux aligned with the process of poetic composition. There seems here to be an underlying awareness of the cave as a place where sound resonates.

We find in the description of Sönghellir in Chapter 4 of *Bárðar saga* a vivid image of echoes in caves:

> Þá fann Bárðr helli stóran, ok þar dvöldu þeir um hríð. Þar þótti þeim svara öllu því, er þeir mæltu, því at dvergmála kvað fast í hellinum; hann kölluðu þeir Sönghelli ok gerðu þar öll ráð sín, ok helzt þat alla stund síðan, meðan Barðr lifði. (111-112)
>
> [Then Bárðr found a great cave, and they dwelt there for a while. There it seemed to them everything they spoke was answered, because dwarf-speech sounded fast in the cave; they called it Sönghellir and had there all their councils, and continued that for a while afterwards, while Bárðr lived.]

That echoes are referred to as *dvergmál*, 'dwarf-speech', again seems to attribute the sound to a supernatural dweller in the landscape, and moreover to conceive of it as a potential means of communication by which human speech is answered. The sense of reciprocity is again underlined. It is interesting too that the cave is constructed as

a social space, where debates and meetings might be held and legal disputes, perhaps, settled.

The verses I have discussed so far are not the only instances of an apparent association between poets and caves; we find more poetry composed about or associated with this topographical feature elsewhere in the *Íslendingasögur*. In Chapter 40 of *Eyrbyggja saga*, for example, Bjǫrn Breiðvíkingakappi returns to Iceland with his brother Arnbjǫrn after a period of exile, and assumes management of his father's farm. He meets with Þuríðr, the married sister of Snorri goði, at her house at Fróðá, in spite of warnings he receives against doing so, and in the course of one of these visits loses his way in a sudden snow storm:

> Þat var einn dag, at Bjǫrn fór til Fróðár; ok um kveldit, er hann bjósk heim at fara, var þykkt veðr ok regn nǫkkut, ok var hann heldr síðbúinn. En er hann kom upp á heiðina, kólnaði veðrit ok dreif; var þá svá myrkt, at hann sá eigi leiðina fyrir sér. Eptir þat laust á hríð með svá miklu hreggi, at hann fekk varla stýrt sér... (109-110)
>
> [One day, Bjǫrn travelled to Fróðá; and in the evening, when he was preparing to travel home, there was dreary weather and some rain, and he was rather late setting out. And when he had come up on the heath, the weather became colder and it snowed; it was then so dark that he couldn't see the path in front of him. After that a storm blew up with such strong winds that he could hardly keep going.]

In many respects, the circumstances of Bjǫrn's cave compositions as recounted in the prose narrative align well with the experiences of Þórðr and his companion in *Bergbúa þáttr*. Though the reason for his journey is quite different, the cave is presented first and foremost as providing shelter from the storm. "Hann hitti um nóttina hellisskúta einn [He found a jutting cave that night]," we are told, "ok fór þar inn í ok var þar um nóttina ok hafði kalda búð [and went in there and was there through the night and had a cold abode]" (110). Rather than meeting a cave-dweller who composes a verse, as in *Bergbúa þáttr* or *Landnámabók*, several verses are attributed to Bjǫrn himself, which present an image of reluctant habitation:

Myndit Hlín of hyggja	Hlín of the sea-fire would not
hafleygjar vel þeygi,	—she who bears clothes in
sú's berr í vǫ́ víða	the wide cabin—yet think
váðir, mínu ráði,	well of my condition,
ef eld-Njǫrun ǫldu	if fire-Njǫrun of the wave
einn vissi mik steina	knew that I, herding-tree of
hirðiþoll í helli	the sea-steed, lay alone freezing
hafviggs kalinn liggja.	in a cave of stones.

[The woman (goddess of gold {sea-fire}), she who bears clothes in the wide cabin, would not yet think well of my condition, if the woman (goddess of gold {wave-fire}) knew that I, the seafarer (herding-tree of the ship {sea-steed}), lay alone freezing in a cave of stones.]

In Verse 29, the first of Bjǫrn's compositions, the predominant sense is of isolation: by positioning himself "einn … steina … í helli … kalinn [alone freezing in a cave of stones]" (29.6-8), he draws attention both to the physical challenges of the landscape, and to his forced separation from Þuríðr. This is a particularly stark image of cave-dwelling, created largely through the juxtaposition of the desired, imagined destination in the first *helmingr* and the reality of the present situation in the second. The comparison of a more domestic space with a desolate landscape is thus used by the poet as a means of expressing longing for the object of his affections. This tension is sustained in the next verse:

Sýlda skark svana fold	I raked the field of swans, stiff with ice,
súðum, þvít gæibrúðr	—since the good-wife
ǫ́stum leiddi oss fast,	led us fast to affection—from
austan með hlaðit flaust;	the east on a ship laden with planks;
víða gatk vásbúð;	widely I had a wet abode;
víglundr nú um stund	the courageous war-grove now
helli byggir hugfullr	inhabits for a while a cave
hingat fyr konu bing.	here, instead of a woman's bed.

[I sailed (raked) the sea (field of swans), stiff with ice, from the east on a ship laden with planks, since the good-wife led us fast to affection; widely I had a

wet abode; the courageous warrior (war-grove) now inhabits for a while a cave here, instead of a woman's bed.]

In Verse 30, too, the two halves of the poem are used to present two different locations: the first, a difficult journey by ship—with the sea conceived of as a field tended by the seafarer—and the second a strong assertion of his present situation. Again, the awareness of the contrast between home and cave is emphasised: Bjǫrn is "hingat fyr konu bing [here, instead of a woman's bed]" (30.8). The verb *byggja* in line 7 and reference to the *vásbúð* in line 5 again foreground the idea of dwelling in relation to the cave, but the implications here are quite different. Where in *Hallmundarkviða*, we will recall, the term *vallbingr* created a sense of the cave as a space that has been in some way domesticated (8.4), Bjǫrn presents the *hellir* as a poor substitute for the *bingr* (30.7-8).

The third of these verses is not stated to have been composed in the cave itself, but is couched instead in terms of the questions as to the man's whereabouts. "Bjǫrn var úti þrjú dœgr í hellinum [Bjǫrn was out in the cave for three days]," we are told, "áðr upp létti hríðinni, en þá kom hann af heiðinni it fjórða dœgrit ok kom þá heim til Kambs. Hann var þrekaðr mjǫk; spurðu heimamenn hann, hvar hann hefði verit um veðrin [before the storm let up, and then he came over the heath on the fourth day and then came home to Kambr. He was quite exhausted; men from home asked him where he had been during the storm]" (111). Bjǫrn's response is as follows:

Spurðusk vǫr und vǫrðum	They spoke of our works under
verk Styrbjarnar merkjum;	Styrbjǫrn's decorated standards;
jarnfaldinn hlóð ǫldum	iron-hooded Eirekr felled
Eirekr í dyn geira;	men in the clash of spears;
nú traðk hauðr of heiði	now I trod the earth over the heath,
hundvillr, þvít fatk illa	utterly lost, since I stepped badly
víða braut í vátri	on the wide road in the wet
vífs gørninga drífu.	snow-drift of the woman's deeds.

[They spoke of our works under Styrbjǫrn's decorated standards; iron-hooded Eirekr felled men in the battle (clash of spears); now I trod the earth over the heath, utterly lost, since I stepped badly on the wide road in the wet snow-drift of the woman's deeds.]

Once again, heroic feats performed abroad are contrasted with more recent events in Iceland. Bjǫrn's movements are expressed—again, in the first person—through the verbs *troða*, 'to tread' (31.5), and *feta*, 'to step' (31.6). The latter, interestingly, seems to have particular connotations of finding one's way; here, crucially, Bjǫrn "fatk illa [stepped badly]" (31.6). The heath is often presented as a transitional or liminal space, a site of crossing or of conflict—for instance, in a number of verses in *Heiðarvíga saga* (4.1, 10.3, 11.7, 15.2 and 16.6), or in Verse 9 of *Kormáks saga* (9.3)—and this is certainly the case here, where it functions primarily as the landscape that separates the speaker from the object of his affections. The term *hundvillr* is likewise particularly evocative as applied to Bjǫrn's situation, since *villr* as a descriptor has the sense of both 'lost' and 'wild' (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'villr')—in this instance, both translations seem appropriate to his condition. All three of these verses thus employ the vocabulary of highland landscapes very effectively in order to express social and physical isolation.

In the second *helmingr* of Verse 11 of *Svarfdæla saga*, meanwhile, we find again that idea of the cave as a potential dwelling place:

Eigum bernskligt báðir	We both have an abode, childlike,
ból, þat er lítt nýtr sólar,	which has seldom enjoyed the sun,
oss hlægir þat eigi,	—that does not gladden us—
út um hellisskúta.	out in the jutting cave.

[We both have an abode, childlike, which has seldom enjoyed the sun, out in the jutting cave; that does not gladden us.]

Here the cave is "ból ... þat er lítt nýtr sólar [an abode which has seldom enjoyed the sun]" (11.5-6), a construction which recalls those allusions to the 'region of twilight' in *Hallmundarkviða* and *Grettis saga*. This description of the space is moreover preceded by an assertion of ownership, and located decisively in the rocky landscape with a familiar closing line—"út um hellisskúta [out in the jutting cave]" (11.8). Interestingly, the poet in this instance is Þorleifr jarlsskáld, whom I will discuss again with regard to his relationship with landscape in the final section of this chapter. These verses about *hellar* seem, in general, to be remarkably cohesive with regard to vocabulary and motifs; there seems to be a well-developed sense of the inherent associations of caves as a topographical feature.

To return to *Grettis saga*, then, what are the implications of this repeated evocation of the cave in the verses of the protagonist? Crucially, it is Verses 60 and 61—the two verses he composes in the course of his confrontation in the cave—that Grettir has carved on rune-sticks, an action that again serves to align him with Hallmundr, who also had his final verses recorded this way. "Margra athafna sinna gat Hallmundr í kviðunni [Hallmundr mentioned many of his feats in the poem]," we are told, "því at hann hafði farit um allt landit [for he had been all over the land]" (204). This detail encourages us to draw yet another comparison with Grettir, whose entire narrative is based on his visits to different parts of Iceland, but also strongly recalls the assertion that forms part of the refrain to Verse 11 of *Hallmundarkviða:* "ek fer víða [I travel widely]" (11.8). More generally, the concern with the preservation of verses on rune-sticks recalls the command in Verse 12 of *Hallmundarkviða* to "flokk nemið it [remember the *flokkr*]" (12.5)—as well as the more general desire for permanence, for something "þats æ mun standa [that always will stand]" (5.7). After Hallmundr's death and the inscription of his final verses, moreover, we are told that his killer, Grímr, "dvalðisk … margar nætr í hellinum ok nam kviðuna [stayed many nights in the cave and learned the poem]" (205)—again calling to mind Hallmundr's warning to his audience in Verse 12 of *Hallmundarkviða.* The fact that this descent into the cave is the deed that Grettir chooses to record underlines its significance to the narrative—*Grettis saga* is deeply concerned with the idea of engagement with the landscape, and the poetry it contains very much reflects this. The cave, it would seem, is not only Hallmundr's space, but Grettir's too. There seems to be a strange symmetry to the fates of Grettir and Hallmundr, centred around the space in which they interact. Of the many references to fellow poets in the course of the text, it is Hallmundr that Grettir consciously imitates. By this reckoning, Grettir's encounter with Hallmundr is one of the most significant in the saga.

There has been some discussion of the figure of Hallmundr as a troll (for example, in Lindow, *Trolls* 30-31; Sävborg, 'The Icelander and the Trolls' 200-201; and Orchard 159). There are certainly trollish aspects to the Hallmundr of *Bergbúa þáttr,* who identifies himself as a *bjargálfr*, a rock-elf (11.6). Marlene Ciklamini suggested that any ambiguity surrounding Hallmundr's status in *Grettis saga* is deliberate, part of a conscious attempt on the part of the saga author to blur the lines of monstrosity ('Grettir and Ketill' 148), and this would seem to be the case also with the depiction

of the protagonist.[13] Grettir not only encounters trolls, but is frequently compared to them. In Chapter 38, for example, he is described physically as "mikill tilsýndar, sem troll væri [great in appearance, as if he were a troll]" (130). When, in Chapter 64, he helps the farmer's wife across the river, she claims to be unsure "hvárt hana hefði yfir flutt maðr eða troll [whether man or troll had carried her across]" (211). These repeated references to trolls in *Grettis saga* gain further significance when we consider that—as supernatural dwellers in the landscape—they might serve a similar function to the *landvættir*. The distinction between the two is by no means clear-cut. *Grettis saga* is preserved alongside *Bárðar saga*—a work in which trolls figure prominently—in several manuscripts, and there would certainly seem to be some connection between the two texts. The hero of *Bárðar saga* is both half-troll and one of the *landvættir*, given the epithet *Snæfellsáss.* This is, as I have noted, another text in the corpus which makes reference to "Hallmund ór Balljökli [Hallmundr from Balljökull]" (131).

The fact that poems about these highland landscapes are so frequently attached to supernatural beings—whether as figures in the verses in question, or poets to whom they are attributed—suggests a particular awareness of this space as a point of contact and interaction. We find an interesting example of an exchange of verses with a supernatural figure in Snorri's account in *Skáldskaparmál* of the first poet, Bragi, who is driving through a forest at night when "stefjaði trǫllkona á hann ok spurði hverr þar fór [a troll-woman addressed him and asked who went there]" (83). The verses composed by Bragi and the troll demonstrate the same structure and poetic conceits in attempting to define themselves: "Trǫll kalla mik [Trolls call me]," she declares (330a.1); "Skáld kalla mik [Poets call me]," he responds (330b.1). In this instance, *trǫll* and *skáld* are deliberately aligned through verse. We see here again that same potential for reciprocity and exchange that Cochrane underlined as crucial to relationships with the *landvættir* (192).

In her discussion of *Grettis saga,* Mary Sandbach stated of both Þórir—a giant who inhabits the landscape in Chapter 61—and Hallmundr that they "have obvious

[13] For further discussions of monstrosity in *Grettis saga*, particularly as relates to the protagonist, see: Richard Harris, 'The Deaths of Grettir and Grendel' (1974) 25-53; Kirsten Hastrup, 'Tracing Tradition' (1986); Janice Hawes, 'The Monstrosity of Heroism' (2008) 19-50; Rebecca Merkelbach, 'The Monster in Me' (2014); Lotte Motz, 'Withdrawal and Return' (1973); Kathryn Hume, 'The Thematic Design' (1974) 475-476; Joyce Tally Lionarons, 'Bodies, Buildings' (1994) 45; Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies* (1995) 178; Eleanor Barraclough, 'Inside Outlawry' (2010) 370ff.

affinities with the 'landvættir'" (99); there would certainly seem to be a purpose to presenting these figures as images of dwelling in the landscape. The connection between land and Icelanders as it is depicted in settlement narratives, as we have observed, was very much embodied in the people's interactions with these spirits: *landvættir*, when in communication with the *landnámsmenn*, served as a protective force, affirming the rights of settlers and establishing a bond between people and land. Where they give voice to the land in the sagas, poetry is presented as the primary means of communication. These supernatural figures are thus crucial to our assessment of the relationship between poetry and landscape, and Grettir's clear identification of himself with them through verse demonstrates one of the major preoccupations of the text. This is a saga about engaging with landscape, and the poetry it contains is central to that engagement.

Dying into the Mountain

With this in mind, I will conclude my discussion of highland landscapes in saga verse by considering another topographical feature which, like the cave, emerges repeatedly in relation to this space, and which moreover seems to be related particularly to the concept of inhabiting the landscape. Both *hellar* and *haugar* are points at which it is easy to imagine physical entrance into or dwelling in the landscape. *Grettis saga* is a text with a distinct structure, and one that is reinforced by the reiteration of certain motifs; entrances into these spaces are an important part of the identity that Grettir enacts through both his poetry and his movements. Mountain and mound, too, are often aligned in the sagas through the use of analogous imagery. In her study of conceptions of the dead in Old Norse literature, Hilda Ellis Davidson discussed the idea of 'dying into the mountain' as pervasive in the *Íslendingasögur*, and argued that, since "the mountain, like the burial mound, is represented inside like a hall, … there is probably some connection between the mound and the hill in which the dead dwell" (90). Mayburd, more recently, has identified "the pronounced preference for elevated terrain" as "perhaps the most striking feature of Viking Age Icelandic burials" (145).

An interest in burial sites emerges in *Grettis saga* early on: we are told of Ǫnundr that he "bjó í Kaldbak til elli; hann varð sóttdauðr ok liggr í Tréfótshaugi [lived at Kaldbak into old age; he died from illness and lies in Tréfótshaugr]" (25). I have

observed already that details in the account of Ǫnundr's deeds and settlement foreshadow events in Grettir's life or serve to underline aspects of the narrative, and this is no exception. The tradition of dying into the mountain, in fact, is explicitly tied to the land of Grettir's ancestors—to the site settled by Ǫnundr at the beginning of the saga, which formed the subject of Verse 5. In Chapter 14 of *Njáls saga*, for example, after Hallgerðr's uncle, Svanr, perishes in a storm, we are told that "fiskimenn þeir, er váru at Kaldbak, þóttusk sjá Svan ganga inn í fjallit Kaldbakshorn [fishermen who were at Kaldbak thought they saw Svanr go into the mountain Kaldbakshorn]" (46). In a recent article, Lisa Bennett has discussed the significance of mounds as sites of cultural memory, serving effectively as "physical representations of ancestry on the landscape" (36). This is true in *Grettis saga* of both mound and mountain. Burial is undoubtedly an important part of the way that Icelanders relate to the land that they inhabit, and emerges also in relation to the process of *landnám*, as I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

The *haugr* is, moreover, another feature of the landscape with which the process of poetic composition is often associated. This association tends to manifest in the *Íslendingasögur* in three ways, the first of which is the representation of the mound as a visual prompt to poetic composition. In *Þórðar saga hreðu*, for example, we find several instances of verses composed immediately following accounts of burial; this connection is made most explicit, however, in Chapter 10, when the protagonist actively draws attention to the *haugr* as a reminder to Miðfjarðar-Skeggi of Skeggi's deceased kinsman. In this particular location, Þórðr declares, "má þér þá minnissamara verða, hvílíkt ættarhögg ek hefi höggvit þér [it may be more memorable for you, the kind of blow I have dealt to your family]" (213). We are told at this point that Þórðr and Skeggi "hurfu … um hauginn [walked around the mound]" (213), which, by the use of the verb *hverfa*—meaning 'to walk around' but with the specific sense of encircling or fencing in (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'hverfa')—evokes that same sense of establishing boundaries that we saw in the opening chapters of *Landnámabók*. The verse that Þórðr subsequently composes in this setting is a direct incitement to physical conflict. In *Gísla saga*, similarly, the mound serves as a subject for verses that address the saga's underlying tensions: Þorgrímr "leit til haugsins Vésteins [looked toward Vésteinn's burial mound]" (50) as he acknowledges his guilt in Chapter 15, and then Gísli does the same in Chapter

18 by Þorgrímr's burial mound (58). The actions of these two men are thus aligned both through the verses they compose, and through the circumstances of their composition. A large portion of the narrative is, moreover, devoted to accounts of the construction of these mounds. "In the landscape around the farmsteads," Barraclough asserts, "the *haugar* of first Vésteinn and and then Þorsteinn stand as physical reminders of the feud, nourishing the animosity that will tear apart this tight-knit community" ('Inside Outlawry' 379). These verses, as we can see, perform a memorial function somewhat distinct from that of commemoration of the dead or connection to ancestry—rather, they serve as a means of inciting and perpetuating conflict.

The second way in which we often find verses associated with this particular topographical feature is in scenes of *haugbrot,* mound-breaking—of which there are notable examples in both *Grettis saga* and *Harðar saga.* Sävborg has discussed the recurrent image of mound-breaking in the *Íslendingasögur* by comparison to its occurrence in *fornaldarsögur* and concluded "that both *haugbrot* and *haugbúi* motifs in general, are old and frequent in Old Norse tradition" ('Haugbrot' 437). That this association between poetry and *haugar* emerges particularly strongly in all three of the so-called 'outlaw' sagas is interesting in itself; there is undoubtedly a consciousness of dispossession in the poetry of these narratives, which resonates powerfully with the impulse to claim land that we have already observed. The poetry in question stands apart from elegy in that it is not concerned with grief, or mourning; it is blunt and violent rather than idealised, and its function is not consolatory. These poems about *haugar* are not about commemorations of the dead so much as they are about claims to space, exploration and movement. They are concerned with physicality and liminality, positioned at the intersection of the human and the natural worlds.

The *haugbrot* in *Grettis saga* occurs in Chapter 18, when Grettir travels to the island Háramarsey and becomes friendly with a man named Auðunn. As Grettir is about to return home one evening, we are told, he "sá eld mikinn gjósa upp á nesi því, er niðr var frá bœ Auðunar [saw a great fire gush up on the headland, which was down from Auðunn's farm]" (57). The verb *gjósa* in this context is interesting enough in itself: Cleasby and Vigfússon give the definition as "to gush, break out, of a furnace, volcano, or the like" ('gjósa'). Falk has gone so far as to suggest—based on

Grettir's assertion "at þar brynni af fé [that treasure burns there]" (57)—that Icelanders might "have imagined volcanoes to be burial mounds in flames" ('Vanishing Volcanoes' 10) and that "descriptions of earth-bound treasure" might be intended to evoke geothermal activity (13). Descriptions of fire emerge often in the context of caves in *Grettis saga*; the image, clearly, is used in relation to mounds and mountains also—particularly in relation to those episodes which describe a character 'dying into the mountain'. In Chapter 11 of *Eyrbyggja saga*, for example, we are told that there were "inn í fjallit elda stóra [great fires within the mountain]" shortly before Þorsteinn is said to have entered it (19). All these features of highland landscapes seem to be in this sense associated with one another: the idea of burial in the *hraun*, as we have seen, emerges in *Hallmundarkviða* but also as context for the composition of verses in *Eyrbyggja saga* (74-75) and *Bjarnar saga* (22.1-4). The use of *gjósa upp* here in *Grettis saga* moreover recalls similarly evocative verbs in *Hallmundarkviða*'s depiction of tectonic activity—for example, *spretta upp* (3.5) or *hrjóta upp* (2.6). In the opening of Stanza 2 of that poem, we might recall, an image of fire also directly precedes a *haugbrot* (2.1-4). This would seem again to be an instance of the association of such verbs with the process of poetic composition. Interestingly, in Chapter 130 of *Njáls saga*, the same verb occurs in the context of poetry composed by a dead man: we are told that "Þar gaus stundum upp eldr [fire gushed up there sometimes]", before Skarphéðinn speaks a verse from the ashes (336).

After Grettir observes the fires on the headland, Auðunn warns him that, "Sá einn mun fyrir þeim eldi ráða, at eigi mun gagn í um forvitnask [Only one will rule over those fires, about whom nothing will be gained to be curious]" (57). In this image of 'one who commands fire' we are reminded of Surtr, stood at the border of Muspell to deny entry to *útlendir* (*Gylfaginning* 9)—which, when combined with the idea of the space as already owned or ruled, raises once again the idea of disputed boundaries. The breaking of a burial mound is certainly a transgressive act: both a literal, physical deconstruction of a boundary, and representative of a crossing between the domains of the living and the dead. Conflict occurs here as at other boundaries. It is Grettir's desire to *know* that sets him apart—not only in this instance, but later in the course of his encounter with Glámr. Here the impulse is underlined by his maternal uncle, Jǫkull, again by means of the term *forvitni*: "er þér forvitni á, frændi, at koma

þar [are you curious, kinsman, to go there]?" he asks, after confirming the accounts of Glámr's killings, and Grettir replies in the affirmative (117). In this tendency we find a parallel is again drawn between Grettir and Ǫnundr: in Chapter 4, speaking of his abilities in battle, "Ǫnundr kvað þat eigi vita mega, fyrr en reynt væri [Ǫnundr said that it wasn't possible to know before it was tried]" (11), while in Chapter 54, in the course of his meeting with Hallmundr, Grettir claims, "Þá veit þat, er reynt er [That is known which is tried]" (136). Tests of physical strength are prominent in *Grettis saga*, but the impulse toward the exploration of unknown space also emerges particularly strongly: in the course of the Sandhaugar episode, similarly, Grettir declares, "Mun ek forvitnask, hvat í forsinum er [I will discover what is in the waterfall]" (214). These entrances into *hellar* and *haugar* are deliberately aligned through similar descriptions of descent—as well as the references to fire and treasure—and seem to fulfil similar functions in the text (cf. 57-59 and 214-216).

This underlying impulse towards exploration is expressed by Grettir in Verses 17 and 18, in response to questions about his *haugbrot*:

Mér hefir brugðizk, bǫru	It has deceived me, diminisher
blikrýrandi, at skýru,	of the wave's gleam, clearly,
brátt spyri bragnar þetta,	—soon men will hear this—
bauga vǫn í haugi;	hope of rings in the mound;
þó sék hit, at Hrotta	though I see that not many a storm-Ullr
hríð-Ullr muni síðan	of swords would afterwards,
fár at Fáfnis mýri	for Fáfnir's marsh,
fullteitr þannig leita.	quite gladly seek that way.

[Hope of rings in the mound has clearly deceived me, diminisher of gold (the wave's gleam)—soon men will hear this—though I see that not many a warrior (god of the storm of swords) would afterwards, quite gladly, seek that way for gold (Fáfnir's marsh).]

Fekk í firna dǫkkum,	I grasped—the spirit fell—
fell draugr, tekit haugi	seized a sword in the awful dark
sax, þats seggja vexir	mound, that which increases men's
sǫr, hyrlestir bǫru;	wounds, breaker of the wave's embers;
ok skyldi mér aldri	and the precious flame of the clash of

jalms dýrlogi hjalma	the grief of helmets, dangerous to men,
ýtum hættr, ef ættak,	would never, if I owned it,
angrs hendi firr ganga.	go far from my hand.

[I grasped, seized a sword in the awful dark mound—that which increases men's wounds—breaker of gold (the wave's embers), the spirit fell; and the sword (precious flame of battle {the clash of the sword <grief of helmets>}), dangerous to men, would never go far from my hand if I owned it.]

Both verses serve to locate Grettir particularly in this space: in the first, he is simply *í haugi* (17.4); in the second, we have the impression of sensory deprivation as he grasps for the sword "í firna dǫkkum haugi [in the awful dark mound]" (18.1-2). The desire for possession and ownership emerges in both cases through the verbs employed: we find variously *fá, taka,* and *eiga.* The conflict with the *draugr*, however, only emerges in the course of Verse 18—in Verse 17, by contrast, we gain a stronger sense of the need to explore this space. The use of *sjá* and *leita* foreground the acts of looking and searching which emerge so prominently in settlement narratives; the assertion that few warriors "muni … fullteitr þannig leita [would quite gladly seek that way]" (17.6-8), moreover, underlines the significance of Grettir's achievement. There is certainly an awareness in these *haugbrot* verses of the recognition to be gained by doing so: in *Harðar saga,* for example, we are told that "Mikit ágæti þótti mönnum Hörðr gert hafa í hauggöngunni [Hörðr was thought by people to have achieved great renown in going into the mound]" (44).

Just as Hallmundr's travels are the subject of his poetry, Grettir's verses seem to prioritise his own movements. The fact that Grettir recounts his exploration of both cave and mound through verse compositions underlines their significance to the narrative—not only in terms of proving his abilities, but also with regard to engagement with his surroundings. When, in Chapter 61, Grettir departs Balljǫkull for Þórisdalr, we are told that "hann hafi farit at tilvísan Hallmundar, því at honum hefir verit víða kunnigt [he had gone on the instruction of Hallmundr, because many places had been made known to him]" (199). Grettir's knowledge of the landscape—modelled on and in this instance directly received from Hallmundr—enables him to negotiate it successfully, and thus to survive as an outlaw for as long

as he does. Transmission of that knowledge, once acquired, appears equally important; poetry is presented as one means of doing so.

We find many of the same impulses that we find in *Grettis saga* in an analogous episode in Chapter 15 of *Harðar saga*: the need for exploration, the desire for renown, and the description of descent are all present here also. In addition, however, the mound-breaking itself as well as the verses composed in the process are framed by an unusually direct account of tectonic activity: the act of *haugbrot*, we are told, is followed immediately by "lands-skjálfti mikill [a great earthquake]" (41). This again bears strong resemblance to Stanza 2 of *Hallmundarkviða* in its attribution of the movement of the landscape to a mound-breaker—here, a conception of landscape as directly impacted and shaped by human action. In this episode, moreover, the encounter that ensues as a result of *haugbrot* is presented rather as a poetic dialogue, with the poet-protagonist engaged in conversation with the inhabitant of the mound. The first of the five verses composed in this chapter opens with a question posed by the *haugbúi*: "Hví fýsti þik [Why do you desire]," Sóti asks, "Hörðr, at brjóta / hús moldbúa [Hörðr, to break the house of a ground-dweller]?" (8.1-3). Sóti's characterization of the mound-breaking is interesting in two respects: first, in the conception of the mound as a *hús*, and secondly in his identification of himself as a *moldbúi*. Both underline the idea of inhabiting the landscape; that he is *moldbúi* rather than *haugbúi*, moreover, seems to align the deceased mound-dweller with *bergbúar* like Hallmundr. Sóti is also, we might note, described as a *tröll* in the preceding passage (40).

This attribution of verses to the *haugbúi* himself is the third way in which we see poetry associated with this particular landscape feature in these texts—and perhaps the most striking. Sóti is by no means the only dead man to compose poetry: not only does Skarphéðinn speak a verse "niðri í eldinum [from down in the flames]" (*Njáls saga* 336), but Gunnarr also is overheard singing in his mound before he rises in order to speak a verse to Skarphéðinn and Hǫgni, which they in turn receive as wisdom (*Njáls saga* 192-3). In *Landnámabók*, too, we find an instance of the *haugbúi* composing in the course of a settlement narrative. Following his arrival and *landnám* in Iceland, we are told that Ásmundr Atlason speaks a verse from his burial mound which serves as a declaration of dwelling in the landscape: "Einn byggvik stǫð steina [I alone inhabit the place of stones]," he says, in the opening line (1.1).

This particular verse likewise expresses certainty that he will be remembered in death (1.7-8), and is interpreted by those who hear it as instructions to adjust his means of burial (104). Nora Chadwick noted the propensity for poetic compositions to be attributed to these figures: "Among the most interesting, and at the same time the most puzzling, aspects of the *haugbúi* and the barrow," she observed, "are their constant association with *skaldskap* and music" (61). The association seems less inexplicable, however, when viewed alongside verses ascribed to other dwellers in the landscape.

This connection between the process of poetic composition and *haugar* as a topographical feature is perhaps made most explicit in *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds*, which concludes with an interesting account of an encounter at the protagonist's burial mound. The shepherd Hallbjǫrn, we are told, "vandist optliga til at koma á haug Þorleifs ok svaf þar um nætr [was accustomed to coming often to Þorleifr's mound and slept there at night]" (227). While lying on the mound he repeatedly expresses the desire "geta ort lofkvæði nǫkkurt um haugbúann [to compose some praise poem about the mound-dweller]" (227). Yet "sakir þess at hann var ekki skáld ok hann hafði þeirar listar eigi fengit, fekk hann ekki kveðit [because he was not a poet and he was not possessed of that art, he could not compose]" (227). There is thus an irony to the one line he manages: "Hér liggr skáld [Here lies a poet]" (228), which evokes both the epitaph we might expect on a grave, and Hallbjǫrn's own supine position and aspirations. It is only in conversation with Þorleifr that he is able to succeed; Hallbjǫrn dreams that Þorleifr stands on top of the mound and addresses him. Skill in poetic composition is here explicitly a gift bestowed upon him by the *haugbúi*: "munt þú þat af mér fá meira en vel flestum mǫnnum ǫðrum [you can get this from me more than most other men]," Þorleifr insists (228). The need for memorization and repetition, again, is emphasised: the verb *nema* crops up here as in *Bergbúa þáttr*. "Skal ek nú kveða fyrir þér vísu [I will now recite for you a verse]," declares Þorleifr, "ok ef þú getr numit vísuna ok kannt hana, þá er þú vaknar, þá munt þú verða þjóðskáld [and if you can learn the verse and recall it, when you wake up, then you will become a great poet]" (228). Having completed the verse with which Hallbjǫrn was struggling, Þorleifr specifies that his first poem should "vanda sem mest bæði hátt ok orðfæri ok einna mest kenningar [make elaborate both metre and language, and especially kennings]" (229). Þorleifr thus

passes on his gift in spite of the fact that he dies childless—fashions Hallbjǫrn, instead, as his poetic heir. Again, a consciousness of the means of transmission is evident. This is, moreover, a text in which the mound is identified particularly as a locus of memory: we are told that "Haugr hans stendr norðr af lǫgréttu, ok sést hann enn [His mound stands north of the lawsite, and it can be seen still]" (227).

These depictions of *haugbúar* seem, in many respects, to be very much in line with other representations of dwelling in the landscape that we have seen. If, as I have suggested, we view *haugbúi* and *bergbúi* and *landvættr* as connected, then these verses composed about mounds are comparable to the poetic fascination we find with caves—as points at which men might enter into the landscape, and make contact with its inhabitants. Interaction with these figures serves to underline the potential for poetry to forge a connection between people and land.

The Poetry of Highland Landscapes

As we can see, various features of highland terrain emerge repeatedly and evocatively in the verses of the *Íslendingasögur* and related texts, and demonstrate a particular fascination with the idea of entrance into and dwelling in the landscape. Hills, *hellar*, *haugar*, and in places the *hraun* are all presented as points at which we might expect to find supernatural figures, at which awareness of the landscape is particularly heightened, and which serve as effective prompts for the recitation of poetry. We have seen, too, that processes of tectonic activity or movements in and through the landscape might be effectively aligned with the process of poetic composition. There is a sense both of the landscape as a source of inspiration and something that might actively be created and shaped by people; in both cases, the poet is presented at the forefront of this engagement. All these aspects are crucial to *Grettis saga* and *Bergbúa þáttr* particularly, but also emerge often in other related texts. The concern with transitional or unstable spaces that we find in the verses of *Grettis saga* and *Hallmundarkviða* is, moreover, part of a broader interest in boundaries and ownership that is fundamental to our understanding of the *Íslendingasögur*, and which emerges just as prominently in the verses as in the prose. Having considered in this chapter the fascination with unsettled land, let us turn next to examine treatments of the primary point of *landnám*, and the various poetic constructions of coastal landscapes that we find in these texts.

CHAPTER 2

LANDNÁM AND THE LITTORAL

Before approaching the depictions of coastal landscapes in the *Íslendingasögur*, it is worth taking a moment to consider some of the particular problems and associations of littoral spaces. While the highland terrain of the previous chapter provided us with ample opportunity to examine the idea of unstable ground in poetic depictions of tectonic activity, an awareness of the landscape as constantly changing must have been even more prominent in relation to the Icelandic coastline. Littoral spaces are inherently marginal: like mountains, positioned at the edges of inhabited land, but also functioning effectively as a boundary between land and sea. Sebastian Sobecki has argued, in relation particularly to medieval English literature, that "literary and wider artistic images of the sea owed much to the sea's essential dissimilarity in *kind* to land: whereas land is immobile and stable, the sea is in constant movement" (5). Yet the dividing line between these two spaces must always be in flux—as Rachel Carson put it, "the edge of the sea remains an elusive and indefinable boundary" (*The Edge of the Sea* 1). Littoral spaces are fundamentally transitional, not only as the point of passage from sea to land and land to sea, but also in the sense that they are constantly shifting with the tide. The tide ensures that the line at which land becomes sea is always moving, and coastal landscapes are visibly shaped and reshaped by those movements. The amount of the shore that is visible—the landscape that is experienced—is dependent on the height of the tide at that point, and the shape and topography of the coastline is moreover gradually altered by that process.

Barry Cunliffe has underlined the difficulties of existing on such a boundary: if, he points out, "the domains of land and sea are conceived of as separate systems subject to their own very different supernatural powers, the interface between them was a liminal place, and as such was dangerous" (9). The ability to move between these spaces is certainly a characteristic of people inhabiting this particular landscape. "If the littoral is permeable," Michael Pearson suggests, in his discussion of littoral societies, "then our description must be amphibious, moving easily between land and sea" (359). This ability to manifest amphibiousness—"to exploit both sides of the tide line, to live not just *by* the sea but *with* the sea in a sustainable relationship"—is

one that John Gillis has attributed to people inhabiting coastlines and islands (*The Human Shore* 40). Along similar lines, Gillis has argued that both these landscapes are fundamentally 'ecotonal' (*The Human Shore* 3, 'Not Continents' 158)—spaces created at the intersection of ecosystems, where those ecosystems "overlap and exist in creative tension with one another" ('Not Continents' 155). On this basis, he describes islanders and coastal inhabitants as "edge species, people capable of exploiting the possibilities of the ecotones they occupied" ('Not Continents' 158). This description, as we will see, resonates strongly with the treatments of coastal landscapes that we find in the texts of medieval Iceland.

There has, of course, been a great deal of attention paid to depictions of coastal landscapes and seascapes in Old English poetry: texts like *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *Wulf and Eadwacer* demand attention to their depictions of these environments in particular. Catherine Clarke has underlined the tendency of tidal spaces in late Anglo-Saxon literature to "complicate easy assumptions about geography, territory, and power" (101), while Karin Olsen has highlighted the interplay between land and sea in the Old English *Andreas* (385). Alfred Hiatt in his analysis of regional space in *Beowulf* observes that the poem "sketches out with relative economy a coastal chorography expressed in terms of ethnic identity, in which the 'border of the Geatas' lies around a day's travel across the sea from the land of the Danes" (25). Phyllis Portnoy has, meanwhile, discussed verbal seascapes in *Beowulf, Genesis A* and *Exodus* with reference to the embellishment of scriptural sea narratives "with imagery drawn from Anglo-Saxon maritime experience" (247), and Winfried Rudolf has examined the idea of 'spiritual islescapes' in Old English homilies (33). Indeed, Kelley Wickham-Crowley has gone so far as to argue that "to consider landscape, especially of the *isle* of Britain, without factoring in the pervasive, changing, and influential presence of water and sea, is to skew how the Anglo-Saxons responded to and imagined themselves in their environment" (110). This is surely true also of literary responses to the Icelandic landscape.

Depictions of sea and coastline are, of course, particularly important to narratives of settlement. Iceland was predominantly settled around the exterior of the island: Jesse Byock notes that "the population was concentrated in the lowland regions along the coast, warmed by the Gulf Stream, and in a few sheltered inland areas" (*Feud* 34). As we have seen already, the *Íslendingasögur* often open with

descriptions of the first journeys to Iceland, of landing on an unfamiliar shore. The coastline serves as an important boundary, not only in the approach to Iceland but in the context of the *landnám* itself; in accounts of settlement, the land taken is often described as bounded by the interior mountains and the exterior coastline. In *Íslendingabók*, we will recall, we are told that at the time of the early settlers "vas Ísland viði vaxit á miðli fjalls ok fjǫru [Iceland was covered with trees between mountain and shore]" (5). The phrase is one with resonance: when Skalla-Grímr makes his land claim in *Egils saga*, he too takes "land milli fjalls ok fjǫru [land between mountain and shore]" (39). Rudolf notes the particular ability of the Anglo-Saxons "to perceive a clear geographical frontier in the coast and thus foster a particular notion of the independence of the land mass they inhabited" (31). There is likewise a keen consciousness in Icelandic settlement narratives of this fact, as I have already noted: one of the first accounts in *Landnámabók* is of that Garðarr Svávarsson, who "sigldi umhverfis landit ok vissi, at þat var eyland [sailed around the land and knew that it was an island]" (35). Unsurprisingly, in the context of a space which is both so crucial to the process of *landnám* and also fundamentally unstable, a preoccupation with boundaries is very much evident—the image of the *garðr* is one that emerges quite often in the context of coastal landscapes and seascapes, as we will see.

It would be oversimplifying, however, to say that the sea is presented in the *Íslendingasögur* primarily as a space to be crossed in the process of travelling from one place to another. These are, after all, coastal settlements—the sea is something with which the Icelandic people must constantly engage, an inescapable part of their daily lives. The law codes make significant provision not only for catching rights, but for drift rights: first and foremost, it is specified that "Hverr maðr a reka fyrir lande sino viðar oc sela oc huala oc fisca [each man owns drift from his land, of wood and seals and whales and fish]" (*Grágás* 123). These laws of ownership are clearly enforced: "Ef viðr kemr afioro manz [if wood comes to a man's shore]", for example, "hann scal marca þan viðar marke sino [he should mark it with his wood-mark]" (*Grágás* 123). Driftwood may be taken from another man's shore in an emergency in order to make repairs to a ship, but that man must be compensated accordingly (*Grágás* 124). Lengthy sections in *Grágás* regarding disputes over beached whales and other salvaged materials (125-131) testify to the significant

value of such resources, which must have been greater in periods of low agricultural productivity (Byock, *Feud* 34-35). We find, too, various references to the *flæðar-mál*, the mark of high tide, as a means of establishing a boundary: for example, "Þar er tré ero hulþ i jorðo ofar en nu gangi floð til oc a sa þau tre er land a fyrir ofan [Where a tree is buried by earth higher than where the tide reaches, then that tree belongs to the man who owns land above that point]" (*Grágás* 124). The coastline is thus not only the first point of contact with this new land, but the space in which the settlers and their descendants exist. Ideas of centre and periphery are here inverted; as we observed in the previous chapter, the uninhabited highlands further inland are constructed as socially marginal. For the Icelanders, effectively, their social centre is geographically peripheral. Kirsten Hastrup's dualistic model of Norse cosmology establishes a dichotomy in the Icelandic worldview between inside and outside, *innangarðs* and *útangarðs*, as well as between land and water: "If wildness reigned at sea," Hastrup argues, "land was the ultimate source of safety and a manifestation of familiarity" ('Icelandic Topography' 59). By their very nature, however, coastal landscapes seem to undermine clear binary oppositions.

Margaret Clunies Ross underlines the fact that in medieval Icelandic texts "the processes of finding suitable land and then settling on it are represented as the major means by which settlers engage with their physical environment" (*Prolonged Echoes* II, 130). By contrast, she argues, we find "a relative neglect of matters to do with the waters and their inhabitants which were placed in a special, somewhat marginal category associated with anomaly and uncertainty" (130). There is certainly a sense of sea and coastline as liminal spaces present in the sagas, and of association with that space as in some way threatening to the established social order. In Chapter 39 of *Grettis saga*, for example, we are told that a boy went up to Grettir "ok kallaði hann margýgjuson ok mǫrgum ǫðrum illum nǫfnum [and called him son of a sea-ogress and many other unpleasant names]" (133). The term *margýgjusonr*—which, as Andy Orchard points out, is unique in Norse (154)—is thus both an extension of the association of Grettir with trolls that we observed in the previous chapter, and an attack on his mother. In *Njáls saga*, too, we find in a physical description of Skarphéðinn the assertion that he was "svá illiligr sem genginn sé út ór sjávarhǫmrum [as grim-looking as if he had come out from sea crags]" (301).

This potential for the coastline to have threatening associations is not only present in the negative descriptors we find in the saga narratives, but also in the verses of *Bjarnar saga*, where they are actively evoked by the protagonist in the context of an ongoing feud. This is particularly evident in the poem *Grámagaflím*, where Bjǫrn attempts to undermine his rival's social standing through insinuations regarding the legitimacy of his birth. The saga tells us the following:

> En þá hafði Bjǫrn eigi miklu áðr ort flím um Þórð, ok var þá ærit heyrumkunnigt nǫkkurum mǫnnum; en þau váru þar efni í, at Arnóra, móðir Þórðar, hefði etit þann fisk, er hann kallaði grámaga, ok lét, sem hann hefði fundizk í fjǫru, ok hefði hon af því áti hafandi orðit at Þórði, ok væri hann ekki dála frá mǫnnum kominn í báðar ættir. (168)
>
> [Bjǫrn had not long ago composed a libellous verse about Þórðr, and it was then sufficiently well-known among men; and the subject of it was that Arnóra, mother of Þórðr, had eaten then a fish, which he called *grámagi* and claimed it had been found on the shore, and she had from eating it become pregnant with Þórðr, and he was not quite descended from men on both sides of the family.]

Grámagaflím, as the libel is dubbed, has prompted discussions of the species of fish and its implications for use in satire: Joseph Harris has argued that the bottom-feeding habits of the fish are deliberately aligned with Arnóra's consumption of it ('Satire and the Heroic Life' 183), while Alison Finlay suggests that "Þórðr's humiliation partly depends on association with a species in which the female is more important, and indeed larger, than the male" ('Monstrous Allegations' 34). Equally interesting is the poem's use of coastal space to suggest illegitimacy, a troubling insinuation in light of the sagas' preoccupation with establishing lines of descent from the times of settlement. The stanza concludes finally, and evocatively, with the assertion that "mart 's illt í sæ [many things are bad in the sea]" (26.8). This association forms the foundation of a sustained poetic attack on his rival: "en þás út taka hrannir / allhvasst of sker falla [when waves reach out roughly to fall over skerries]," Bjǫrn says of Þórðr, in Verse 18, "færir lókr of leiru / ljótr kerlingu skjóta [the ugly tramp goes shooting over the muddy shore]" (18.5-8). The sense, again, is

that those associated with this space are somehow threatening to the social order; it is interesting, too, that in all three cases the slurs are applied to poets.

Yet, as was the case with highland landscapes, poetic depictions of coastal landscapes and seascapes in the *Íslendingasögur* also move beyond straightforward associations with monstrosity and instability to perform particular functions or achieve particular effects in the narrative. There are two types of landscapes which intersect here in our appraisal of these texts—coastlines, and islands—which, at various points, are viewed, experienced and prompt poetic responses from speakers located both on land and on sea. Seascapes, too, will be treated in this chapter—particularly in light of the difficulties we have already observed with clearly delineating these spaces. How, for example, should we define poems composed while standing on the shore and looking out to sea? At what point does a coastal landscape become a seascape, and vice versa? More important is the conscious way in which these verses play with the ideas of land and sea in relation to one another, and the particular interest we find in littoral and ecotonal spaces. Coastal features like *nes*, *fjǫrðr* and *hamarr* all emerge repeatedly, alongside *brim* and various words for waves—but also what we might call ecotonal features like *bakki*, *hólmr* and *mýrr*. With this in mind, I will examine in this chapter three very different treatments of coastal landscapes and seascapes in three different texts: I will begin my discussion with *Víglundar saga*, a work that locates its major characters through verse specifically in relation to the meeting of land and sea, before moving on to look at littoral encounters and conflicts in the verses of *Egils saga* and *Kormáks saga*. In each case, as I will demonstrate, poetry is used as a means of capturing and exploring certain aspects of a coastal existence, and of considering more broadly what it means to exist on a boundary.

Land and Sea in *Víglundar saga*

Víglundar saga is extant in two vellum manuscripts dated to the sixteenth century: AM 510 4to, c. 1550, and AM 551 a 4to, c. 1500 (*ONP* 409). The tale stands apart somewhat among the sagas as a relatively late text—dated by Jóhannes Halldórsson to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century (xxxii)—which combines various conventions of romance with those of the *Íslendingasögur*. Ármann Jakobsson has observed the relative neglect of this text in saga scholarship before the end of the

twentieth century (‘Structure’ 130). What little scholarship there is on *Víglundar saga* has tended to focus on its apparent generic hybridity: Marianne Kalinke, notably, has suggested that it should be considered under the category of ‘bridal-quest romance’ rather than as an inferior *Íslendingasaga*, identifying the pursuit of Ketilríðr by Víglundr as the primary catalyst for action in the tale (‘Fathers, Mothers, and Daughters’ 167). Massimiliano Bampi, by contrast to Kalinke, underlines “the temporal and the geographical setting as the sagas’ major generic markers”, suggesting that *Víglundar saga* specifically benefits from comparison to other *Íslendingasögur*, with its “heterogeneity … consciously used to articulate a more nuanced narrative” (9). Certainly, in its preoccupation with the Icelandic landscape it is very much in line with the other sagas we will be examining in this chapter: *Víglundar saga* demonstrates the same consciousness of the littoral that we find in *Egils saga* and *Kormáks saga*, and through its effective use of poetic dialogues creates a powerful sense of that space. As we will see, this is a text in which the juxtaposition of land and sea is employed to great effect, and which positions its protagonists repeatedly on the boundary between these two spaces.

Setting in *Víglundar saga* is undoubtedly crucial to the development of the narrative. Kalinke describes events in the saga as having “an unmistakably Icelandic flavour” (‘Fathers, Mothers, and Daughters’ 170); the same might be said of its landscapes. The majority of the action in *Víglundar saga* takes place on or off the coast of Iceland. Early episodes relating to Víglundr’s parents that transpire in Norway show no particular fascination with landscape or setting; a distinct sense of place emerges only with the movement of the action to Iceland. The details of this movement are familiar, with the settler’s removal from Norway presented as necessary to his survival. “Þá var landnáma tími sem mestr á Íslandi [Then the time of land-taking was at its peak in Iceland],” we are told; “þóttist Þorgrímr vita, at hann mundi eigi geta haldit sik í Nóregi eptir þetta verk [Þorgrímr thought that he would not be able to remain in Norway after what he had done]” (74). Following this, their journey and arrival in Iceland are described, and the particular locality with which *Víglundar saga* is concerned is established: “Létu þeir í haf ok fengu byri góða ok váru skamma stund úti, kómu við Snæfellsnes ok tóku land í Hraunhöfn [They set out to sea and had a good wind and were out a short while, came to Snæfellsnes and took land in Hraunhöfn]” (74). The *Íslendingasögur* in general demonstrate a keen awareness of

setting and make reference to specific place names; *Víglundar saga* is no exception. When Ketill's sons Gunnlaugr and Sigurðr make the journey to Iceland in Chapter 17, we are told that they "kómu þá við Snæfellsnes í þoku mikilli ok brutu skipit við Öndvert nesit [reached Snæfellsnes in a great fog and wrecked the ship against the headland at Öndvert]" (96).

Víglundar saga, like *Bárðar saga*, takes place primarily in Snæfellsnes, a prominent headland on the west coast of Iceland. Indeed, the two narratives exist explicitly in the same space: in Chapter 12 of *Víglundar saga*, for example, we are told that the protagonist "nær landi við Dögurðarnes. Þar bjó Þorkell skinnvefja, er út kom með Bárði Snæfellsás [reached land at Dögurðarnes. There dwelt Þorkell skinnvefja, who came out with Bárðr Snæfellsáss]" (83-4). Chapter 3 of *Bárðar saga*, meanwhile, identifies one of Bárðr's companions as Ingjaldr Álfarinsson, "bróðir Hólmkels, föður Ketilríðar, er Víglundr orti flestar vísur um [brother of Hólmkell, father of Ketilríðr, whom Víglundr composed many verses about]" (109). Both texts are preserved in part in AM 551 a 4to, alongside *Grettis saga*; Finnur Jónsson suggested on the basis of the apparent connections that the two might be products of the same author (*Den oldnorske* 86). There certainly seem to be a number of verses associated with particular topographical features in and around Snæfellsnes; alongside the poetry contained in these two texts, we find two verses associated with specific landscape features (*haugr* and *drangr*) in *Landnámabók* (102, 107). The first of these I discussed in the previous chapter; the second I will return to shortly.

In *Bárðar saga*, meanwhile, we find examples of poetry used to map this area, both in terms of listing local place names—as Helga Bárðardóttir does in Verse 1 of the saga—and through a physical exploration of the landscape. Verse 3 in this text is spoken by the "tröllkona [troll-woman]" and "hamhleypa [skin-shifter]" Hetta, who in the course of a dispute with Ingjaldr of Hválr gives him directions to a fishing bank along the coast of Snæfellsnes—purportedly to make amends for the loss of livestock she has caused, but in truth in an attempt to drown him (124):

Róa skaltu fjall Firða	You must row out on a rough sea
fram á lög stirðan;	from the mountain of fjords;
þar mun gaurr glitta,	there will a sad fellow glitter,
ef þú villt Grímsmið hitta;	if you want to find Grímsmið;

þar skaltu þá liggja—	there you must wait then—
Þórr er víss til Friggjar—;	Þórr is known to Frigg—;
rói norpr inn nefskammi	the short-nosed tarrier rows
Nesit í Hrakhvammi.	the headland at Hrakhvammr.

[You must row out from the mountain of fjords on a rough sea, if you want to find Grímsmið; there will a sad fellow glitter; there you must wait then; Þórr is known to Frigg; the short-nosed tarrier rows the headland at Hrakhvammr.]

Hetta's verse is littered with place names and topographical features, both of which serve as reference points for directions to a particular site, and create a vivid sense of navigating this space. Here we find a number of specifically coastal features: *firðir* and *nes*, fjords and headland, bracket the poem (3.1, 3.8), together creating a sense of the shape of the coastline, and are combined with the image of *lög stirðan*—a rough sea. There is a strong consciousness here and, as we will see, in other *Íslendingasögur*, of the potential for danger to lie just offshore. This verse, we can see, usefully underlines several aspects of the coastal existence. Eljas Ormann has noted that from the thirteenth century Snæfellsnes was an important centre for the medieval Icelandic fishing industry (284). Grímsmið is the bank that Ingjaldr seeks, "er aldri mun fiskr bresta, ef til er sótt [where a fish will never be lacking, if it is sought]" (124); the *gaurr*, the 'sad fellow' to which Hetta refers, is a fish with glittering scales, but is also perhaps suggestive of her ill intentions towards Ingólfr. The term *mið*, meanwhile, might be translated as 'fishing bank'—or alternatively, as Cleasby and Vigfússon suggest, as a bank "out at sea marked by prominences or landmarks on shore" ('mið, n.'), in which case it represents an extension of the coastline beyond what is visible and tangible. The landscape of the Icelandic coastline is after all not static, but constantly in transition: the boundaries of land and sea transform with the movement of the tides, and are further complicated by the presence of boundaries and landmarks offshore.

Víglundar saga does not privilege land over sea, but rather concerns itself specifically with the interplay between the two. Its hero is forced repeatedly to negotiate by ship the Icelandic coastline, while its heroine stands on the shore looking outwards. This is, on several different levels, a narrative of two parts. As in other *Íslendingasögur* we begin with an account of the protagonist's family and

events leading to their settlement in Iceland, which prefigures aspects of the saga proper. Thus the marriage of Ólof to Þorgrímr against her father's will foreshadows the struggles of Ketilríðr and Víglundr to be together in spite of the opposition of her family. Jana Schulman has observed the way that making a match or negotiating a betrothal may be used in the sagas to achieve certain narrative effects (318); in *Víglundar saga*, the author seems to be at pains to establish the suitability of the match in order to heighten the tension of their subsequent separation. Víglundr and Ketilríðr are both poets, and their affections for one another, as well as the obstacles they face, are expressed most explicitly through the verses they compose—which, as we will see, make vivid use of landscapes and seascapes. The lovers are from the first constructed as equals and natural counterparts, and their potential union is socially sanctioned: "töluðu þat ok margir, at þat þætti jafnræði [many said also that they thought them an equal match]" (76).

The resistance of Ketilríðr's mother Þorbjörg to the match comes to a head in Chapter 12, when she persuades a friend, who is skilled in magic, to bring about a storm to drown Víglundr and his brother Trausti while they are out at sea on a fishing trip. The circumstances of this episode are certainly similar to those surrounding Verse 3 in *Bárðar saga*, not only with regard to the threat of the conjured storm, but also in the fact that "þeir kómu út á miðit [they came out to the fishing bank]" (83). Þorbjörg's attempt to have them drowned is ultimately unsuccessful—their boat is merely forced off-course. The brothers are, however, briefly reported to be dead, and unsurprisingly the news causes Ketilríðr great distress. It is in this context that we find the first evocation of landscape through poetic composition in this text: "er hon raknaði við [when she recovered]," we are told, "kvað hon vísu þessa, er hon leit til sjóvarins [she spoke this verse while she looked out at the sea]" (84):

Eigi má ek á ægi	I cannot look out to sea
ógrátandi líta,	without weeping,
sízt er málvinir mínir	since my friends
fyr marbakkann sukku;	by the sea-bank are sunk;
leiðr er mér sjóvar sorti	loathsome is to me the black sea
ok súgandi bára;	and sucking of waves;

heldr gerði mér harðan	very hard grief overtook me
harm í unna farmi.	at the cargo of waves.

[I cannot look out to sea without weeping, since my friends by the sea-bank are sunk; the black sea and sucking of waves is loathsome to me; very hard grief overtook me at the cargo of waves.]

The verb *líta* emerges repeatedly in relation to the verses of *Víglundar saga*, the act of *looking* established as central to these compositions. In the first verse of the saga, for example, Víglundr's mother Ólof surveys unwanted suitors with a critical eye: "Engi er hirðir hringa / hvítr svá, at ek til líta [No man (keeper of rings) is so fair that I look upon]" (1.5-6). Here, by contrast, Ketilríðr is looking *á ægi*, out to sea, and mourning the loss of the friends she believes dead. She opens thus with an expression of restriction—"eigi má ek [I cannot]" (2.1)—that underlines her helplessness. As in Hetta's verse from *Bárðar saga*, there seems here to be both an underlying consciousness of the dangers of sea travel and an interest in topographical features as boundaries. In Ketilríðr's verse it is not a *mið*, however, but a *marbakki*, a term which may be translated literally as 'sea-bank', but Cleasby and Vigfússon render more specifically as "the border between shoal and deep water along the coast" ('mar-bakki, m.'). The reference to this feature is particularly interesting, both in terms of the saga's preoccupation with defining space and the fact that it places Víglundr and Trausti relatively close to the coast. We can see here already the difficulties of distinguishing between what we might call a 'seascape', and what would be more appropriately called a 'coastal landscape': the fact that Ketilríðr looks out to sea seems to place it in the former category, but the fact that she does so from land and the reference to the *marbakki* suggest the latter. Nevertheless, the prominent image here is of a "sjóvar sorti [black sea]" (2.5) and the "súgandi bára [sucking of waves]" (2.6). The sense created of the power of the sea and dangers inherent in navigating this space—even so close to shore—is compounded in a later verse composed by Víglundr, in which "öldur gangi / jafnhátt skeiðar stafni [waves go as high as the ship's stern]" (11.3-4). The construction in the final line of bodies washed ashore as *farmr unna*, cargo of waves (2.8), moreover bears comparison with aspects of *Egils saga*—and particularly of *Sonatorrek*—as I will discuss in more detail later in the chapter.

This act of looking out to sea is transformed further in a subsequent verse, spoken by Víglundr in Chapter 18 just before he is forced to leave Iceland in exile, in which he implores Ketilríðr to remember him despite their parting:

Mær, nem þú mínar vísur,	Maid, take my verses,
munnfögr, ef þú villt kunna;	fair-mouthed, if you wish to know;
þær munu þér at gamin,	they will for you, brooch-field,
þorn-Grund, verða stundum;	be amusement sometimes;
en ef, ítrust, verðr úti	and if most beautiful Freyja
eygarðr litinn, Freyja,	happens to look out at the island-fence,
þá muntu mín, in mjóva,	then you, slim one, will
minnast hverju sinni.	remember me each time.

[Fair-mouthed maid, take my verses if you wish to know; they will be amusement sometimes for you, woman (brooch-field); and if the most beautiful woman (Freyja) happens to look out at the sea (island-fence), then you, slim one, will remember me each time.]

Once again, the main point of reference is explicitly topographical. The use of *eygarðr* (6.6)—literally, 'island-fence'—here as a kenning for the sea is indicative of its function as a natural boundary, the means by which home and abroad are delineated. It also serves to position the sea to some extent within the realm of the known, the explicable, the social, by expressing it in terms of legal ownership: the term *garðr* suggests enclosed space, and—as I will discuss further in Chapter 3—occurs often in the context of boundary disputes. This sense of the sea as a means of establishing the limits of land recalls Garðarr's circumnavigation of Iceland in *Landnámabók* (35), and bears comparison with a similar kenning in Verse 51 of *Egils saga*, which constructs the sea as a "jarðar gjǫrð … eyneglda [girdle of the earth, nailed with islands]" (51.7-8). We find, too, reference to an "eyja þjalfa [encircler of islands]" (56.3) in Verse 56 of *Kormáks saga*, as well as a similar construction of the sea as a boundary in Verse 10 of *Víga-Glúms saga*, where *fleygarðr*, 'ship-fence', is used as a kenning (10.6).

In its suggestion that Ketilríðr might "verðr úti / eygarðr litinn [happen to look out at the island-fence]" (6.5-6), the verse establishes the sea first as a visual point of reference. Here, however, the act of looking is tied also to the act of remembering,

líta equated with *minna*. The insistence in the first line that Ketilríðr take his verses presents them both as a parting gift and something to be preserved—the verb *nema* in the context of poetry may be translated as 'to take', 'to hear' or specifically 'to learn' (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'nema'). We saw this verb too in the closing verse of *Hallmundarkviða*, with its instruction to its audience to remember the poem (12.5). The process of poetic composition and the preservation and transmission of poetry thus becomes associated with ideas of landscape—or, in this instance, seascape—and memory. Víglundr leaves Ketilríðr with instructions to remember him by two means: by the verses he is composing and by looking out to sea. The notion of poetry as something to be composed in dialogue with the natural world is prominent throughout *Víglundar saga*; these verses are explicitly framed as poetic responses to the Icelandic coastline.

There is, moreover, a sustained dialogue between the lovers enacted through verses, which becomes more evident in those composed by Víglundr in Chapter 21. The verses in question occur following the protagonist's expulsion from Iceland for the killings of Jökull and Einarr, brothers of Ketilríðr. Víglundr is at this point both an outlaw and a poet—though, unlike Grettir, he escapes out of the land rather than into it. Joonas Ahola has discussed *Víglundar saga* as belonging to a subcategory of 'fortunate' biographies of outlaws (124); as is the case in other sagas, Víglundr expresses his social status by means of poetic composition.[14] These too are presented as coastal verses, composed from a boat offshore in response to a specific landmark: Víglundr and Trausti, we are told, "sigldu, þar til er þeir sá Snæfellsjökull [sailed along there until they saw Snæfellsjökull]" (104). It is this sight that apparently prompts Víglundr's verses. Here we see for the first time the potential for the coastline to be viewed from either land or sea—for this type of landscape to be experienced from two distinct perspectives. The idea of viewing land from the sea should certainly not be neglected in our consideration of coastal landscapes in these texts. Indeed, there is a term in Old Norse specifically for the condition of being

[14] For Grettir, his status as poet and his status as outlaw are declared in the same breath, in the same line: "Allt kom senn at svinnum, / sekð mín, bragar tíni [It all comes at once to the wise—my outlawry—recounter of poetry]" (*Grettis saga* 30.1-2). Gísli's verse declares that the sentence "varðat mér… orðfátt [does not make me speechless]", and subsequently threatens violence to "þeirs mik sekðu [those who outlawed me]" (*Gísla saga* 21.3-6). Hörðr follows confirmation of his status as outlaw (14.1-4) with the insistence that he is unafraid (*Harðar saga* 14.7-8). Even Egill, when outlawed in Norway, composes a verse lamenting the fact that the king "hefir lagða … fyrir mér sjálfum … vegu langa [has laid before me a long path]" (*Egils saga* 29.1-4).

within sight of land when sailing: *landsýn*—literally, 'land-sight'—which occurs at points in *Landnámabók* (232, 313), but also in *Flóamanna saga* (279) and *Grænlendinga saga* (257). This act, of course, emerges particularly clearly in narratives of settlement, where the coastline is the first point of contact and survey in that process—here in *Víglundar saga*, however, it serves rather as a means of positioning its protagonist.

Verses 9 and 10 of the saga, presented in quick succession, are as follows:

Sér ek á fjall þat er fjötra	I look upon that mountain of fetters,
framlunduðust sitr undir,	under which the most courageous one
þó renni ek til hennar	sits—though I direct to her
hugreik, vinaraugum.	mind-wandering—with eyes of a lover.
Þá brekku kveð ek þekka;[15]	Then I say the slope is pleasing;
Þrúðr, er þar stendr hjá prúðri,	Þrúðr of lace, who stands near
hlaðs sem hlíðir aðrar	there proudly, as other slopes
hugþekk er mér nökkut.	are to me somewhat mind-pleasing.

[I look upon that mountain of fetters, under which the most courageous one sits, with eyes of a lover, though I direct mind-wandering to her. Then I say the slope is pleasing, the woman (goddess of lace) who stands there proudly, as other slopes are somewhat mind-pleasing to me.]

Ljóst er út at líta,	It is light to look out,
lauka reið, yfir heiði;	carrier of leeks, over the heath;
sól gengr síð und múla,	the sun goes late under the mulls,
slíkt langar mik þangat;	in such a way I long for that place;
fjöll eru mér þekk af þellu;	mountains are pleasing to me from the
því er ek hljóðr, valin tróða;	fir; thus am I silent, chosen wood;
víf á ek vænst at leyfa,	I hope to praise the woman,
valgrund er þar sitr undir.	who sits under the hawk-ground.

[It is light to look out over the heath, woman (carrier of leeks); the sun goes late under the mulls, in such a way I long for that place; mountains are

[15] This line differs slightly in AM 510 4to from that in AM 551 a 4to. I use the transcription of the former here for the purposes of my translation, where the *Íslenzk Fornrit* edition uses the latter.

> pleasing to me from the woman (fir); thus am I silent, woman (chosen wood); I hope to praise the woman who sits under the mountain (hawk-ground).]

These two verses alone demonstrate a rich vocabulary of landscape: we have here "fjall [mountain]" (9.1), "brekku [slope]" (9.5), "hlíðir [hillsides]" (9.7), "heiði [heath]" (10.2) and "múla [mulls]" (10.3). These are mountainous features, but identified particularly as part of a coastal landscape—specifically identified in the prose as Snæfellsnes—as viewed from the sea. There is a pleasing symmetry apparent in the construction of the two verses quite distinct from the *dróttkvætt* metre, whereby the first line of each verse describes the act of looking and the beginning of Verse 9 and end of Verse 10 both see reference to 'sitting under' the mountain (9.2, 10.8). *Fjall fjötra* and *valgrund* (9.1, 10.8), *framlunduðust* and *víf* (9.2, 10.7), are positioned similarly at beginning and end. These are intricately constructed verses, from a poet who seems to pride himself on and is praised for his ability to structure compositions: in the same chapter, Trausti compliments Víglundr's skill in beginning and ending a subsequent verse with Ketilríðr's name (106).

Verse 9 opens with an immediate sense of the poet as observer, with the declaration that "Sér ek á fjall þat [I look upon that mountain]" (9.1), and then proceeds to identify the mountain primarily in terms of the woman who dwells under it, the alliteration in the first two lines reinforcing the comparison of *fjall fjötra* with *framlunduðust* (9.1-2). Within the framework of the poem, moreover, the landscape becomes a substitute for the lady; the speaker looks upon the mountain "vinaraugum [with eyes of a lover]" (9.4). Here, then, we find another nuanced association of person with place, but lacking the agency we find in *Hallmundarkviða* and much of *Grettis saga*, and at every instance acutely conscious of that fact. Distance, in fact, becomes the primary motive for composition—there is no sense of physical movement through or into the landscape, though deictic terms are employed to great effect. The movement between sitting and standing (9.2, 9.6), between under and over (9.2, 10.2), meanwhile, creates a strong sense of rise and fall that seems to imitate the topography of the landscape. Similarly, "heiði [heath]" and "múla [mulls]" (10.2-3) suggest alternating flat land and promontory. If, as I have suggested, land and lady are in these verses inextricable from one another, then the curve of the land might be intended to evoke the curve of the body. This act of

looking so prominent in the two verses thus becomes proprietary, expresses the same instinct towards possession that we find elsewhere in the poetry of the sagas.

There is, as we know, significant precedent in Old Norse poetry for association of parts of the body with landscape features; Guðrún Nordal has discussed the use of these kennings in *Tools of Literacy* (277-308). We have seen it employed already in Verse 11 of *Gunnlaugs saga*, and more subtly in that reference to looking under the *brún* in *Hallmundarkviða* (11.5). Roberta Frank, meanwhile, has discussed conceptions of the earth as the bride of the pagan ruler in skaldic praise poetry: she points out that since "the mythological name Jǫrð and the common noun *jǫrð* were homonyms, any kenning designating Óðinn's mistress could designate 'land, territory' as well" ('The Lay of the Land' 180). More recently, Emily Osborne has looked particularly at examples of verses in which "women are referenced by kennings with base words denoting 'land' or 'earth'" (26). The association, it seems, goes both ways: woman constructed as land, or land as woman. Here in *Víglundar saga* the lady in question becomes inextricable from landscape, through association with a certain place—Snæfellsjökull—and through the use of various poetic conceits. *Fjall fjötra* exists in conjunction with *framlunduðust*; *víf* in conjunction with *valgrund*. The association is thus underlined through the alliterative metre and the juxtaposition. For the poet, to imagine himself onshore is to imagine himself with her: "slíkt langar mik þangat [in such a manner I long for that place]," Víglundr declares, his desire for Ketilríðr expressed in terms of love of the land (10.4). This connection is further reinforced in line 5 of Verse 10—"fjöll eru mér þekk af þellu [mountains are pleasing to me because of the fir]"—where the tree, here a half-kenning for 'woman', is explicitly tied to the appeal of the topographical feature. This visual assessment through verse is similar to that of Verse 5 in *Grettis saga*, though used to very different effect: we recall Ǫnundr looking upon the land he is to settle with little satisfaction. The act of viewing land is, as we have established, very much foregrounded in the process of settlement.

The passive construction in line 4 of Verse 10—*langar mik*—reinforces the impotence Víglundr feels at his banishment. There is a sense that even this looking has its limits; the sun is setting as he speaks, quite literally, creating again the impression of transition (10.3). The closest he approaches to actual movement is the reference to "hugreik [mind-wandering]" (9.4) in the first verse, in conjunction with

the verb *renna*, 'to run' (9.3)—a mental mapping of the space he is forbidden to enter—which is in turn associated by position in the line and by anaphora with "hugþekk [mind-pleasing]" (9.8). The act of exploration is presented as enjoyable. There is certainly a sense here of the landscape as something aesthetically pleasing—the term *þekkr*, for example, is reiterated in the second stanza (10.5)—as well as an impulse towards physicality that underlines Víglundr's limitations. In this construction of his desire for Ketilríðr in terms of love of the land, he aligns his physical banishment from Iceland with his separation from her. Consequently, dispossession for Víglundr is constructed as distance, and amounts to loss of land *and* love.

Víglundar saga is a text composed of poetic dialogues, and these verses seem to be composed specifically in response to Ketilríðr's own verses on the ocean. Just as Ketilríðr looks out to sea and thinks of Víglundr, so he looks toward land and thinks of her. The mountain that he describes is Snæfellsjökull, the land that he longs for is the inheritance of which he has been deprived. The two poets are thus positioned deliberately: one on the inside looking out, the other on the outside looking in. The coastline is constructed as it is viewed alternately from land and sea. The point at which land and sea meet, the space with which the saga concerns itself, is explored further in another of Ketilríðr's verses, which is preserved in one of the two extant medieval versions of the text. This verse is given in the text of AM 510 4to, following the second of Víglundr's parting verses, with no other changes to the passage in question.[16] After Víglundr bids her farewell and departs, Ketilríðr composes the following:

Skammt leidda ek skýran	Briefly I led the wise
skrauta-Njörð ór garði,	Njörðr of ornaments beyond the fence,
þó fylgdi hugr minn hánum	though my mind followed him
hvers kyns konar lengra;	further in every way;
munda ek leitt hafa lengra,	I would have led him longer,
ef land fyrir lægi væri	if there were land in place of water

[16] The *ÍF* edition of *Víglundar saga* follows AM 551 a 4to but includes this verse as a footnote. Though it is preserved in the later of the two manuscripts, the verse seems very much in keeping with the tone and imagery of the compositions that form the poetic dialogue between Víglundr and Ketilríðr.

ok ægis mór yrði	and all the sea's moor
allr at grænum velli.	became green fields.

[Briefly I led the wise man (Njörðr of ornaments) beyond the fence, though my mind followed him further in every way; I would have led him longer, if there were land in place of water, and all the sea's moor became green fields.]

The declaration that "fylgdi hugr minn hánum [my mind followed him]" (l. 3) seems to respond specifically to Víglundr's mental wanderings in Verses 9 and 10, and the desire to move "ór garði [beyond the fence]" (l. 2) is here made explicit. The distance imposed between them as well as the differences in their situations are underlined: *land* is juxtaposed against *lægi*, *ægis mór* against *grænum velli* (ll. 6-8). The sense of symmetry created between the lovers' poetic responses to land and sea is particularly evident in this verse. As suggested previously by the use of the term *eygarðr* in one of Víglundr's verses, and in the opening line of Ketilríðr's first verse, there is a sense of restriction here expressed explicitly in relation to the sea. It is not, however, a physical restriction so much as a social one: the sea is the barrier that keeps the lovers apart, the boundary between society and the space in which legal sentences—in this case, full outlawry—cannot be carried out. Thus it is not the sea that is the object of Ketilríðr's ire, but the social structures which ensure her confinement, and which are enforced by means of such boundaries. The fact that the major antagonist of the saga over the course of two generations, Ketill, is constructed first as *bóndi*, farmer, and almost immediately after as "málamaðr svá mikill, at aldri átti hann því máli at skipta, at hann ynni eigi [such a great lawyer that he was never concerned with a case that he did not win]" (66), underlines the preoccupation of the narrative with the established social order. Ketilríðr is entirely pragmatic about her situation. When Víglundr first proposes marriage, she responds with a realistic assessment of the outcome: "eru þar [there are]," she says, "margir hlutir í móti [many things against this]"—among them "at ek sé mín eigi ráðandi [that I am not in charge of myself]" (76). Her husband, she understands, will ultimately be decided by her parents.

Víglundar saga is written with a consciousness of space as something created through interdictions. We see this first in the account of Víglundr's mother, Ólof,

who is kept from the eyes of the world by her father. Deciding "at enginn karlmaðr mátti tala við hana [that no man might speak to her]", Jarl Þórir "lét gera henni eina skemmu [had made for her a separate dwelling]" (64). "Skiðgarðr hár var um skemmuna ok læst grindhlið með sterkum járnhurðum [A high wooden fence was around the dwelling and a gate locked with strong iron doors]" (64). Here we see obvious romance conventions at play; with their transplantation to Iceland in the account of the subsequent generation, the sense of restriction is by contrast created primarily through depictions of the landscape. By repeatedly constructing the sea as a boundary—one that Víglundr may cross but Ketilríðr cannot—Iceland itself, and the laws and values upon which Icelandic society is based, becomes the means by which Ketilríðr is confined. "Munda ek leitt hafa lengra [I would have led him longer]," she declares, "ef land fyrir lægi væri [if there were land in place of water]" (ll. 5-6). The island is effectively her *skemma*.

The sense of constriction here is reinforced by its repetition over generations, through a kind of mirroring; the connection between the two women is reinforced through Ólof fostering Ketilríðr (75). Just as every verse in *Víglundar saga* is carefully sculpted—to the point that one is explicitly praised for its symmetry (106)—the narrative in general is highly structured. Symmetry is crucial to our understanding of the saga as a whole. It is marriage to Ólof that prompts Þorgrímr's exile from Norway and the initial removal of the action to Iceland. Similarly, marriage is the means by which Víglundr is restored to his lands. It is no coincidence that he announces his return to Iceland by means of a verse in which he expresses his continued desire for Ketilríðr: he first expresses repulsion at the sight of Þórðr's arms around her (22.1-4), and then declares, "heldr vilda ek halda … at vilja mínum … í landi … um þik miðja [I would rather want to hold with mine in the land around your middle]" (22.5-8). There are several layered associations at play in this particular verse. In the first *helmingr* Víglundr refers to the arms of another man around Ketilríðr; by the word *mínum,* 'mine', then, we might assume that he means his arms. Simultaneously, however, the lack of a specific noun expresses a more general desire for possession, for what is rightfully his. In the same way, we might take 'the land around Ketilríðr's middle' to mean her waist—as an expression of Víglundr's desire to hold her in his arms. The kennings for 'woman'—"Hlín [goddess]" (22.6) and "lýsigrund … liðar elds [bright ground of arm's fire]" (22.7-

8)—serve, however, to punctuate the last three lines, and to isolate the phrase "í landi [in the land]" (22.7). Taken separately, it is far more suggestive of a desire to be *on land* in a physical sense. The verb *halda*—'to hold'—thus has two possible meanings here. As the lovers are reunited, Víglundr is absolved of his crimes and allowed finally to return to Iceland.

Images of land and sea juxtaposed and constructed in opposition to one another, and the strong sense of the Icelandic coastline evoked through reference to topographical features, are fundamental to our reading of the verses of *Víglundar saga*. Evocation of the landscape is the primary means by which the poetic dialogue between the two main characters is created, and consequently through which their relationship is expressed and explored. In this text we find various examples of coastal landscapes employed to achieve particular effects: to create the sense of the sea as a potentially threatening space, to heighten the sense of grief or longing, to underline the major tensions of the saga, and to function as part of the larger spatial constructions of the narrative.

Landnám and Headlands in *Egils saga*

We have seen, in *Víglundar saga* as well as in the verses of the previous chapter, that the acts of looking and of remembrance may emerge strongly in the context of verses about landscape. In this section of the chapter, I will discuss the potential for coastal landscapes in the *Íslendingasögur* to serve explicitly as part of a claim to land in relation particularly to their visual and memorial aspects. Here my analysis will focus for the most part on *Egils saga*, and the means by which the poet in this text establishes and reinforces settlement on—and relationship with—the land. Before I do so, however, I will consider two more verses associated particularly with the landscape of Snæfellsnes, in which two different aspects of the *landnám* process are usefully foregrounded. The first of these is from *Bárðar saga*, composed by the protagonist's daughter, Helga, who we are told "var … tröll kölluð af sumum mönnum; svá var hon ok karlgild at afli, til hvers sem hon tók [was called a troll by some men; she was also fully able in strength, whatever she took to]" (115). The ascription of trollish characteristics is, of course, inherited from her father. I noted in the previous chapter Bárðr's reputation as a *landvættr*; Helga, too, seems to demonstrate the same affinity with landscape, and to play a role particularly in

connecting land and settlers. In the episode in question, Helga is set adrift on a piece of broken ice and is swept by the tide out to sea and all the way to Greenland. "Þat var einn dag [One day]," we are told, "<at> Helga stóð úti ok litaðist um ok kvað vísu [Helga stood outside and looked around and spoke a verse]" (115):

Sæl værak,	Happy I would be,
ef sjá mættak	if I could see
Búrfell ok Bala,	Búrfell and Bali,
báða Lóndranga,	both Lóndrangar,
Aðalþegnshóla	Aðalþegnshóll
ok Öndvertnes,	and Öndvertnes,
Heiðarkollu	Heiðarkolla
ok Hreggnasa,	and Hreggnasi,
Dritvíkrmöl	Dritvíkrmöl
fyr dyrum fóstra.	before the doors of my fosterer.

[I would be happy if I could see Búrfell and Bali, both Lóndrangar, Aðalþegnshóll and Öndvertnes, Heiðarkolla and Hreggnasi, [and] Dritvíkrmöl, before the doors of my fosterer.]

"Þessi örnefni öll eru á Snjófellsnesi [All of these old names are on Snæfellsnes]," the saga informs us (116). This verse is not composed as a direct response to that landscape, as we saw in *Víglundar saga*, but rather expresses a desire for it inextricable from the acts of surveying and naming land. Helga simultaneously expresses an affection for the familiar landmarks of her home and the need for a *landnám*: the desire to see those lands *fyr dyrum fóstra*, before the doors of her fosterer, seems to suggest a desire to possess them. Her longing for home is not merely an expression of grief or loss or powerlessness, but specifically manifests in the image of gathering those places together under someone's control. In view of this, the fact that immediately following this composition "Skeggi tók Helgu at sér of hafði við hana fylgjulag [Skeggi took Helga under his protection and had with her a state of companionship]" (116) assumes particular significance. Heroes consort with the daughters of giants in a number of other sagas—during Grettir's visits to Balljökull and to Þórisdalr, for example, he is said to have enjoyed the company of Hallmundr's and Þórir's daughters (*Grettis saga* 184, 200)—but the use of the term

fylgja is also used particularly of a guardian-spirit, as for example in *Hallfreðar saga* (198). Here, when Miðfjarðar-Skeggi sets out to take land in Iceland, we are told specifically that Helga travels with him—and, at points, actively assists him. Their association enables his *landnám.* After their forced parting, too, we are told that Helga withdraws from society and chooses instead to dwell "í hreysum eða hólum [in heaps of stones or hills]" (122), an act that certainly strengthens her association with the landscape.[17]

In Verse 1 of *Bárðar saga*, the acts of surveying land and speaking verse are thus combined and evoked specifically in the context of a land-claim. This listing of place names certainly aligns well with the process of naming the land that Eleanor Barraclough identifies in *landnám* narratives as an important means of "anchoring the settlers to their new country" ('Naming the Landscape' 83). It is interesting, too, that several of the landscape features evoked in these names are explicitly coastal: we have *nes* ('headland'), *möl* ('pebbles'), *vík* ('bay'), *lón* ('inlet') and *drangar* ('rocks', 'cliffs'), as well as *bali* ('bank'), which we might identify rather as ecotonal, a point at which land meets water. The idea of coastal features evoked in verse as part of the process of *landnám*—particularly as a means of cementing that claim to land—is one to which I will return in my reading of the poetry of *Egils saga.* Some of the places in this verse are, moreover, familiar to us: Öndvertnes is also the headland against which Ketill's sons wreck their ship in Chapter 17 of *Víglundar saga* (96). Interestingly, the Lóndrangar of line 4 are also the subject of a fascinating passage in the Hauksbók redaction of *Landnámabók*, which leads us directly to the second verse associated with this particular local landscape.

Here, we are told, a man named Einarr is running along the coast of Snæfellsnes: "en þá er hann kom hjá Drǫngum, sá hann trǫllkarl sitja þar á uppi ok láta róa fœtr, svá at þeir tóku brimit, ok skelldi þeim saman, svá at sjódrif varð af, ok kvað vísu [then, when he came near to Drangar, he saw a troll-man sitting up there and letting his feet rock back and forth, so that they hit the surf, and crashed together, so that sea-spray came from it, and (he) spoke a verse]" (26-7):

[17] The *ÍF* edition of the text gives the main reading as *hreysum,* but notes that the AM 158 fol. manuscript has *hellum* ('caves') in place of *hreysum.*

Vask þars fell af fjalli	I was there, where flood-grain fell from
flóðkorn jǫtuns móður	the mountain of the giant's mother,
hám bergrisa ór himni	out of the high heaven of brightness,
heiðins ána leiðar.	the river of the path of the rock-giant.
Gerir fár jǫtunn fleiri	Few giants make more
fold í vinga moldu	—on island's earth, field
hǫmlu heiðar þumlu	of oar-straps of the island-heath—
hamváta mér báta.	boats skin-wet than me.

[I was there, where flood-grain fell from the mountain of the giant's mother, out of the sky (high heaven of brightness), the river of the mountain (path of the rock giant). Few giants make more boats skin-wet than me on island's earth, field of oar-straps of the island-heath.]

This stanza does not allow for easy translation, as Jakob Benediktsson notes in the *ÍF* edition of the text (106-107), and lines 3-4 and 6-7 are particularly problematic. Certain aspects of the verse are, however, extremely compelling in spite of these difficulties: first and foremost, that it is framed both as a declaration of presence and an attribution of certain processes to the speaker. Again, we find a description of something falling from the mountain: the exact nature of the *flóðkorn* is unclear, but it is likely precipitation of some kind, and perhaps tied to the river referenced in line 4—if this is the case, then it would seem to be another equation of poetry with the flow of water. The concept of a 'river of the mountain' is, moreover, an interesting one in light of the association of this verse with a location on Snæfellsnes, since the glacier on Snæfellsjökull must have been omnipresent in any impression of that landscape. The idea of the giant as present at the formation of that landscape certainly resonates with the images we found in *Hallmundarkviða* in the previous chapter. Either way, the falling of water seems to be attributed here to the poet.

The second *helmingr* is more decisively located along the coast, and equates the actions of the speaker particularly with danger to boats. Lines 6 and 7, which are particularly obscure, include two terms—*vingi* and *þumla*—which are listed among the *heiti* for islands ('Eyja heiti' 980-982). These lines seem to suggest kennings for 'sea', which would certainly be consistent with the context of this verse given in *Landnámabók* as well as the lines that bracket these images, though it is difficult to

provide a wholly satisfactory translation. The declaration that "gerir fár jǫtunn fleiri … hamváta mér báta [few giants make more boats skin-wet than me]" (lines 5-8) is at least comprehensible. Through this verse, the *trǫllkarl*, as he is described in the prose, is aligned also with *jǫtunn* and *bergrisi*—both terms for 'giant'—and in the case of the latter identified particularly in relation to a topographical feature. The fact that he compares himself explicitly with other giants, moreover, suggests that this behaviour is not restricted to the speaker. This attribution of landscape processes to the actions of a dweller in the landscape, which are then expressed through verse, strongly recalls *Hallmundarkviða* and the texts we saw in the previous chapter. It demonstrates, too, the potential for these coastal landscapes to be used to create a sense of poetic dialogue between people and their environment as well as between characters in the sagas.

The idea of a dialogue between the poet and the landscape or seascape is consistently raised in the *Íslendingasögur* and related texts, and is very much tied to the idea of *landnám*. Poetry is a medium by which identity with place—crucial to the act of settlement—is created and reinforced, and the consideration of figures that appear in some way to bridge the gap between people and land is highly significant to our assessment of the role of the poet in these texts. Having established the potential for verses to function explicitly as part of the act of *landnám*, let us turn our attention to *Egils saga* and the conscious evocation of coastal landscapes as part of that narrative. The details of the Icelandic landscape that emerge most clearly in the verses of *Víglundar saga*—a consciousness of boundaries and the dangers of a coastal existence—are more striking still in *Egils saga*, which foregrounds the methods and problems of laying claim to such a space. Here, we will see, the details of Egill's father's land-claim inform the vivid seascape constructed in *Sonatorrek*, a poem that is as concerned with the idea of inheritance as it is with the expression of grief.

Where *Grettis saga* is preoccupied with the interior geography of Iceland, *Egils saga* might reasonably be described as outward-looking. The narrative is from the beginning dominated by coastal landscapes—unsurprising, in light of its concern with *landnám* and the settlement process. Our first impression of Iceland in the prose of *Egils saga* is of its coastline—of "brim á landit [surf on the land]" (30), "fjǫrðinn [the fjord]" and its "sker [skerries]" (38). The first thirty chapters of the saga are devoted to the deeds of Egill's grandfather and father, Kveld-Úlfr and

Skalla-Grímr, and to their settlement in Iceland, which is recounted in considerable detail. Chapters 23 and 27-29, moreover, have analogues in *Landnámabók*: we find here references to the journeys of Ketill hœngr and Ingólfr and Hjǫrleifr to Iceland, as well as those of Egill's family members. The accounts of Kveld-Úlfr's death en route and of Skalla-Grímr's subsequent *landnám* both appear in *Landnámabók*, though they are extant only in the Sturlubók variant (68ff.). There is, however, a page missing in Hauksbók; the references to "leysingiar Skallagrims [Skalla-Grímr's freedmen]" (21) and the lands that he gives them immediately following this lacuna would suggest the initial land claim was also present in some form in that version of the text. Jonas Wellendorf describes the relationship between *Landnámabók* and the *Íslendingasögur* as "a complicated process of cross-fertilization that in many cases is difficult if not impossible to disentangle" (8); regardless of whether this account originates in *Egils saga* or in *Landnámabók*, it seems suggestive that the detail of Kveld-Úlfr's coffin washing ashore ahead of the ships was significant enough to be preserved in multiple narratives.

The passage in *Egils saga* is as follows:

> En er sóttisk hafit þá elnaði sótt á hendr Kveld-Úlfi; en er dró at því at hann var banvænn þá kallaði hann til skipverja sína ok sagði þeim at honum þótti líkligt at þá mundi brátt skilja vega þeira. 'Hefi ek,' sagði hann, 'ekki kvellisjúkr verit, en ef svá ferr sem mér þikir nú líkligast, at ek ǫndumk, þá gerið mér kistu ok látið mik fara fyrir borð, ok verðr þetta annan veg en ek hugða at vera mundi, ef ek skal eigi koma til Íslands ok nema þar land. Þér skuluð bera kveðju mína Grími syni mínum þá er þér finnizk ok segið honum þat með, ef svá verðr at hann kemr til Íslands, ok beri svá at, þótt þat muni ólíkligt þikja, at ek sjá þar fyrir, þá taki hann sér þar bústað sem næst því er ek hefi at landi komit. (37)
>
> [But once they were far out to sea, Kveld-Úlfr grew ill; and when it brought him close to death then he called to his crew and told them that he thought it likely he would soon part ways with them. 'I have,' he said, 'not been tormented by sickness, but if it goes as I now think is most likely, and I breathe my last, then take my coffin and have me thrown overboard, and it will happen another way than I think it will, if I do not come to Iceland and

> take land there. You must bear my request to my son Grímr when you find one another and tell him this with it: if it happens that he comes to Iceland, though it will seem unlikely, that I am there already, tell him to take for himself there a farmstead nearest to where I have come to land.]

Barraclough has underlined the importance of naming in Skalla-Grímr's *landnám* ('Naming the Landscape' 84-5), but there is something significant too in the fact that the location of the settlement is determined by his father's final resting place. When Skalla-Grímr is shown the place that Kveld-Úlfr's body washed up and was buried, we are told that "sýndisk honum svá sem þaðan mundi skammt á brott þar er bólstaðargjǫrð góð mundi vera [it seemed to him that not far from there would be good for building a homestead]" (38). The idea of drift has particular resonance in medieval Icelandic culture: I have observed already the attention to the idea of 'drift rights' in the law codes, but it also emerges repeatedly in literary narratives as part of the process of settlement. This treatment of Kveld-Úlfr's coffin is surely intended to evoke the use of *ǫndvegissúlur*—wooden posts cast into the ocean and allowed to drift ashore—by various parties in *Landnámabók* and other sagas to determine the location of settlement.[18] Drift is likewise accorded particular force and impact in the closing chapters of *Grettis saga*, where Þorbjörn's foster-mother relies upon it to carry cursed runes to Grettir: "lætr hon hrinda trénu á sjá ok mælti svá fyrir, at þat skyldi reka út til Drangeyjar [she had the tree pushed out to sea and said that it should drift out to Drangey]" (250). We are reminded too of the account of the creation of Askr and Embla, the first man and woman, who according to Snorri are formed of pieces of driftwood: "Bors synir gengu með sævar strǫndu, fundu þeir tré tvau, ok tóku upp tréin ok skǫpuðu af men [the sons of Borr went together along the strand of the sea, they found two trees, and took up the trees and made men from them]" (*Gylfaginning* 13).

[18] Ingólfr Arnarson uses this technique in the opening of *Landnámabók* (42-45), as do Þórólfr Mostrarskegg and his son Hallsteinn in the same text (124, 164). Differences in the details of these episodes underline important aspects of the individuals' relationships to the land. While Ingólfr and Þórólfr transport their pillars from their homeland to Iceland, Hallsteinn instead sacrifices to Þórr for pillars and is provided with driftwood: "kom tré á land hans [a tree came to his land]" (164). Þórólfr's use of *ǫndvegissúlur* is also recounted in Chapter 4 of *Eyrbyggja saga* (7-8). For other examples, see descriptions in *Kormáks saga* (205) and *Laxdœla saga* (8-9). Margaret Clunies Ross discusses this motif in *Prolonged Echoes* as one of a number of "symbols of supernaturally sanctioned authority" in Icelandic settlement narratives (II, 142-145).

There is certainly value and power attributed to drift in these texts not limited only to practical value, but associated also with the idea of rights to land. Interestingly, in the context of Skalla-Grímr's *landnám* we are given certain identifying features of that land, and there are a number of references made to driftwood in the wake of his settlement: Skalla-Grímr, we are told, "var skipasmiðr mikill, en rekavið skorti eigi vestr fyrir Mýrar [was a great ship-builder, and there was not a shortage of driftwood west of Mýrar]" (40). The land that Egill is to inherit is presented as particularly rich in coastal resources: in addition to the potential for valuable driftwood, we are told that there is "selveiðar gnógar ok fiskifang mikit [enough seal-catching and great fishing]" (38). The opening chapters of *Egils saga* thus serve to establish both the importance of the settlement narrative, and the nature of the landscape with which the text is most concerned.

Not all aspects of the coastal existence, however, are idealised in this text—far from it. This evocation of drift in relation to the death of Kveld-Úlfr, in fact, serves subtly to foreshadow the drowning of Egill's son Bǫðvarr and his companions in Chapter 80. The dangers of traversing the Icelandic coastline are, in this episode, made explicit: Bǫðvarr volunteers to fetch timber for his father from a ship moored in Hvítá and perishes in a storm en route. Various details of the perilous conditions of his journey are provided:

> Ok er þeir skyldu <út> fara, þá var flœðrin síð dags ok er þeir urðu hennar at bíða, þá fóru þeir út um kveldit síð. Þá hljóp á útsynningr steinóði, en þar gekk í móti útfallsstraumr. Gerði þá stórt á firðinum sem þar kann opt verða; lauk þar svá at skipit kafði undir þeim ok týndusk þeir allir. (144-5)
>
> [And when they were to go out, the tide was late in the day, and because they had to wait for it, they set out late in the evening. Then a violent, south-westerly gale leapt up, and went there against the ebbing current. The sea rose high in the fjord as can often happen there; it ended there that the ship sank under them, and they all perished.]

The fact that we are told that the conditions that cause Bǫðvarr's death "þar kann opt verða [can often happen there]" (145) seems to imply a particular knowledge of the local landscape, and serves to frame this episode as an unfortunate reality as much as a personal tragedy. This description is subsequently compounded by the image of

the driftwood that arrives in place of the expected timber—not only the wreckage of the ship, but the bodies of the men themselves. "En eptir um daginn [And the next day]," we are told, "skaut upp líkunum; kom lík Bǫðvars inn í Einarsnes, en sum kómu fyrir sunnan fjǫrðinn ok rak þangat skipit [the bodies came up; Bǫðvarr's body came in at Einarsnes, and some came farther south in the fjord and the ship wrecked there]" (145). This is precisely the *farmr unna*, the cargo of waves, that Ketilríðr envisions in Verse 2 of *Víglundar saga*, and the "harðan / harm [hard grief]" she feels at the prospect (2.7-8) parallels Egill's deep anguish in *Sonatorrek*, the poem he composes in response to his loss. The same images that we find in the prose narrative, as we will see, reemerge powerfully in the text of Egill's poem.

In *Egils saga*, as will become clear, the settlement narrative is not confined to the opening chapters. Russell Poole has described Egill aptly as "a pre-eminent finder of ways"—a character who "embodies the myths that enabled the founding and perpetuation of viable human livelihoods in the *terra nova* of Iceland" ('Introduction' 14). The idea of right to land certainly shapes the trajectory of this text, and is reinforced by repeated images that create a sense of continuity between the generations.[19] There is a clear symmetry to *Egils saga* that ultimately brings the narrative full-circle, and is in places created and reinforced through reference to the landscape. In fact, the later years of Egill's life seem increasingly to echo those of his grandfather. In Egill's response to Bǫðvarr's passing we are reminded forcefully of the death of Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson in Chapter 24—indeed, the details of these deaths of sons seem deliberately selected to underline the parallel. When Kveld-Úlfr hears that his beloved son has fallen, "varð hann hryggr við þessi tíðendi svá at hann lagðisk í rekkju af harmi ok elli [he became so distressed at the news that he took to his bed from grief and old age]" (31). Egill, likewise, "gekk … þegar til lokrekkju þeirar er hann var vanr at sofa í [went immediately to the bed-chamber which he was accustomed to sleep in]" and "lagðisk niðr [lay down]" (145). They are both consoled by surviving offspring, and express their grief very effectively through poetic compositions. Verse 1 of the saga, which Kveld-Úlfr composes after he hears the news of Þórólfr's death, seems moreover to prefigure certain aspects of

[19] In addition to the parallels I address in my analysis, a number of scholars have discussed the repetition of physical characteristics and personality traits over several generations of Egill's family: see, for example, P. S. Langeslag, 'Tröll and Ethnicity' (2009); Kaaren Grimstad, 'The Giant as a Heroic Model' (1976); Byock, 'Egill Skalla-Grímsson' (1986); and Catherine Jorgensen Itnyre, 'The Emotional Universe' (1996).

Sonatorrek, in juxtaposing the sense of loss with the need to take vengeance, *hefna* (1.7). Bearing in mind the saga's broader concern with continuity, then, I will now take some time to consider *Sonatorrek* with particular regard to its treatment of coastal landscapes and seascapes.

Before we begin our analysis of the poem, however, it is necessary to review *Sonatorrek*'s rather complicated textual history. *Egils saga* itself is preserved in a number of manuscripts, the most important of which are generally considered to be AM 132 fol., the collection of *Íslendingasögur* known as Möðruvallabók, dated c. 1330-1370; 9. 10. Aug. 4to, the fourteenth-century Wolfenbüttel codex; and two paper copies, AM 453 4to and AM 462 4to, written by Ketill Jörundarson in the seventeenth century and known collectively as Ketilsbækur (*ONP* 234; Bjarni Einarsson, 'Foreword' ix-xii). Additionally, ten early vellum fragments of the saga are preserved in AM 162 A fol., the earliest of which have been dated to c. 1250 (*ONP* 234). Following Jón Helgason's 1956 article, which criticised Finnur Jónsson's omission of paper manuscripts in his edition of *Egils saga*, the extant manuscripts have been divided in scholarly discussions into three main branches or redactions: those derived from or related to Möðruvallabók (designated M), the Wolfenbüttel codex (W), or Ketilsbækur (K) (110-112). The full text of *Sonatorrek* as we find it in modern editions is extant only in K-redactions; in Möðruvallabók only the first stanza is included, while in the Wolfenbüttel codex there is a lacuna where *Sonatorrek* should be, and in copies derived from that text only the first stanza is given. Outside of its transmission with *Egils saga*, we also find Stanza 23 and the first four lines of Stanza 24 in Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* in the context of listing kennings for Óðinn (9).[20]

Modern editions of the saga—including Bjarni Einarsson's normalised 2003 edition, from which I am quoting—have tended to work from Möðruvallabók as the superior text, filling its two biggest lacunae with reference to seventeenth-century copies of that manuscript, and supplying the three long poems in full from Wolfenbüttel and

[20] Much attention has been paid in scholarship to the possibility that Snorri was the author of *Egils saga*: see, for example, Sigurður Nordal, 'Höfundurinn' (1933); Ralph West, 'Snorri Sturluson and *Egils saga*' (1980); Melissa A. Berman, '*Egils saga* and *Heimskringla*' (1982); Sveinn Bergsveinsson, 'Tveir höfundar' (1983); Margaret Cormack, '*Egils saga, Heimskringla*' (2001); Torfi Tulinius, *The Matter of the North* (2002) 234-289; and, more recently, Haukur Þorgeirsson, 'Snorri versus the Copyists' (2014). On the citation of Egill's poetry in poetic and grammatical treatises, see Guðrún Nordal, 'Ars Metrica' (2015).

Ketilsbækur. Clunies Ross goes so far as to suggest that for future editions of *Egils saga* the structure of Möðruvallabók should be followed with regard to the poetry, and that Egill's longer poems—*Sonatorrek*, *Arinbjarnarkviða*, and *Hǫfuðlausn*, none of which are given in full in that manuscript—should be provided separately for reference purposes rather than integrated as part of the narrative ('Verse and Prose' 201). Aside from the fragments in AM 162 A fol., of which one is part of an early version of the M-redaction, Möðruvallabók contains the oldest surviving version of *Egils saga*; it has been suggested, by contrast, that the K-redaction may be a late medieval product (Chestnutt LIX). In his 2006 edition of the K-text, however, Michael Chestnutt argues that both the K- and W-redactions of *Egils saga* "descend from a hyperarchetype *y that represents one of two parallel lines of transmission of the saga", the other being texts of the M-class (LVIII). The K-text thus represents an important version of the saga in its own right, and one that allots more space to the longer poems. Bjarni Einarsson acknowledges that "the prose of *Egils saga* in M is clearly the result of a determined effort to abbreviate the text" and that "the omission of the three long poems shows the same intention" ('Foreword' x).[21]

Though the extant manuscripts that preserve the full poem are newer, it seems most likely that *Sonatorrek* predates the extant saga prose: the traditional dating for the poem given by Finnur Jónsson in his *Skjaldedigtning* is 960 (40), while *Egils saga* is of course more generally dated to the first half of the thirteenth century, c. 1220-40 (Jonna Louis-Jensen 145; Theodore Andersson, *Growth* 109-110; Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, 'Religious Ideas' 160). While Torfi Tulinius has made arguments against the poem's composition in the tenth century ('The Prosimetrum Form' 195-6), *Sonatorrek* is more often identified as an earlier text (Abram, 'Hel' 17-18; Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, 'Religious Ideas' 160; Finlay, 'Elegy and Old Age' 111). Russell Poole argues for a tenth-century context for *Sonatorrek* based on linguistic evidence and parallels with contemporary Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon verse ('Non enim possum' 178, 188ff.). Consequently, the text as we have it is flawed: scribal

[21] Bjarni Einarsson gives an overview of the major editions of *Egils saga* ('Foreword' xi-xii): notably, Finnur Jónsson's edition (1886-1888), Sigurður Nordal's *ÍF* edition (1933), and the Arnamagnæan editions of the M- and K-texts (2001, 2006). On Finnur Jónsson's use of Möðruvallabók in his edition, see Þorgeir Sigurðsson *et al*, 'Ofan í sortann' (2013). For a fuller sense of the problems surrounding the creation of saga editions, see discussions in *Creating the Medieval Saga*, ed. Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge (2010), and particularly Clunies Ross, 'Verse and Prose'. On manuscript emendation, particularly in reference to the corrupt text of *Sonatorrek*, see Clunies Ross, 'Conjectural Emendation' (2005).

errors and the fact that the full poem survives only in seventeenth-century copies mean that the metre is at points corrupted and in places meaning has become irrevocably obscured; Gabriel Turville-Petre in his 1974 edition and translation of the poem discussed many of the variations and emendations (‘The Sonatorrek’ 42-55), and Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson has more recently made some helpful suggestions regarding ambiguous passages of the poem (‘Religious Ideas’ 166ff.).[22]

Poole observes, moreover, that “when verses are incorporated into [the saga] we cannot be certain that they are in their original context”, and that the poetry attributed to Egill may have “issued from a great diversity of origins and perhaps even constitute a little anthology of the verse-making that built up around his name” (‘Non enim possum’ 174-175). The relationship between poetry and prose in *Egils saga* is undoubtedly complex, but *Sonatorrek* remains an integral part of the narrative: the accounts of Bǫðvarr’s death and burial, Egill’s grief and Þorgerðr’s intervention leading up to the poem’s composition are equally prominent in the M- and K- redactions (cf. 147-9 in *Bind I* and 141-2 in *Bind III*). *Egils saga* is, as Guðrún Nordal puts it, a text that “speaks to an audience interested in poetry” (‘Ars Metrica’ 43).

Kate Heslop has attributed the great popularity of *Sonatorrek* in skaldic studies to judgment of these verses by the standards of “expressive lyricism” (‘Gab mir ein Gott’ 162). Scholarship on the poem has often contextualised it in terms of the genre of elegy: Joseph Harris, in particular, has noted the usefulness of this term “to give a modern audience an initial conception of *Sonatorrek*” (‘Myth to Live By’ 154), and discussed the poem alongside examples of elegiac verse in Old English (‘Elegy’ 47, ‘North-Sea Elegy’ 105). Ruth Wehlau finds *Sonatorrek*, by comparison to *The Wanderer* and *Beowulf*, emphatically pagan in its means of consolation, since, she argues, “defiance of the divine order … is not an option within the Christian world of Old English poetry, where all lamentation must take place within a framework of a world governed by a good God” (16). Carol Clover has discussed the poem alongside other examples of lament in the Old Norse corpus (‘Hildigunnr’s Lament’ 25-29), while Alison Finlay observes that the long poems serve to “infuse qualities

[22] We await Margaret Clunies Ross’ edition of *Sonatorrek* for the Skaldic Project, to be published in a forthcoming volume of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages.*

of the lyrical and the elegiac into the saga as a whole" ('Elegy and Old Age' 111).[23] We find evidence in other verses of the sea evoked as an effective means of expressing emotions: in addition to Ketilríðr's lamentations in Verse 2 of *Víglundar saga*, Víglundr conceives of his unhappiness in Verse 16 as "strangr … straumr [a strong current]" (16.3-4), and Verse 56 in *Kormáks saga*, which I will discuss in due course, juxtaposes the image of crashing waves with the sense of separation from and longing for a woman. *Sonatorrek* plays very effectively on these associations, as we will see, but in addition presents a direct response to the sea and to certain realities of a coastal existence. Finlay has observed that "this last part of the saga is very specifically rooted in the local landscapes around Egil's homes at Borg and later Mosfell" ('Elegy and Old Age' 123); it is in this light that I will consider *Sonatorrek*. This is a text which intersperses elegiac notes with legal language, and which uses images and features of land and sea very deliberately.

Sonatorrek offers an important and vivid depiction of a coastal landscape, and one that seems the natural culmination of events that precede it in the saga. We begin with an expression of difficulty, and the idea of poetry as something with a physical trajectory: "era [it is not]," Egill asserts, in the opening stanza, "hógdrœgt / ór hugar fylgsni [easy to carry out of the cavern of thought]" (1.5-8). This sense of movement outwards permeates the poem: the poet draws the words "ór hyggju stað [out of thought's place]" (2.4), just as the Mead of Poetry was "ár bórinn ór jǫtunheimum [long ago borne out of Jǫtunheimr]" (2.7-8), and Egill's son was "heiptugligr / ór heimi nam [taken banefully out of the world]" (20.3-4). Part of the power of *Sonatorrek* is the way that it incorporates metaphorical landscapes into a literal one. It is the sea that serves to tie these three acts together. Stanzas 6 and 7 address the circumstances surrounding Bǫðvarr's death more directly:

Grimmt vǫrum hlið	Grim to me was the gap
þat er hrǫnn um braut	that the waves broke
fǫður míns	in the kin-fence
á frændgarði;	of my father;

[23] The poem has also received a great deal of attention with regard to its presentation of myth, religion and ritual. See, for example: Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, 'Religious Ideas' (1999); Joseph Harris, 'Myth to Live By' (2010); and Richard North, 'Pagan Inheritance' (1990). Torfi Tulinius has emphasised the Christian aspects of the poem ('The Self as Other' 210ff.).

veit ek ófullt	I know that unfull
ok opit standa	and open stands
sonar skarð	the void of the son
er mér sjár um vann.	that the sea won from me.

[Grim, to me, was the gap that the waves broke in the kin-fence of my father; I know that unfull and open stands the void of the son that the sea won from me.]

Mjǫk hefir Rán	Much has Rán
ryskt um mik,	handled roughly with me,
em ek ofsnauðr	I am stripped bare
at ástvinum;	by dear friends;
sleit marr bǫnd	the sea slit the bonds
minnar ættar,	of my family,
<snaran> þátt	a twisted strand
af sjálfum mér.	of me myself.

[Much has the sea (Rán) handled roughly with me, I am stripped bare by dear friends; the sea slit the bonds of the family, a twisted strand of me myself.]

Here, unsurprisingly, the destructive potential of the sea is emphasised: "hrǫnn of braut [waves broke]" (6.2), "mér sjár um vann [the sea won from me]" (6.8), "sleit marr bǫnd [the sea slit the bonds]" (7.5). It is a force beyond the poet's control, attributed its own agency, and inescapable. Simultaneously, however, it is the source of Egill's poetic skill: the sea as an image is very much tied to the myth of the Mead of Poetry, which is employed to great effect in *Sonatorrek*. Roberta Frank has emphasised the role of Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* in developing and perpetuating the myth in early thirteenth-century Iceland ('Snorri and the Mead' 157ff.). The use of this imagery in *Egils saga*, too, has been well documented.[24] Finlay has discussed it in the context of ideas of poetic inheritance and what she refers to as "poetic temperament" ('Pouring Óðinn's Mead' 89-93), while Laurence

[24] See, for example: Clover, 'Scaldic Sensibility' (1978) 68-79; Thomas Hill, 'Beer, Vomit, Blood, and Poetry' (2015); Jón Karl Helgason, 'Bloody Runes' (2015); and John Stephens, 'The Mead of Poetry' (1972). On liquid metaphors for the transmission of knowledge in the mythological sources, see Judy Quinn, 'Liquid Knowledge' (2010). For a broader discussion of metaphors for poetic inspiration, see Anthony Faulkes, 'Poetical Inspiration' (1997).

de Looze observes that *Sonatorrek* "is based on a series of metamorphosing images and variously depicts and/or enacts the conversion … of the sea into poetic mead" ('Poet, Poem' 137). The movement of water is used as a metaphor for composition: "Era auðþeystr [It is not easy to make flow]," the poet declares, in the opening to the second stanza (2.1). The verb from which *þeystr* is derived, *þeysa*, means 'to make flow, gush or spurt' (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'þeysa'), and has similar connotations to terms like *gjósa* or *spretta*, which we encountered previously in comparable contexts in *Grettis saga* and *Hallmundarkviða*. This sense of the flow of water in *Sonatorrek* is reinforced by references to "ekki [sobbing]" (2.2), and "ið [tears]" (17.3), as well as by the description of the void left by his son as "ófullt [unfull]" (6.5).

There seems to be a consciousness throughout *Sonatorrek* of liminality, of being poised on the edge of something. In this respect, the poem seems to exemplify the association of seascapes "with anomaly and uncertainty", as Clunies Ross describes it (*Prolonged Echoes* II, 130). Stanza 4, for example, opens with the declaration that "ætt mín / á enda stendr [my family stands at an end]" (4.1-2), a line which refers to the deaths of his sons, but also seems to parallel both Hel's stance in the final stanza (25.4) and that of Ægir, who "á hendi stendr [stands at hand]" (19.3). Egill positions his family as part of a coastal community and settlement, with all the uncertainty that that implies; *Sonatorrek*, it quickly becomes clear, is as concerned with the broader implications of the loss of sons as it is with personal grief. When combined with the images that precede the poem of bodies washing up on the beach (38, 145), Egill's construction of an "ættar ask [an ash of family]" (21.5) and description of the trees as "hræbarnir [wrecked]" (4.3) are suggestive of driftwood as well as ships. This evocation of driftwood in the image of the *rek* of sons serves, as I have noted, as a reminder of Kveld-Úlfr's role in that original act of *landnám.* The allusion to timber in the penultimate line of Stanza 5, moreover, recalls the reason for Bǫðvarr's ill-fated journey (5.7).

The reference to "fens … hrosta [fen's mash]" (19.1-3) in Stanza 19 evokes another type of landscape particularly associated with Egill's family, which again is established as such in the course of the initial *landnám* narrative: the "mýrlendi mikit [great marshland]" is one of the major identifying features of the land claimed by Skalla-Grímr (38). Wetlands, like coastlines, are created at the intersection of land

and water, and thus fall into the category of landscape that Gillis describes as 'ecotonal' ('Not Continents' 158). The terms *mýrr* and *fen* both emerge in the course of the prose narrative as difficult spaces to be navigated—for example, in the context of an attempted ambush in the forest in Chapter 76 (139)—but also form the basis of a significant land dispute that occurs towards the end of Egill's life. David Stevens has pointed out the potential value of fertile wetlands, and thus the significance of the dispute between Steinarr and Þorsteinn over Stakksmýrr in Chapter 82 of the saga: "this type of pasture," Stevens argues, "would have been of crucial importance to the early settlers, due to the necessity of winter fodder for cows" (35). I have noted the significance of marshland to Skalla-Grímr's land-taking in Iceland—Steinarr's challenge to Þorsteinn is effectively a challenge to the authority of that claim. An awareness of the importance of verbal skill to asserting legal rights is present throughout *Egils saga*: early on in the narrative, Grímr recognises the need to be "orðsnjallr [eloquent]" in seeking recompense for Þórólfr's death (32). In the case of the Stakksmýrr dispute, too, we find another assertion of verbal power in the context of claims to land: when his son Þorsteinn is unable to resolve the conflict with Steinarr, Egill is forced to step in, to recount the details of his father's *landnám* again at the *þing* (174). Later, he composes a verse in which he recounts the accomplishment: "Spanða ek jǫrð með orðum … Steinari ór hendi [I won land with words out of Steinarr's hands]," he declares (57.1-2).

Roberta Frank in her discussion of the Mead of Poetry emphasises the importance of ideas of exchange and repayment to "an oral poet enmeshed with his patron" ('Snorri and the Mead' 165). There is certainly a sense of the poet-patron relationship in Egill's rebuke to Óðinn in *Sonatorrek*: "gerðumk tryggr / at trúa hónum, / áðr vinátt … um sleit við mik [I came, faithful, to believe in him, before (he) broke off friendship with me]" (22.3-8). Ideas of exchange and repayment, however, seem here to be just as firmly rooted in the legal: Egill claims, in Stanza 10, that "Mik hefir marr / miklu ræntan [The sea has robbed me dearly]" (10.1-2). The loss of his sons is at one point described explicitly as the breaking of a boundary, as if in an attempt to express it in comprehensible terms, as a situation with a logical solution. "Grimmt vǫrum hlið [Grim to me was the gap]," Egill declares, "þat hrǫnn of braut / fǫður míns / á frændgarði [that the waves broke in the kin-fence of my father]" (6.1-4). Cleasby and Vigfússon note the potential for *hlið* to be used in a legal context to

indicate a gap in a fence (‘hlið, n.’); the sea’s transgression is thus constructed as movement into a *garðr*, an owned space. The fact that Egill’s loss is conceived of repeatedly in spatial terms more appropriate to a boundary dispute again underlines the centrality of land and inheritance to this text. This is as much a threat to Egill’s family and their holdings in Iceland as it is a personal loss, and the desire for justice—for appropriate “iðgjǫld [recompense]” (17.3)—drives the poem. This sense of the text as a legal appeal emerges particularly clearly in Stanzas 8 and 9:

Veiztu um þá sǫk	You know that case
sverði of rækak,	with sword I would avenge,
var ǫlsmið<r>	the ale-smith would be
allra tíma;	all out of time;
hroða vágs brœðr	the brothers of brutal wave,
ef vega mættak	if I could fight
fœra ek andvígr	I would go against in arms,
Ægis mani.	[and] Ægir’s mistress.

[You know I would avenge that case with sword, the ale-smith would be all out of time; if I could fight, I would go against the brothers of brutal wave and the sea (Rán, Ægir’s mistress) in arms.]

En ek ekki	But I thought
eiga þóttumk	I had not
sakar afl	strength of accusation
við sonar bana,[25]	against the son’s banes,
því at alþjóð	because before the eyes
fyrir augum verðr	of all the people appears
gamals þegns	an old man
gengileysi.	without support.

[25] *Sonar* is a common editorial emendation in this line, which Bjarni Einarsson accepts as “a fitting conjecture” in his edition (149): *súð*, a term of used of ship’s boards, is given in the K-text, which Turville-Petre observed would give the kenning ‘bane of ships’ (‘The Sonatorrek’ 47), again indicating the sea. This reading underlines again that sense of navigating the coastline as inherently dangerous, and would also be consistent with the use of wood/drift imagery elsewhere in the poem.

> [But I thought I had not strength of accusation against the son's banes, because an old man appears without support before the eyes of all the people.]

Egill is conscious of his appearance in the eyes of the community (9.5-8), and of the importance of public support to determining the outcome of a legal challenge: "ek ekki / eiga þóttumk / sakar afl [I thought I had not strength of accusation]," he states, "við sonar bana [against the son's banes]" (9.1-4). In Stanza 8, meanwhile, the sea is given not only physical body, but a genealogy: "hroða vágs brœðr [brutal wave's brothers]" (8.5), relations of its own against whom Egill might claim recompense for his loss. Framed in terms like "sǫk [charge]" (9.1) and "bœtr [compensation]" (23.7), Egill's address to the sea is constructed recognisably as a legal challenge.

In the closing lines of *Sonatorrek*, we find both the culmination of grief for lost sons and a clear consciousness of his own mortality: Egill concludes the poem by declaring his intention to "heljar bíða [wait for Hel]" (25.8). Snorri says of Hel that "hon skipti ǫllum vistum með þeim er til hennar váru sendir, en þat eru sóttdauðir menn ok ellidauðir [she arranged all lodgings for those who were sent to her, and those are men dead of illness or old age]" (*Gylfaginning* 27)—appropriate for Egill, who deems himself an old man, *gamall þegn* (9.7), and who will ultimately die from illness. Christopher Abram argues that in early skaldic verse "Hel was a personification of death or possibly the grave, but not of the underworld in the way that it is conceived in eddic poetry" ('Hel' 19), and this seems true of the figure in *Sonatorrek.* The assertion here that a personification of death "á nesi stendr [stands on the headland]" (25.4) is particularly powerful as the conclusion of a poem mourning a drowned son, and even more so when considered in terms of creation of continuity in the saga. *Nes* as a topographical feature emerges repeatedly in the landscapes of *Egils saga*, and is emphasised specifically in the context of the *landnám* narrative.

Of Skalla-Grímr's settlement, we are told that:

> Þeir kǫnnuðu landit með sæ, bæði upp ok út; en er þeir hǫfðu skammt farit þá fundu þeir í vík einni hvar upp var rekin kista Kveld-Úlfs; fluttu þeir kistuna á nes þat er þar varð, settu hana þar niðr ok hlóðu at grjóti. (38)

> [They explored the land alongside the sea, both upwards and outwards; and when they had travelled a short way they found where Kveld-Úlfr's coffin had washed up in an inlet; they carried the coffin out to that headland, set it down there and laid stones on it.]

Egils saga returns, again and again, to the image of burial on a headland. When Skalla-Grímr dies, we are told that "Lét Egill þar gera haug á framanverðu nesinu [Egill had a mound made there on the front of the headland]" (100). After Bǫðvarr's body washes up on Einarsnes, Egill "reið með út í Digranes til haugs Skalla-Gríms. Hann lét þá opna hauginn ok lagði Bǫðvar þar niðr hjá Skalla-Grími [rode out with it to Digranes to the mound of Skalla-Grímr. He opened the mound and laid Bǫðvarr down there by Skalla-Grímr]" (145). When Egill envisions his own burial site, it too is coastal: the image of Hel standing on the headland in *Sonatorrek* is compounded by a subsequent *lausavísa* in which he describes his hypothetical death as the moment when seafarers "hlœði … of mik grjóti [laid stones over me]" (55.7-8), repeating precisely the vocabulary used in the description of his grandfather's burial. This image of *nes* and *grjót* and *haugr* is thus repeated over four generations of Egill's family. It would seem, moreover, that these details are given specifically in the context of the Icelandic coastline, since the account of Þórólfr's burial in Norway was quite different: "Bjuggu þeir um lík Þórólfs eptir siðvenju svá sem títt var at búa um lík gǫfugra manna; settu eptir hann bautasteina [they prepared Þórólfr's body according to the practice which was usual for the bodies of noble men; set over him a memorial stone]" (28). These headland burials thus serve to reinforce the claim of Egill's family to this space, and the connection of the people to this landscape, both through the physical act of creation and by evoking the original means by which the land was claimed. In *Egils saga*, as in the texts examined in the previous chapter, there is a sense that *dying into the landscape*, dwelling through burial, serves to cement the relationship between people and land.

We find, in *Sonatorrek*, many of the same aspects we identified in the Snæfellsnes verses in *Víglundar saga, Bárðar saga*, and *Landnámabók*: the poem is at once a complex dialogue between the poet and the sea rooted in grief, a commentary on the perils of a coastal existence, an attempt to negotiate this particular space in legal terms, and a claim to land reinforced through repeated reference to specific topographical features. We might likewise compare *Sonatorrek* and

Hallmundarkviða, as texts which make effective use of the myth of the Mead of Poetry, and align the processes of the natural world with the process of poetic composition. Egill's poem, like Hallmundr's, is qualified by the need to *remember*, not only in terms of the commemorative nature of the work, but also in Þorgerðr's promise to carve it on a rune-stick (146). We have seen in *Víglundar saga* and *Egils saga*, then, both the appeal of coastal landscapes as the subject of poetic compositions, and the importance of these compositions to the narratives as a whole. In the final section of this chapter, I will examine some poetic treatments of coastal and ecotonal features in *Kormáks saga*, a text in which the marginal nature of these landscapes emerges particularly strongly, and in which the protagonist's relationship to the land is again expressed primarily through verse.

Coastal Conflicts in *Kormáks saga*

Kormáks saga is a curious text in several respects. First and foremost, the question of its composition is rather more complex than for many other sagas: the text as we have it is preserved in the fourteenth-century vellum manuscript Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.) alongside *Egils saga*, as well as in fragmentary form with *Bjarnar saga* in AM 162 F fol. (compiled in the second half of the fourteenth century) and in paper copies dating from the seventeenth century onwards (*ONP* 315). As with *Egils saga*, however, there has been considerable debate as to the respective dates of the poetry and the prose, as well as disagreement as to the quality of the latter. The saga itself is generally agreed to have been composed in the thirteenth century (Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 'Aldur og Heimkynni' cv-cvi), while the poetry has been dated variously from the tenth century (Finnur Jónsson, 'Sagaernes Lausavísur' 13) to contemporaneous with the prose (Bjarni Einarsson, 'The Lovesick Skald' 25). More recently, however, Kari Ellen Gade has concluded that "the *lausavísur* in *Kormáks saga* … bear all the marks of having been composed prior to 1014" and thus cannot have been the work of its thirteenth-century author (73-74). Heather O'Donoghue's study of the relationship between verse and prose in *Kormáks saga* has underlined those places in the text where aspects of the narrative fail to entirely align with details in the poetry (*The Genesis of a Saga Narrative* 17ff.).

In light of this it seems most useful to consider the text as both a compilation of related verses and an attempt to position those verses within a particular narrative

framework, the trajectory of which is established in the first two chapters. "The main function of the beginning of virtually any saga is to set out its spatio-temporal frame of reference," John Stephens observes, and *Kormáks saga* achieves this by means of "a set of implicit ideological paradigms expressed in the career of Ǫgmundr" ('The Unwelcome Suitor' 156). First and foremost is the description of the conflict and then duel between Ǫgmundr and his rival Ásmundr, the details of which resonate powerfully with subsequent events in Kormákr's life. Ǫgmundr is rewarded for his victory in the initial battle with a desirable marriage (203). We are told, too, that prior to the duel Ǫgmundr receives assistance from his new wife's foster-mother, who—like Þórdís later in the saga—is *framsýna*, able to tell the future, and her involvement ultimately ensures his victory (204). Ásmundr's son, moreover, appears toward the end of the saga to abduct Steingerðr and prompt a daring rescue on the part of Ǫgmundr's sons; every detail here seems intended as a point of reference for Kormákr's subsequent exploits. The duel between Ǫgmundr and Ásmundr thus establishes the major unifying component of an otherwise uneven saga narrative: *Kormáks saga* is driven primarily by conflict, between individuals and on a larger level between the hero and the sphere he is forced to navigate.

In Chapter 2, following the death of his first wife and son, Ǫgmundr departs for Iceland. "Eptir þat [After that]," we are told, "sigldu þeir í haf; þá kastar Ǫgmundr út ǫndvegissúlum sínum [they sailed out to sea; then Ǫgmundr cast out his high-seat posts]" (205). Here, as in *Egils saga*, there is a sense of the act of settlement as in some way predestined, location decided by tidal drift: "þeir kómu útan at Miðfirði, þar váru áðr komnar ǫndvegissúlur hans, kǫstuðu þar akkerum [they arrived at Miðfjǫrðr, where his high-seat posts had already come, and cast anchor there]" (205). At this point Ǫgmundr is greeted by Miðfjarðar-Skeggi, who "í þann tíma réð þar fyrir [at that time had authority there]": "hann reri til þeira ok bauð þeim inn í fjǫrðinn ok svá landskosti [he rowed out to them and offered them welcome to the fjord and also choice land]" (205). Skeggi appears frequently in the saga corpus—for example, in Chapter 10 of *Þórðar saga hreðu* (212-215), and Chapter 6 of *Laxdœla saga* (10)—but his appearance in Chapter 5 of *Bárðar saga* is perhaps most useful in terms of our reading of his function here in *Kormáks saga* (115-117). In *Bárðar saga*, as we observed, Skeggi is presented explicitly in the context of narratives of settlement. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he also figures prominently in

Landnámabók, emerging at various points in that text—notably, he is listed with Egill Skallagrímsson as one of the most important chieftains immediately following the initial settlement period (230). The association of Skeggi with this process of *landnám* becomes highly significant later in the saga, as we will see.

Following Ǫgmundr's arrival in Iceland, we are presented with an interesting account of the construction of his farm. He asks first for *grund-vǫllr*, ground marked out for a building (205)—*vǫllr* on its own may be translated as 'field', or even 'paddock', with the sense of enclosed or owned land (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'völlr, m.')—and subsequently the process of marking itself is described. "Þat var þeira átrúnaðr [It was their belief]," the saga explains, "ef málit gengi saman … at þess manns ráð myndi saman ganga [that if the measuring narrowed, this man's state of life would narrow]", but "þróask, ef hann vissi til mikilleiks [it would increase, if he would know greatness]" (205). They take the measurements three times, and it narrows. Here, explicitly, the fortunes of Kormákr's family are deemed to be shaped by the process of settlement—and more particularly by the process of marking bounds. Ultimately, we are told, Ǫgmundr builds his home "þar á melnum [there on the sand-bank]" (205)—another decisive association of farm with a particular feature of the landscape. After Ǫgmundr's death, we are told that Kormákr's brother Þorgils "annaðisk … um bú við umsjá Miðfjarðar-Skeggja [took care of the farm with the oversight of Miðfjarðar-Skeggi]" (206).

Thus, by Chapter 3, the narrative focus has moved emphatically to the protagonist—the details given about Ǫgmundr's life are only those pertinent to Kormákr's. The first two chapters function almost entirely as a means of establishing the major preoccupations of the text, as will become increasingly clear. *Kormáks saga* is in many respects a very concisely drawn and fast-paced narrative, perhaps due to the quantity and variety of material it attempts to incorporate. Kormákr is not introduced, like other saga heroes, with reference to his physical feature, personality traits or particular skills, but rather fittingly through a rejection of responsibility in favour of contact with Steingerðr. The chapter opens with a description of a beached whale that we are told "kom út á Vatnsnes, ok áttu þeir bræðr Dǫllusynir [came up on Vatnsnes, and the Dolluson brothers owned it]" (206)—another circumstance for which *Grágás* makes provision (125-131). Drift rights are once again foregrounded, as is fitting for a text in which so much of the action takes place on or along the

coast, and the choice with which Kormákr is presented—"fara á fjall eða til hvals [to go up the mountain or to the whale]" (207)—seems to evoke once more the notion of the bounds of settled land as stretching "milli fjalls ok fjǫru [between mountain and shore]" (*Egils saga* 39). The decision to go up the mountain leads to his first meeting with Steingerðr, and ultimately to a rejection of the task assigned to him: "makara's mér at mæla [it is more suitable to me to speak]," he declares, in Verse 9, "an mórauða sauði / umb afréttu elta, / orð margt við Steingerði [many a word with Steingerðr, than to chase yellow-brown sheep around the pasture]" (9.5-8).

This is not an isolated incident, but rather sets a precedent for the saga as a whole. One of the first of Kormákr's heightened compositions about Steingerðr sets her value not only above possession of land, but above Iceland itself. In Verse 8, he declares:

Alls metk auðar þellu	I value the young pine of wealth,
Íslands, þás mér grandar,	who causes me harm, with all of
Húnalands ok handan	Iceland, and beyond with Húnaland,
hugstarkr sem Danmarkar,	strong-minded, with Denmark,
verð es Engla jarðar	Eir of the fire of the oar-beast's
Eir hádyrnis geira,[26]	[ground] is worth English earth,
sól-Gunni metk svinna	—I value wise sun-Gunnr
sunds, ok Íra grundar.	of the sea—and Irish ground.

> [I value the young woman (pine of wealth), who causes me harm, strong-minded, with all of Iceland, and beyond with Húnaland, with Denmark; the woman (goddess of gold {fire of the sea <ship ... >}) is worth English earth and Irish ground; I value the wise woman (valkyrie of gold {sun of the sea}).]

In Verses 9 and 10 in *Víglundar saga* we saw the protagonist equate the object of his affections from whom he is parted with the land to which he cannot return; there is, consequently, an implication that their marriage would restore not only the woman he loves, but also his proper inheritance and place in society. Víglundr's pursuit of

[26] This line seems to be another kenning for 'woman', which takes the name of a goddess as its base-word, but the meaning of *hádyrnis geira* is obscure, as Einar Ól. Sveinsson discussed in his notes to the *ÍF* edition of the text (214). I would tentatively suggest a reading of *há-dýr* as a kenning for 'ship' and thus infer a partial kenning for 'sea', but this would require some emendation of the text.

Ketilríðr is thus aligned with a rightful claim to land, their union compatible with and representative of social order. By contrast, Kormákr's assessment of Steingerðr's value sets him at odds with societal expectation; she is more important than land, whether that land is his own or someone else's. When Kormákr values his beloved above Iceland he expresses a willingness to choose one over the other, and thus represents a threat to the social order.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that *Kormáks saga* as a whole is so characterised by conflict. Among the sheer quantity of verses compiled in *Kormáks saga*—85 in total, of which 64 are attributed to the protagonist—two types are particularly prominent: the 'love' poems for which the text has gained so much attention in scholarship, in which Kormákr expresses longing for Steingerðr, and the 'duelling' verses, which record various aspects of the saga's major confrontations.[27] The two subjects are, of course, connected in that the outcome of one relies on success in the other, and in both cases we find depictions of landscape used to great effect. In *Kórmaks saga*, we find that the precariousness of coastal settlement manifests particularly in poetic presentations of certain topographical features, and in the text's heightened sense of the potential for conflict at boundaries.

Islands are perhaps the most obvious example of conflict associated with a particular feature of the landscape. The line "Hefk á holm of gengit [I have gone on to the island]" occurs at the beginnings of three of the 'duelling' verses in *Kormáks saga* (30.1, 70.1, 71.1), and variations on it in a number of others (see, for example, 27.1, 45.4, and 50.7). Cleasby and Vigfússon render *hólmr* as an islet "in a bay, creek, lake, or river", and note in addition that meadows "by the shore with ditches behind them" are often referred to in Iceland by the same term ('hólmr, m.'). I discussed, in the previous chapter, the use of rivers as natural boundaries; such a space thus seems a logical site for arranged conflicts. We might recall also that the word forms part of an early name for Iceland—Garðarshólmr—in *Landnámabók,* as part of an episode

[27] The 'love' verses in *Kormáks saga* have been subject to much scrutiny with regard to the potential influence of continental troubadour poetry. For the major scholarship and debates on this issue, see Bjarni Einarsson, *Skaldasögur* (1961); Theodore Andersson, 'Skalds and Troubadours' (1969); Bjarni Einarsson, 'The Lovesick Skald' (1971); and Alison Finlay, 'Skalds, Troubadours, and Sagas' (1995). Dating of these verses has often been tied up with this question of influence. On other possible European contexts for poetry in the *skáldasögur*, see Finlay, 'Skald Sagas' (2001). Marianne Kalinke has discussed the Tristam legend in *Kormáks saga* ('Arthurian Echoes' 151-153). On the prominence of the 'love triangle' in the *skáldasögur*, see Andersson, 'Skald Sagas' (2001).

whose primary purpose seems to be to establish that the land is an island (35). In a country in which fertile land was finite and laws of inheritance and ownership so stringent, islets or islands, as spaces that are well-defined but exist on the boundary *between* two territories, might serve most naturally as neutral ground.

The term *hólmganga* is defined more specifically by Cleasby and Vigfússon as "a duel or wager of battle fought on an island or holm" ('hólm-ganga, f.'), and the idea of duelling as literally 'going onto an island', regardless of its historical accuracy, seems to persist in the *Íslendingasögur*. In Chapter 11 of *Gunnlaugs saga*, for example, Gunnlaugr challenges his rival Hrafn to a duel "hér á þinginu á þriggja nátta fresti í Øxarárhólmi [here at the thing in three nights' time on Øxarárhólmr]" (92-3)—the proposed location an isle in the river that runs through Þingvellir. This account of a duelling isle in the context of the site of the Alþing would, moreover, seem consistent with Marlene Ciklamini's description of the duel as "a legalized feud" ('The Old Icelandic Duel' 175). In a subsequent verse Gunnlaugr declares, "Nú emk út á eyri / alvangs búinn ganga [Now am I prepared to go out to the field's bank]" (17.1-2). Egill, too, fights the *berserkr* Ljótr on an island, though here it is an *ey* rather than a *hólmr*: we are told that "fara þeir síðan ok koma í eyna Vǫrl [they set out afterwards and came to the island of Vǫrl]", where "þar var fagr vǫllr skammt frá sjónum er hólmstefnan skyldi vera [there was a fair field a short distance from the sea where the meeting should be]" (*Egils saga* 118). Egill's uncle, Þórólfr, is described by Kveld-Úlfr in a verse as having perished "norð<r> í eyju [north on an island]" (1.1).

In one of Bersi's verses in *Kormáks saga*, similarly, we find the boundaries of the duelling site drawn explicitly in terms of landscape features:

Bóðit hafa brynju hríðar	They have offered, bidders
beiðendr við styr kenndir,	of the mail-storm, known to battle,
oss gerum at því ekki	to us this causes no
angr, á holm at ganga;	grief, to go to the island;
gaman þykkir nú gumnum	it seems an amusement now for men
gunnstœranda at fœra,	to bring to the battle-sweller
uggum hvergi at hǫggva,	—nowhere afraid to fight—
Hlakkar veðr, á bǫkkum.	Hlökk's storm, on the banks.

> [Bidders of battle (the mail-storm), known to battle, have offered to go to the island; this causes no grief to us; it seems now an amusement for men to bring battle (Hlökk's storm) to the warrior (battle-sweller) on the banks.]

That Verse 45 concludes with the speaker poised *á bǫkkum*, on the banks, is suggestive of an island, or at the very least close proximity to water. This seems consistent, too, with the text's tendency to express conflict in terms of or against a backdrop of coastal features. The killing of the walrus in Chapter 18 which Kormákr believes to be an embodiment of Þórveig is, for example, juxtaposed with an account of the "mikinn háska [great danger]" Þorgils and Kormákr face in navigating the coastline (267). Meanwhile, in Chapter 16, Bersi's dispute with his brother-in-law, Váli, over the illegal use of his fields culminates in a cliffside ambush (262). Accounts and explication of place names in this saga, moreover, seem to foreground coastal or ecotonal features associated with conflict—as, for example, with Válafell in Chapter 16 (263), or Orrustuhólmr in Chapter 9 (233).

When accused by his brother of failing to keep his promises to Steingerðr, Kormákr claims, "Meir olli því vándra vætta atkvæði en mín mislyndi [That was caused more by the spells of evil spirits than my uncertain temper]" (267). It becomes increasingly clear, however, that had Kormákr respected and deferred to these supernatural influences he would have been able to overcome the obstacles keeping him from Steingerðr; their separation is less a result of the curse than it is Kormákr's refusal to conform to societal expectations. Dalla warns him early on: "Of óráðþægr ertu, frændi [You are too resistant to advice, son]," she insists (235). In light of his part in Ǫgmundr's settlement narrative—not only in giving the land, but in continuing to oversee it after Þorgils inherits it—it is particularly relevant that Miðfjarðar-Skeggi emerges again in the context of Kormákr's duels with Bersi. It is from Skeggi that Kormákr borrows the sword with which he first fights Bersi, at his mother's entreaty; he fails, however, to use the blade as instructed and so is unsuccessful (238). Kormákr's rejection of the supernatural seems, too, to be inextricable from his rejection of the social order. Having received the instructions regarding the sword, Kormákr aligns Skeggi explicitly with sorcery (235).

Kormákr's love for Steingerðr becomes increasingly problematic as the saga progresses, and the underlying conflict between personal desires and social

obligations is expressed most clearly in the verses he composes for her. The poetic landscapes prompted by Kormákr's affections are without exception threatening—some more so than others. Verse 56, included as part of the account of Kormákr's travels abroad, is particularly memorable:

Brim gnýr, brattir hamrar	Surf roars, steep crags
blálands Haka strandar,	of the strand of Haki's blue land,
allt gjalfr eyja þjalfa	the din of the encircler of islands
út líðr í stað víðis.	glides out to the wide sea's abode.
Mér kveðk heldr of Hildi	I declare myself much more lacking
hrannbliks an þér miklu	in sleep than you, for Hildr of the
svefnfátt; sǫrva Gefnar	wave-fire; I will miss
sakna mank, ef ek vakna;	the goddess of the necklace, if I awake;

[Surf roars, steep crags of the strand of the sea (the sea-god's {Haki's} blue land), the din of the sea (the encircler of islands) glides out to the wide sea's abode. I declare myself much more lacking in sleep than you, for the woman (goddess {Hildr} of gold {the wave-fire}); I will miss the woman (goddess {Gefn} of the necklace), if I awake.]

This is a particularly powerful verse, both in its vivid seascape and the deliberate subversion of our expectations—here, Kormákr positions himself explicitly outside of the social sphere, "í stað víðis [in the wide sea's abode]" (56.4). Here we find yet another example of the blurring of distinctions between land and sea: waves are constructed evocatively here as "brattir hamrar / blálands Haka strandar [steep crags of the strand of Haki's blue land]" (56.1-2). Not only is the sea a 'blue land', but it has a *ströND*—a coast or shore, but also used more generally in the sense of border, or edge. This seascape is a liminal space, a transitional space, which would seem to align well with the presentations of coastlines we have seen so far. Waves are described as the "brattir hamrar [steep crags]" of that shore. We saw *sjávarhamrar*, sea crags, used to imply a threatening space in *Njáls saga* (301); in Chapter 18 of *Kormáks saga*, when the two brothers find themselves in difficulty venturing out to sea, we are told that, "silgdu þeir at hǫmrum nǫkkurum [they sailed close to some crags]" (267). The sense of *hamrar* as particularly threatening perhaps reflects an awareness of the shifting nature of the coastline, or a consciousness of the difficulties

of inhabiting an inherently changeable space. The shifting grounds of the highland landscape in *Hallmundarkviða*, we will recall, are conceived of in very similar terms: instead of *brim*, 'surf', it is the mountain that "gnýr [roars]" (1.5) in the first stanza of that poem, but we find the same description of "bratta hamra [steep crags]" (1.6). When Kormákr concludes the verse with the assertion that he misses Steingerðr, we are reminded simultaneously of Ketilríðr's verses on the sea in *Víglundar saga*; once again, there is a sense of loss and longing juxtaposed with the image of a violent seascape. Two things keep the poet from sleep: the crashing waves of the first *helmingr*, and the lack of the woman he loves in the second. In the context of the narrative, this verse is followed immediately by Kormákr's insistence on returning home: "kann ek þat segja þér, bróðir, at ek lýsi útferð minni til Íslands [I can say this to you, brother, that I declare my journey out to Iceland]" (270). His intention is conceived of as an extension of the verse itself.

The interplay between land and sea that is evident here is developed further through the juxtaposition of stone and water in subsequent verses. Various motifs and images are repeated in Kormákr's love verses—the excessive valuations, for example, and an exchange of rings—but most striking perhaps in light of the saga's preoccupation with the supernatural are the repeated references to stones floating on water (52.5-6, 65.5-6) and other comparable occurrences. Einar Ól. Sveinsson discussed these verses at length and identified widespread analogues for the dominant motifs ('Kormákr the Poet' 43-51). We see these vaguely apocalyptic images first in Verse 19, when Kormákr insists that "upp skulu allar … áðr ek þér hafna … þjóðáar rinna [all the rivers will run upwards before I forsake you]" (19.5-8). The culmination is Verse 61, addressed to Steingerðr in the course of their frustrated reunion:

Heitask hellur fljóta	Stones threaten to float
hvatt sem korn á vatni,	bold as grain on water—
enn emk auðspǫng ungri	still I am to the young wealth-clasp
óþekkr, en bjǫð sekkva,	not pleasing—and the ground to sink,
fœrask fjǫll en stóru	the great mountains will be brought,
fræg í djúpan ægi,	famous, into the deep sea,
auðs áðr jafnfǫgr tróða	before a tree of wealth equally fair
alin verði Steingerði.	to Steingerðr is born.

> [Stones threaten to float, bold as grain on water, and the ground to sink; still I am to the young woman (wealth-clasp) not pleasing; the great mountains will be brought, famous, into the deep sea, before a woman (tree of wealth) equally fair to Steingerðr is born.]

This repeated association of their love with shifting ground is suggestive of its instability, of the threat it poses to the social order, and it would seem, based on her consistently unfavourable responses, that Steingerðr recognises this. In Verse 61 we find a powerful image of the collapse of those established boundaries of settled land in Iceland—*fjall ok fjǫra*—as "fœrask fjǫll en stóru / fræg í djúpan ægi [the great mountains will be brought, famous, into the deep sea]" (61.5-6).

This of course is not to say that Kormákr is an unsympathetic hero; on the contrary, the saga author seems at pains to render his conduct in every conflict more palatable. He is, however, emphatically an outsider, and constructs himself as such. In fact, Bersi's duels are as important as Kormákr's in terms of narrative trajectory. He functions effectively as a foil for Kormákr, a point of comparison for both poetic and social conduct: over the course of the saga, he speaks thirteen verses, though his careful adherence to the rituals preceding the duels sets him firmly apart from his rival. That Bersi's story forms the centre of the narrative seems strangely fitting for a text in which he socially supplants the protagonist; Bersi navigates the social sphere skilfully with a full comprehension of and deference to its norms and expectations, where Kormákr consistently falls short. Nor is Bersi the only touchstone for Kormákr's behaviour—the fact that Steingerðr divorces Bersi only to marry Þorvaldr tinteinn offers a further point of reference. Even those figures who might be expected to be unambiguously troublesome in *Kormáks saga*—the witches, Þórveig and Þórdís—are instead shown to work effectively within the constraints of society. Þórveig is undoubtedly the more problematic of the two; nevertheless, she demonstrates on several occasions the ability to navigate both the social sphere and the natural landscape. When Kormákr attempts to force her from her home, for example, she appeals to Bersi and he purchases land for her in Hrútafjǫrðr (225). Þórveig's ties to both the land and the people who inhabit it are, it would seem, stronger than Kormákr's.

Movement of the narrative abroad in Chapter 24 serves to bring it full circle: in Denmark Kormákr comes into contact with the son of Ásmundr, his father's old rival. The text as a whole is characterised by a strong sense of something *diminished*; the contrast between the fortunes of Kormákr and his father serves only to heighten the sense of loss. Removed from the framework of Icelandic society, Kormákr is more successful in the conflicts he undertakes, but ultimately Steingerðr chooses to remain with her husband. They return to Iceland together; Kormákr does not. There is no place for him there. For all that *Kormáks saga* is a text that foregrounds the supernatural and its influence in social conflicts, it is simultaneously a text firmly rooted in social realities. The text expresses a deep concern with the implications of absence from or failure to exist within the constraints of Icelandic society. Kormákr's refusal to be parted from Steingerðr ultimately prevents him from forming any beneficial social ties or assuming the responsibilities expected of him.

Bjarni Einarsson identified similar tendencies in the structures of *Kormáks saga* and *Egils saga* ('The Lovesick Skald' 26). The two texts certainly invite comparison with one another with regard to structure and setting; moreover, the characters of Steinarr and his father Qnundr sjóni, so prominent in the account of settlement and dispute over Stakksmýrr in *Egils saga*, appear here as relatives of Kormákr and become embroiled in the tale's major conflict (239). In *Kormáks saga*, Steinarr is a poet, and rather more successful in his duels with Bersi than Kormákr is; his victory in Chapter 12 is attributed to a combination of understanding of the proper rituals involved and successful navigation of the coastal space in which it takes place (249-50). *Kormáks saga* shares many of the concerns of *Egils saga*, but its trajectory is quite different. It takes as its subject a settlement narrative, presents us with characters firmly rooted in that narrative, who both represent and uphold the social framework, and then through its hero aggressively challenges the established order. Kormákr is a compelling hero, but not one who has a place within Icelandic society: he is not Egill, who upholds the land claims of his father, or Grettir, marginal but powerful, or even Víglundr, who loves the land as much as he loves Ketilríðr. *Kormáks saga* is a work which shows an awareness of sea and coastline, and particularly of ecotonal spaces like banks and islands; which makes reference to these features in order to establish the major concerns of the narrative as well as the

social standing of its protagonist; and which demonstrates the potential for these features to be used in verse as a means of expressing and enacting conflict.

The Poetry of Coastal Landscapes

Poetic depictions of the Icelandic coastline, clearly, demonstrate some of the same characteristics as the treatments of highland landscapes we examined in the previous chapter: a preoccupation with boundaries and the consequences of breaking them, the idea of burial as a means of cementing connections with the land, the act of surveying land, and the use of topographical features as aids to memory. These coastal verses also demonstrate and represent, however, some very particular experiences of landscape which only occur in response to this space. There are, evidently, varied and nuanced poetic responses to the Icelandic coastline present in these texts. Association with this inherently unstable space is used in the poetry of *Bjarnar saga* to undermine a rival, but is also used to great emotional and narrative effects elsewhere. We have seen verses mourning those lost at sea in *Víglundar saga* and *Egils saga*, poetic evocations of associated topographical features as part of a larger claim to land in *Egils saga* and *Bárðar saga*, and depictions of coastal resources in verses from *Víglundar saga* and *Bárðar saga*. The interplay of images of land and sea are used to great effect in the poetry of both *Víglundar saga* and *Kormáks saga*, and we find a general interest in transitional, ecotonal spaces like wetlands and islands, banks and borders, in saga verse. As in the case of other boundaries or marginal spaces, these often serve as a convenient site for conflict, and the edge of the land may be evoked as a means of expressing internal conflicts or personal restrictions. The sense of the coastline itself is in certain instances created through evocation and juxtaposition of land and sea—through the interplay of the two. The major texts of this chapter all position their protagonists specifically in relation to the Icelandic coastline in order to establish their social standing, and do so particularly through poetic constructions of that space. In this chapter I have discussed the importance of landscape to narratives of settlement, and the potential of poetry to either justify or undermine claims to land; in Chapter 3, we will turn finally to depictions of farmland and similarly ‘domestic’ landscapes, and consider more explicitly the function of poetry in the context of boundary disputes and other social conflicts.

CHAPTER 3

FIELD, FENCE AND FEUD

In medieval Icelandic texts, Margaret Clunies Ross argues, "the processes of finding suitable land and then settling on it are represented as the major means by which settlers engage with their physical environment" (*Prolonged Echoes* II, 164). The landscapes I will examine in this chapter, however, are already settled: the verses of the *Íslendingasögur* are filled with references to land that is owned, worked and inhabited. Having established in the previous two chapters the types of landscapes—mountainous and coastal—that constitute the bounds of 'owned' land, it seems appropriate to turn in this final section to poetic depictions of agricultural space in the sagas. Once again, the verses with which we will be dealing initially require some definition. When we think broadly about agricultural poetry, two literary 'modes' spring immediately to mind, both of which emerged from the classical European tradition. The first of these is the pastoral, a term which in its original form described the body of poetry, beginning with the *Idylls* of Theocritus and given clearer shape in Virgil's *Eclogues*, which deals with rural life and setting.[28] This is literature built on a principle of contrast: Terry Gifford describes the pastoral as having in its earliest form exploited a tension "between the life of the court and the life of the shepherd, between people and nature, between retreat and return" (15). Laurence Lerner, meanwhile, identified nostalgia as "the basic emotion of pastoral" (41); an appreciation for and idealisation of a 'simpler' lifestyle emerges strongly in this type of poetry.

Greg Garrard argues that pastoral is a "construction of nature … suited to long-settled and domesticated landscapes" (67), an assessment that perhaps goes some way to explaining the very different construction that we find in the texts of medieval Iceland, which as we have seen are deeply concerned with the initial process of settlement. The appeal of agricultural land in Icelandic poetry, of course, is that it lies at the centre of that society, as opposed to removed from it, and thus is not characterised by that contrast between urban and rural. Consequently, it lacks

[28] The defining characteristics of pastoral literature—and, consequently, which texts may or may not be defined as such—has of course been widely debated. See, for example, discussions in Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (1999); Paul Joel Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (1997); and Ken Hiltner, *What Else Is Pastoral?* (2011).

much of the nostalgia and idealism we are used to finding in poetic treatments of this space. In this respect, the agricultural verses of medieval Iceland have more in common with the second literary mode often associated with this type of landscape—the poetry derived from Virgil's *Georgics*, which is more concerned with the processes involved in working the land. The emphasis is active, rather than passive: Georgic poetry, as Ken Hiltner describes it, is "distinguished [from pastoral poetry] by aggressive cultivation and working of the soil, rather than merely letting sheep graze on enclosed land" (161). In Virgil's work, Anthony Low observes, farming is conceived of through metaphor as "a heroic activity, a kind of constructive warfare in which farmer and ox may labor together as fellow-soldiers" (8). Though certain verses in the *Íslendingasögur* do make references to agricultural practices, however, their treatment of these landscapes is informed more strongly by a consciousness of *ownership*. These are verses steeped in the major conflicts of Icelandic society: the legal aspects that have emerged in relation to mountainous or coastal landscapes are here most explicit, and depictions of fields and meadows are, as we will see, often qualified or transformed by the threat of violence. The concerns of these poems are largely territorial.

Two aspects of Icelandic geography in particular contribute to the attitudes toward agricultural land that we find in the medieval literature. The first, which I noted previously in Chapter 1, is the finite amount of fertile, habitable land available due to the topography of the island's interior; the second is the relative harshness of the climate and the length of the seasons, which must have informed agricultural practices and techniques. In *Grágás*, we find a consciousness of the need to work any available fertile land: "þat er mælt. er engi maðr scal legia bolstað sin ileg [it is said that no man shall allow his land to lie in waste]" (92). "The laws," William Ian Miller stresses, "were greatly concerned with getting the maximum productivity out of the miserably volcanic soils in a short growing season" ('Home and Homelessness' 126). Prescriptions are made for the protection of agricultural land in particular: use of someone else's land without permission requires compensation regardless of whether the perpetrator profits from it (*Grágás* 93), and instructions for the building of legal walls are given in detail (*Grágás* 95-96). "Hverr maðr [Every man]," we are told, "a jarðar avoxt isino landi allan [owns all produce of the earth on his land]" (*Grágás* 94). These are the landscapes that are of most value to the

settlers, and which consequently lie at the centre of major conflicts. The boundaries that emerge in these agricultural landscapes again provide material for verse composition, but with even greater potential for conflict, since a disputed boundary in the context of the social centre is both a direct threat to personal livelihood and social stability, and a challenge to the honour of the individual.

Boundaries are, of course, crucial to our idea of what constitutes an agricultural landscape, since demarcation is so heavily emphasised in legal material relating to land ownership, but definitions like Kirsten Hastrup's *innangarðs*, set against the *útangarðs* (*Island of Anthropology* 28), do not seem sufficient to indicate the variety of landscapes encompassed by this agricultural system. As Gro Steinsland has observed, there are limitations to models of the medieval Icelandic worldview based entirely on binary oppositions (143). "Grain cultivation and animal husbandry were the basic means of providing sustenance," Eljas Ormann tells us, "but were complemented, according to local conditions, by various forms of hunting, fishing and gathering" (250). Icelandic agricultural practices were not limited to land immediately surrounding the farm, but could and did make use of less fertile ground as additional, secondary resources. Ingvild Øye uses the term "utmark" to denote "natural-geographical environments such as forests, moorland, mountains and coastal areas, and economic, social and cultural aspects of these landscapes as part of agricultural systems, as a complementary component to the infield" (9). Many of these spaces emerge also in verses in the *Íslendingasögur*. The fact that land is taken *milli fjalls ok fjǫru*, as we have seen, ensures that there are parts of the landscape—the highlands and the shore—at which laws of ownership are particularly complicated, and which prompt lengthy explication in the legal codes. Spaces which we might consider part of the *utmark*, or outfield, are points at which we might expect further potential for encounters and conflicts.

In poetic depictions of agricultural land, we find perhaps the broadest range of vocabulary applied to the landscapes in question. The term *garðr*, unsurprisingly, occurs often at the centre of legal conflicts. In reference to the land itself, we find common terms like *tún* and *akr*, meadow and crops, but also *vǫllr*, *fold*, *taða* and *trǫð*, as well as more general descriptors for 'earth' and 'ground'. The landscapes that we might consider to be agricultural are, moreover, varied by the nature of the Icelandic agricultural system, and those 'supplementary' resources discussed by

Ormann and Øye. For this reason, I will begin my examination of agricultural poetry with a survey of some of the features and spaces that emerge in the sagas, with particular reference to four *lausavísur* from *Víglundar saga*, *Egils saga*, *Kormáks saga*, and *Gísla saga*. From there, I will move on to discuss the major text of this chapter, *Víga-Glúms saga*, in which poetry is employed powerfully to express the identity of the protagonist with the land he owns, before concluding with a discussion of the prominence of boundaries and conflict in saga verse.

The Spaces of Agricultural Poetry

Surely the most memorable and lauded instance of appreciation for landscape in the *Íslendingasögur* is the scene in *Njáls saga* in which Gunnarr of Hlíðarendi contemplates the home he is about to depart. Forced to leave Iceland for three years and warned by Njáll that, "ef þú ferr eigi útan ok rýfr sætt þína, þá muntu drepinn vera hér á landi [if you don't go abroad and you break your settlement, then you will be killed here in this land]" (182), Gunnarr surveys the landscape of Hlíðarendi as he rides away, and is compelled to turn back:

> Honum varð litit upp til hlíðarinnar ok bœjarins at Hlíðarenda ok mælti: "Fǫgr er hlíðin, svá at mér hefir hon aldri jafnfögr sýnzk, bleikir akrar ok slegin tún, ok mun ek ríða heim aptr ok fara hvergi." (182)
>
> [He looked up towards the slopes and the farm at Hlíðarendi and said, "So fair is the slope—to me, it has never seemed so fair—pale fields and mown meadows, that I will ride home now and go nowhere."]

The nineteenth-century poet Jónas Hallgrímsson appropriated this image of the saga protagonist's refusal to leave Iceland as the central tenet in his poem 'Gunnarshólmi' (1838), in which it is imbued strongly with nationalistic feeling: "Því Gunnar vildi heldur bíða hel, / en horfinn vera fósturjarðarströndum [Thus Gunnar would rather wait for death, / than be turned from the shores of his native land]" (ll. 67-68). In *Njáls saga,* Gunnarr's attachment is to a particular part of the Icelandic landscape, and his identity with the land is undoubtedly tied to his sense of ownership. The appeal of Hlíðarendi is that it belongs specifically to Gunnarr. It is *his* land that he refuses to relinquish: "hlíðarinnar [the slopes]" are paired with "bœjarins [the farm]", and the vocabulary employed creates the impression of a distinctly agricultural

space. The sense of aesthetic appreciation is qualified somewhat by the reference to "bleikar akrar ok slegin tún [pale fields and mown meadows]", whose beauty seems to lie primarily in their potential for harvest. We have seen the term *akr* already in Verse 5 of *Grettis saga*, used to refer to the fertile land that is denied to the protagonist's great-grandfather when he settles in Iceland. It is a word which is often translated simply as 'field', but seems to imply cultivated land and crops in particular; interestingly, *akr* is listed alongside terms like "barr [barley]" (1.1), "sæði [seed]" (1.1) and "korn [corn]" (1.4) in the 'Sáðs heiti' found in one manuscript of Snorri's *Edda*.

The *tún* seems to refer rather to an enclosed or hedged plot of land; that the adjective "slegin [mown]" is applied to it in this particular passage suggests a piece of grassland. In *Víglundar saga*, the *tún* acts as a transitional space in the course of the protagonist's forced departure from Iceland: we are told of Víglundr and Ketilríðr that "Þau skildu í túninu úti [they parted out in the meadow]" (98). We have seen already that *Víglundar saga* is strongly informed by an awareness of space and the relative positioning of its characters, with the result that physical distance from land is used to express separation from the hero's intended; we will recall, too, Ketilríðr's lament that she is unable to follow him any further than she does (99). Verse 7 of the saga is deliberately framed by a movement beyond the *garðr*. "En er þeir váru komnir skammt ór garði [And when they had come a short way out from the farm]," we are told, "þá kvað Víglundr vísu [then Víglundr spoke a verse]" (99):

Stóðum tvau í túni;	We stood, two of us, in the meadow;
tók Hlín um mik sínum	Hlín took me in her
höndum, haukligt kvendi,	arms, hawk-like woman,
hárfögr ok grét sáran;	fair-haired, and wept sorely;
títt flugu tár um tróðu,	tears often flowed from wood,
til segir harmr um vilja;	sorrow to speak of what she wanted;
strauk með drifhvítum dúki	the girl stroked with drift-white
drós um hvarminn ljósa.	handkerchief her bright eyes.

[We stood, two of us, in the meadow; the fair-haired woman (Hlín) took me in her arms, hawk-like woman, and wept sorely; tears often flowed from the

> woman (wood), sorrow to speak of what she wanted; the girl stroked her bright eyes with drift-white handkerchief.]

We begin to see already the different spaces of what we might deem agricultural land; this description of movement outwards from the farm as Víglundr departs creates a clear sense of the centre. Here the *tún* is the setting for their tearful farewell; its placement in the opening line associates the space decisively with "tvau [the two of us]" (7.1), and with Víglundr's life and lands in Iceland. The verb *standa* in the opening line is not quite the defiant assertion of presence it would be in the present tense, but rather reinforces the sense of Víglundr's subsequent displacement. The evocation of the meadow in this context is very much consistent with the use of landscape in *Víglundar saga* that we identified in the previous chapter: as a means of positioning its protagonists, and as a point of reference for the expression of their emotions.

The verses of the *Íslendingasögur* present a variety of responses to agricultural landscapes, however, beyond the attachment to land and lady expressed in this instance, all of which demonstrate slightly different ways of engaging with the physical environment. In the settlement narratives of the previous chapter we saw the value of fertile land emphasised repeatedly; it is unsurprising that we should find expressions of conflict over land in which the speakers attempt to reassert ownership. As Ormann points out, too, the social position of an individual was in large part predicated "on the size of the landed property owned or controlled by them" (303). Consequently, any threat to ownership or inheritance would have represented not only a slight to the honour of that person, but a challenge to their status in society. The value of land in the *Íslendingasögur* lies not only in the fertility of the soil—in its physical quality and potential for harvest—but also in the respect and social capital it represents for its owner.

Verse 26 of *Egils saga* is a powerful example of voicing a legal grievance through poetry:

Erfingi réð arfi	A false heir wreaks havoc
arfljúgr fyrir mér svarfa,	with my inheritance,
mœti ek hans ok heitum	I meet with his vows
hótun, Þyrnifótar;	and threatening, [heir] of Thorn-Foot;

nærgi er simla sorgar	whenever such plunder of the sorrow
slíkt rán, ek gef hánum,	of oxen is—I give to him
vér deildum, fjǫt foldar,	feet of the field we disputed,
fold væringja, goldit.	the field-guard—repaid.

[A false heir of Thorn-Foot wreaks havoc with my inheritance, I meet with his vows and threatening; whenever such plunder of the land (sorrow of oxen) is repaid, I give to him feet of the field we disputed, the snake (field-guard).]

Egill's opponent in this case, Ǫnundr, is immediately established and almost as quickly undermined: "erfingi [heir]" (26.1) in the next line becomes "arfljúgr [false heir]" (26.2), an interesting compound that combines the *arfr*, 'inheritance', identified in the opening line with the word for 'liar', *ljúgr*. The use of possessive pronouns over successive lines sets "arfi … mér [my inheritance]" (26.1-2) against "hans ok heitum / hótun [his vows and threatening]" (26.3-4), and Ǫnundr's possession of the land is characterised as *rán*—'plunder' or 'theft' (26.6). Subsequently, we gain a clearer sense of the space in question: the kenning in line 5—"simla sorgar [the sorrow of oxen]"—seems specifically to evoke worked, agricultural land. This is reinforced subsequently by the repeated use of *fold* to refer to the landscape, a term which Cleasby and Vigfússon render as "a field of soft grass" and note is frequently found in poetry ('fold, f.'); in this instance, the word is applied both to the land in question (26.7) and used as a component in the kenning Egill applies to his enemy (26.8).

Through juxtaposition and *aðalhending*, moreover, *fold* and *goldit* are aligned, reinforcing the sense of the need for legal redress. Miller has observed the centrality of the notion of requital and repayment to the Icelandic model of feud, "captured variously in the verbs *launa* (to repay, requite), *gjalda* (to repay, return, to pay), and *gefa* (to give)" (*Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* 183). We find two of these verbs in the second half of the verse: first when Egill declares, "ek gef hánum … fjǫt foldar [I give to him feet of the field]" (26.6-7), and then in the final line when he declares the *rán* "goldit [repaid]" (26.8). This intention to 'give land' to his enemy at once calls to mind that act of allotting land described in Skalla-Grímr's *landnám*, and carries an underlying threat of violence. There is surely an implication here that the feet of

land promised would be used for burial. The fact that the past participle of *gjalda*—*goldit*—is delayed to the end of the very last line serves to heighten its impact; with the placement of the auxiliary verb in line 5, the act of repayment frames the second half of the verse.

Poetic depictions of agricultural landscapes, as we will see, are often qualified by threat of conflict. We find another example of a dispute over owned land in Verse 49 of *Kormáks saga*. Here Bersi expresses a particular frustration with his brother-in-law, Váli, for making use of his fields without permission:

Veitk, at Váli beitir	I know that Váli grazes,
vegstórr tǫður órar,	great in honour, on our infields,
oss vill heldr enn hvassi	the fierce helm-wearer wants rather
hjalmnjótr troða und fótum;	to tread us underfoot; I have
opt hefk ýfzk, þás heiptir	often become troubled, when feuds
unnsólar galtk runnum,	I repaid to bushes of the wave's sun—
rauðk á brynju beiði	I reddened the snake of wounds
benja linn, of minna.	on the mail-wearer—I remembered.

> [I know that Váli grazes, great in honour, on our infields, the fierce warrior (helm-wearer) wants rather to tread us underfoot; I have often become troubled, when I remembered feuds I repaid to men (bushes of gold {the wave's sun}); I reddened the sword (snake of wounds) on the warrior (mail-wearer).]

Here, the term *taða* in line 2 refers particularly to the homefield, or infield, and is immediately qualified by the possessive "órar [our]" (49.2); the encroachment of Váli's livestock upon Bersi's land seems particularly intrusive in light of the proximity to his home. The physical nature of the offence is further reinforced by the declaration that his brother-in-law desires "oss … troða und fótum [to tread us underfoot]" (49.3-4), which both conceives of the action as a preface to more direct violence, and also seems to evoke the notion of walking as a means of claiming land. The second half of the poem dwells uncomfortably on the prospect of further bloodshed, while at the same time conceiving of physical injury as a form of repayment (49.4-8). Both "veitk [I know]" (49.1) and "galtk [I repaid]" (49.6)—once again, from *gjalda*—reinforce the sense that this is a legal grievance expressed.

This verse recounts yet another situation for which we find stipulations in *Grágás*. The section dedicated to grazing rights outlines the penalties for allowing livestock to stray: "Ef maðr rekr fe sitt i anars manz land eða lætr reka sva at hann vili anars eigin beita oc verþi af þvi v. aura scaðe eða meire oc varðar honom fiorbaugs garð [If a man drives his livestock onto another man's land or has it driven in order to graze on another's property, and damage worth five ounces or more results, then his penalty is lesser outlawry]" (92). Intention is, of course, important in determining penalty here, since the transgression is by proxy rather than committed directly by the individual in question. The verb *beita*, which occurs in line 1 of the poem, is used here in the legal text also; interestingly, the phrase *beita upp* is employed in various sagas to mean 'to exhaust [land] by overgrazing' (it is applied, for example, to "eng" in *Egils saga* 168, "eng" and "akr" in *Svarfdæla saga* 158, and "vǫllr" in *Reykdæla saga* 196). There is certainly a consciousness in this verse of the potential impact of Váli's actions, and the threat that he poses to Bersi's success and wellbeing.

In *Gísla saga*, meanwhile, we find a particularly interesting treatment of agricultural land in poetry: Verse 11 represents the means of admission and confirmation of the protagonist's guilt, and thus is fundamental to the social tensions of this particular narrative.[29] Following the murder and burial by Gísli of his brother-in-law, we are told that he "horfir á hauginn Þorgríms; snær var á jǫrðu, en konur sátu up í brekkuna, Þórdís systir hans ok margar aðrar [turned towards Þorgrímr's mound; snow was on the ground, and the women sat up on the slope, his sister Þórdís and many others]" (58). It is from this spot that he composes the following verse:

Teina sák í túni	I saw shoots in the meadow of
tál-gríms vinar fǫlu,	the grim traitor of the giantess's friend
Gauts þess 's geig of veittak	—I gave that battle-gleam
gunnbliks þáamiklu;	of Gautr serious hurt—greatly thawed;
nú hefr gnýstœrir geira	now has the stirrer of the clash of spears
grímu Þrótt of sóttan,	sought helmeted Þróttr,

[29] The relationship between verse and prose in *Gísla saga* has often been discussed, and it is generally agreed that the poetry was composed at some point between the tenth century and the composition of the saga itself (Björn Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson xxi-xli); P.S. Langeslag describes the text as "a good example of the classical paradigm in which the compiler builds his prose narrative around pre-existing verse" ('Dream Women' 47).

þann lét lundr of lendan	the tree of the river-flames
landkostuð ábranda.	gave that land-valuer the fields.

[I saw shoots in the meadow of grim Þórr (traitor of the giant {giantess's friend}), greatly thawed, I gave that warrior (shield {battle-gleam} of Óðinn {Gautr}) serious hurt; now the warrior (stirrer of battle {the clash of spears}) has sought the warrior (helmeted Óðinn {Þróttr}), the man (tree of gold {river-flames}) gave that land-valuer the fields.]

Once again, this is a poem of two halves. The first *helmingr* foregrounds the act of viewing the landscape with the use of the first person "*sák* [I saw]" (11.1), and presents an image of regrowth, of shoots emerging "í túni … þáamiklu [in the greatly thawed meadow]" (11.1-4), which is set strikingly against the poet's admission of culpability for a man's death. The disparity between verse and prose here is important: the space to which Gísli refers is identified explicitly as *haugr*, a burial mound, in the saga narrative, and the construction of that mound is described at length (55-56). It is Gísli who initiates the act, expresses the need "bjóðask at heygja Þorgrím [to volunteer to bury Þorgrímr]" (55) and performs the final task when they raise the mound at Sæból. In the first line of the verse, however, the space he describes is conceived of as a *tún*—a field or meadow. The play on Þorgrímr's name in the second line—pairing a kenning for Þórr with the adjective *grímr*—makes quite clear that the space described, whether meadow or mound, belongs to him.

This verse stands apart from the *haugbrot* verses of *Grettis saga* and *Harðar saga*, or any of the verses spoken by *haugbúar*; it represents rather a poetic transformation of the field into a grave for one's enemies. Perhaps the most interesting discrepancy between verse and prose here is the reference to Þorgrímr as "landkostuð [land-valuer]" (11.8), which taken in the most literal sense seems to imply a dispute over land. This does not align with the circumstances or motivations for Gísli's killing of Þorgrímr given in the prose narrative, but it does recall that characterization of the enemy in the final line of Egill's verse as "fold væringja [field-guard]" (26.8). In both cases, a man who is described in terms of his need for land is given a field by the poet: here, the poet concludes with the assertion that he has "lét … lendan [given land]" (26.7) to Þorgrímr. In Verse 50 of *Kormáks saga*, Bersi expresses fear of death specifically in terms of burial: the possibility that men "skaldi / skapi aldr í

grǫf kaldan [might shape for the poet an age in a cold grave]" (50.5-6). This understanding of burial space as a form of owned land appears to stem from the same place as the passages in *Egils saga* which treat burial mounds as a means of reinforcing land claims, but is cleverly appropriated in these verses as a response to illegal land claims—a fitting end for men who encroach on the land of others. The second half of Gísli's verse is thus concerned, once again, with the need for requital or repayment.

The narrative surrounding this composition, moreover, presents a conspicuous instance of the attachment of a verse to a particular location. The act of looking expressed in the opening line is reinforced not only by the positioning use of *horfa*, 'to turn towards', immediately prior to the composition of the poem, but also by the reiteration of the same process by Þórdís later in the same chapter. While travelling with her new husband, Bǫrkr, they come upon Þorgrímr's burial place: "Þá stingr hon við fótum ok kvezk eigi fara lengra; segir hon nú ok, hvat Gísli hafði kveðit, þá er hann leit hauginn Þorgríms, ok kveðr fyrir honum vísuna [Then she stopped and said she would go no further; she also repeated now what Gísli had said when he looked at Þorgrímr's burial mound, and recited the verse for him]" (60). The *haugr* thus becomes not only a monument to the deceased, but a visual prompt for the recitation of a particular verse, and thus by extension a mental and physical record of Gísli's guilt. The description of the *tún* as "þáamiklu [greatly thawed]" (11.4) in the fourth line, then, is perhaps suggestive of the impending exposure of Gísli's crime; snow in the Icelandic sagas often represents a physical barrier or means of concealment. In the narrative of *Gísla saga*, we are told that "aldri festi snæ útan ok sunnan á haugi Þorgríms ok eigi fraus [snow never settled out on the south side of Þorgrímr's mound and it did not freeze]", a circumstance that is attributed to the favour of Freyr (57)—interesting, in view of the association of that god with the fertility of land. This is a powerful example of a landscape feature presented in a saga as a locus for memory.

Already, we can see the potential for poetry to demonstrate the different spaces of agricultural land, to express social and legal grievances in relation to these spaces, and in doing so to defend rights to ownership of that land. All these qualities are, as we will see, characteristic of the verses of *Víga-Glúms saga*, a text which concerns itself particularly with ownership and possession of land, and which demonstrates

particularly well the power of skaldic verse as a medium to express legal grievances and to enact the subsequent conflicts. As we will see, it is primarily through verse that the protagonist of this saga negotiates his relationship with the land he owns—as well as those who seek to challenge his claim to it.

Losing Ground in *Víga-Glúms saga*

In the *Íslendingasögur*, Clunies Ross argues, any sense of identity with place "is always mediated by the sense of satisfaction in land-ownership" (*Prolonged Echoes* II, 165). This is particularly true of *Víga-Glúms saga*, a text which concerns itself primarily with attempts by its protagonist, Glúmr Eyjólfsson, to maintain ownership of his land and farm in Eyjafjǫrðr. Consequently, it is also a text in which the use of poetry as a means of expressing legal grievances and conflicts is particularly evident. In spite of a tendency in scholarship to discuss the text in terms of distinct episodes—Gabriel Turville-Petre, for example, divided it into six parts ('Introduction' ix-x)—*Víga-Glúms saga* is in its major preoccupations and overall trajectory strikingly coherent. In her discussion of the influence of *Rígsþula* on the text, Ursula Dronke observed that the extant verses share its overall concern with "Glúmr's possession and loss of Þverárland" (63). Its landscapes are interesting to us on a number of levels: agricultural land is particularly prominent in *Víga-Glúms saga*, as is a consciousness of the physical bounds of that space, and a sense of the different types and uses of owned land. This text makes explicit many of the tendencies of saga verse that have emerged over the course of the previous two chapters, as we will see, but also demonstrates particularly well the potential for poetry to function in defence of property. We find here both a keen sense of identity with the local landscape, and strong spatial and legal dimensions to the verses in question.

Suggested dates for the composition of *Víga-Glúms saga* have tended to fall somewhere in the first half of the thirteenth century (Jónas Kristjánsson xlix-liii); in his edition of the text, Turville-Petre proposed 1230-1240 ('Introduction' xxii). In connection with his argument for the origins of the Skúta episode in *Víga-Glúms saga* and based on his assessment of *Reykdœla saga,* Theodore Andersson has suggested a particularly early dating of between 1207 and c. 1220 ('*Víga-Glúms saga*' 36). The full text of the saga is preserved only in the fourteenth-century

Möðruvallabók (AM 132 fol.), and in numerous paper copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries derived from that manuscript (Turville-Petre, 'Introduction' li). Fragments of a longer version of the text also survive in Vatnshyrna (AM 564 a 4to) and in AM 445 c 4to, both of which have been dated between the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century (*ONP* 256).

Initially, analysis of *Víga-Glúms saga* requires a sense of what is missing from the text. In the first chapter, we are introduced to Ingjaldr and his son Eyjólfr, respectively grandfather and father of Glúmr, who "bjó at Þverá í Eyjafirði [dwelt at Þverá í Eyjafjǫrðr]" (3). The genealogy is familiar; the scene itself is not. The ship that arrives in Eyjafjǫrðr in this initial scene is not bringing the ancestors of the saga protagonist to take land in Iceland; instead, it carries a man named Hreiðarr, who we are told "átti bú á Vǫrs í Nóregi [had a farm in Vǫrs in Norway]" (4). *Grettis saga*, we will recall, presents that powerful image of Ǫnundr standing on the prow of a ship, making his belated journey from Norway to Iceland; *Egils saga* devotes its first thirty chapters to an account of Kveld-Úlfr and Skalla-Grímr, and gives particular prominence to their *landnám*. By contrast, the description of Ingjaldr in the first line of *Víga-Glúms saga* as "sonr Helga ins magra [son of Helgi the lean]" (3) is the only explicit reference to the figure who originally settled the land on which Ingjaldr, and subsequently Glúmr, resides. Helgi's arrival in Iceland is recounted separately in *Landnámabók*, where we are told,

> Helgi tók land fyrir útan í Hrísey, en fyrir innan Svarfaðardal; hann var enn fyrsta vetr á Hámundarstǫðum. Þeir fengu vetr mikinn. Um várit gekk Helgi upp á Sólarfjǫll; þá sá hann, at svartara var miklu at sjá inn til fjarðarins, er þeir kǫlluðu Eyjafjǫrð af eyjum þeim, er þar lágu úti fyrir. … Helgi kannaði sumarit herað allt ok nam allan Eyjafjǫrð milli Sigluness ok Reynisness ok gerði eld mikinn við hvern vatsós ok helgaði sér svá allt herað. (250-252)
>
> [Helgi took land above Hrísey, and below Svarfaðardalr; he spent the first winter at Hámundarstaðir. They suffered a heavy winter. In the spring Helgi went up into Sólarfjǫll; then he saw that it was much blacker to look inwards to the fjord, which they called Eyjafjǫrðr because of the islands that lay out from it. … In the summer Helgi explored all the districts and took all of

> Eyjafjǫrðr between Siglunes and Reynisnes and made great fires at each estuary and thus appropriated for himself all the districts.]

Aspects of Helgi's *landnám* in this passage are certainly relevant to ideas expressed in *Víga-Glúms saga*, and to our consideration of landscape in that text. As in Skalla-Grímr's claim, the act is couched in terms of the prospects of the land, which are initially limited by the harshness of the winter: the assertion that "svartara var miklu [it was much blacker]" (250) indicates that the land is more sheltered from snow further into the fjord, and Helgi relocates accordingly. Prior to the physical exploration of and movement through the lands he takes, Helgi's ascent to higher ground in Sólarfjǫll allows him to survey the landscape in terms of its prospects, the verb *sjá*, 'to see', preceding *kanna*, 'to search, expore'. The *landnám* itself follows both a visual and physical assessment of the landscape. Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson describes the act of carrying fire around as "an active and well-known custom to take possession of land" ('Old Norse Religion' 313); there is surely something significant, too, in the image we have seen of fires burning on the headland in *Grettis saga* (57) and in various *haugar* (*Eyrbyggja saga* 19, *Njáls saga* 336). This image of fire in the context of land-taking emerges again at the end of *Víga-Glúms saga*, as we will see. The verb *helga* means 'to hallow, or sanctify', but with specific connotations of land-taking and ownership, reinforced here by use of the reflexive "sér" (252).

We are told, too, in *Landnámabók*, that "Helgi var blandinn mjǫk í trú [Helgi was very mixed in faith]" (250), a characteristic that initially creates obstacles to his settlement in guiding his ship too far north, and which parallels those tensions in *Víga-Glúms saga* between "personal and familial adherence to particular gods" (Dubois 174) that have received particular critical attention.[30] A consciousness of the position of this settlement in the north of Iceland is, moreover, evident in the question posed to Helgi en route: "fréttin vísaði honum norðr um landit. Þá spurði Hrólfr son hans, hvárt Helgi mundi halda í Dumbshaf, ef Þórr vísaði honum þangat [the enquiry guided him north in the land. Then his son Hrólfr asked whether Helgi would hold course to Dumbshaf (the Arctic Ocean), if Þórr showed him to that

[30] See, for example, Thomas Dubois, *Nordic Religions* (1999) 184-192; Turville-Petre, 'Introduction' (1960) xii-xiv; and Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, 'Old Norse Religion' (1990) 308-314, and 'Myth and Ritual' (1998).

place]" (250). Eyjafjǫrðr is not the wetlands of *Egils saga* or the highlands of *Grettis saga*, and the process of settlement implied here is noticeably different—it is not, however, the process of settlement with which *Víga-Glúms saga* is for the most part concerned. Indeed, the text fails to include any description of that first journey from Norway to Iceland.

The fact the saga narrative chooses to omit the events of Helgi's land-taking in spite of his prominence in narratives of settlement would seem to suggest a different point of reference for *Víga-Glúms saga.*[31] This is clear from its opening chapter: instead of an account of the foundation of Ingjaldr's farmstead, we begin with an entreaty to hospitality, expressed by Eyjólfr to his father on Hreiðarr's behalf (4). Ingjaldr agrees to house Hreiðarr, and Hreiðarr subsequently expresses his admiration for Þverá: "Ek hefi komit á nǫkkura bœi hér í Eyjafirði, þá er beztir eru, ok sé ek engi herbergi slík sem hér [I have visited some of the farms here in Eyjafjǫrðr, those that are best, and I haven't seen lodgings like there are here]" (5). The purpose of this visit seems initially to be to establish Ingjaldr's social standing and reputation in the area, and Hreiðarr does so by comparing Þverá to other farms he has visited. The text thus represents a movement away from the usual trajectory of the *Íslendingasögur* in its concern with *maintaining* ownership of land and property rather than with the initial act of laying claim to it. The act of speaking verse is, as we will see, once again central to the major preoccupation of the text.

What happens, then, when the story begins at a point at which ownership and land rights are assumed, rather than in the process of being established? The first five chapters of *Víga-Glúms saga* describe Eyjólfr's marriage and settlement at Þverá after his father's death, and introduce his children. Of one of Glúmr's brothers, we are told, "Vigfúss andaðisk litlu síðar en hann kvángaðisk ok átti barn eitt, ok lifði þat litlu lengr en hann [Vigfúss died shortly after he married, and had one child which lived only a little longer than him]" (14-15). The result is that Vigfúss' share of the land at Þverá falls to his wife, and by extension, under the influence of her father Þorkell and her brother Sigmundr. It is significant that the text establishes these challengers to Glúmr's land claim prior to his departure from Iceland, and then

[31] Jónas Kristjánsson in his edition of the text noted that Helgi "er víða getið í fornum ritum [is widely referenced in old texts]" (3). In addition to this episode in *Landnámabók*, Helgi appears, for example, in the opening chapters of *Laxdæla saga* (3, 6, 11), in Chapter 8 of *Grettis saga* (20-21), and in Chapter 14 of *Svarfdæla saga* (158).

resumes its account of them immediately upon his return; the conflicts in *Víga-Glúms saga* are not caused or even enabled by Glúmr's absence. Here, the protagonist's desire to go abroad is expressed with an awareness of what that means: "en ek nenni eigi at þola ágang Sigmundi [I cannot bear to suffer invasion by Sigmundr]," Glúmr tells his mother, "en ek sé mik enn vanfœran í mót honum. En lógaðu eigi landinu, þó at þrøngt verði kosti þínum [but I can see I am still lacking in strength against him. But don't part with the land, even if your position becomes tight]" (16). The language here emphasises Sigmundr's physical encroachment on their property: the act itself is rendered as *ágangr*, literally 'a movement towards'. Glúmr is positioned *í mót*, against, his rival, and the potential for Ástríðr's position to become *þrøngr*—close, tight, or crowded—suggests a narrowing of the space she occupies as well as a difficult situation.

Turville-Petre aligned Glúmr's return to Iceland in Chapter 7 with the return of the story to its expected trajectory, the point at which he suggested it becomes "an unembellished and straightforward family saga" ('Traditions' 56). Details of Glúmr's visit to his maternal grandfather, however, neatly foreshadow aspects of his conflicts in Iceland, and anticipate the skills he requires to overcome them. Glúmr's realization that he is not yet strong enough to challenge his rival informs his decision to leave; the implication, then, is that travel abroad will ultimately enable Glúmr to defend his property at home. This consciousness of the protagonist as yet untested is reinforced when he arrives at the hall of his grandfather, Vigfúss, in Norway to find that his identity is in doubt (17). This scene, too, is drawn with particular attention to space and relative position, and a consciousness of what it means to speak out against a challenger. Disgruntled and relegated to a seat "á inn óœðra bekk útarliga [on the lower bench, near the entrance]", Glúmr witnesses the entrance of the *berserkr* Bjǫrn into the hall (17). The physical conflict that ensues is expressed deliberately in terms of a negotiation of that space: Bjǫrn first "ferr útar með … bekk [moves outwards along the bench]" (18) to Glúmr, before Glúmr drives him back with physical blows, "þar til at hann kom út fyrir dyrr [until he was outside the door]" (19). The encounter serves both as a demonstration of the protagonist's strength, and as evidence of his lineage. Glúmr confirms his identity by performing it in front of witnesses: as a result of this physical ejection of the *berserkr* from the hall, Vigfúss declares that Glúmr "nú hafa raun til gǫrt, at hann var hans ættar [had

now given proof that he was of his family]" (19). The priorities of the narrative are evident throughout. In spite of Vigfúss' offer of succession, Glúmr insists upon returning to Iceland—"at eigi eignaðisk þeir fǫðurleifð hans, er hann ann eigi at njóta [so that his father's inheritance would not come into the possession of those whom he did not want to use it]" (19).

Chapter 7 opens, fittingly, with a declaration of movement: "Nú [Now]," we are told, "ferr Glúmr út til Íslands ok heim til Þverár [Glúmr went out to Iceland and home to Þverá]" (20). He is greeted by Ástríðr, who "sagði ójafnað þeira feðga [spoke of the unequal share of father and son (Þorkell and Sigmundr)]" that has continued in her son's absence (20). Once again, the conflict is conceived of in spatial terms, as a need "at ganga þeim í móti [to go against them]" (20). Significantly, the first thing that Glúmr does after speaking with his mother is to issue a direct challenge to Þorkell and Sigmundr by means of a verse he composes. "Síðan reið hann heim at garði [Afterwards, he rode home to the farm]," we are told. "Þá sá hann, at fœrðr var garðrinn ok gengit á hans hlut, ok þá kvað hann vísu [Then he saw that the fence had been changed and moved onto his share, and then he spoke a verse]" (20). Here we see multiple meanings of the term *garðr*: it is clear that in the first line the term is synonymous with the home to which Glúmr rides, signifying the farm as a whole—the land that it encompasses, as opposed to a human dwelling place specifically—where in the second line the assertion that the *garðr* has been physically moved makes clear that we are dealing with a physical boundary. The acts of walking the boundary, surveying the land, and speaking verse are again aligned.

The verse itself is a powerful expression of Glúmr's suit:

Nær gengr mér ok mínum,	It goes nearer to me and mine,
menþǫll, hjúum ǫllum	necklace-tree, to all the household
þverr við glaum, enn grœni	—joy is diminished—than
garðr an oss of varði.	agreed, the green fence.
Verðr hróðrskotat harðla	It becomes greatly dishonoured—
hér tínik þat, mínum,	here I recount it—I will not
munat enn of styr stála	then be without trouble in the
starflauss, fǫðurarfi.	stir of steel—my father's inheritance.

> [The green fence goes nearer to me and mine, to all the household, than agreed, woman (necklace-tree); joy is diminished. My father's inheritance becomes greatly dishonoured; here I recount it; I will not then be without trouble in battle (the stir of steel).]

The imagery here recalls Glúmr's parting words to Ástríðr before he left Iceland, Sigmundr's *ágangr* described specifically in terms of the altered boundary. We see again an initial attempt to *locate*: "Nær gengr mér ok mínum [nearer goes to me and mine]," the poem begins (1.1). The sense of something encroaching, something imminent, and a pressing need to respond to it, is evoked powerfully through the movement in this opening line. The subject of this first *helmingr*, "enn grœni garðr", emerges in the fourth line, and the effect is of a wall closing in around them—vaguely claustrophobic, recalling Glúmr's earlier assertion to Ástríðr that her position may become "þrøngt" (16). Proximity to self and possessions is thus foregrounded; position is more important to assert than the existence of the fence itself. This use of the delayed subject is also mirrored in the second half of the poem: Glúmr's sense of familial obligation is expressed through reference to the dishonoured *fǫðurarfr*, inheritance from a father, in the closing line (1.8). Fence and inheritance are deliberately aligned, both in terms of position and significance, the latter dependent on the former. The centrality of the *garðr* to ideas of ownership is again emphasised. Based on the adjective applied we can surmise that this is the border of the *tún*—meadow, or infield—and is comprised of strips of turf. The section on wall-building in *Grágás* states that, "Maðr a at gera lög garð um engi sitt ef hann vill [A man may build a legal wall around his meadow if he wishes]", and specifies that, "hann scal i sino engi marke. velta torfe til garðs [he should dig out turf for the wall within the bounds of his own meadow]" (95).

"Nær" (1.1) and "hér" (1.6) are both positioning, and the possessive "mínum" is repeated over the two halves of the poem (1.1, 1.6). The two assertions of Glúmr's verse—that the fence has been moved, and his father's inheritance dishonoured—thus become inextricable from one another. As Glúmr's lands decrease, so too does his social standing; his identity is rooted in ownership of Þverá. This is precisely one of the circumstances for which the law codes make provision; *Grágás* has a section specific to the unlawful movement of boundary lines or fences. "Ef maðr leynir merki [If a man conceals boundary marks]," it states, "eða villir merke, eða

ferir landz merke, eða scógar, eða engia merki varðar þat fiorbaugs garð hvergi sem þat gorir [or falsifies them, or moves the marks of land or woodland, or the boundaries of meadows, the penalty is lesser outlawry, whoever does it]" (82). The threat of impending conflict is underlined in the poet's closing assertion that, "munat enn of styr stála / starflauss [I will not then be without trouble in the stir of steel]" (1.7-8). On a number of levels, then, this first verse establishes the major preoccupations of the saga as a whole: ownership of land is prioritised, and poetry is the means by which that ownership is expressed and negotiated. This verse contains both an accusation of legal misconduct on the parts of Þorkell and Sigmundr, and a declaration of Glúmr's intention to challenge them on those grounds. Thus when Glúmr says, "hér tínik þat [here I recount it]" (1.6), he is not only asserting his presence, announcing his return to Iceland to defend his inheritance, but also identifying the medium by which he does so. *Here,* in this instance, is both the speaker's physical location and the space of the poem. Through the composition of this verse, effectively, Glúmr makes his case.

Following the composition of this first verse, the narrative diverts to account for the development of the conflict in Glúmr's absence. The foundation of the disputes in *Víga-Glúms saga* is, of course, the conflict over particularly valuable agricultural land. "En þau gœði fylgðu mest Þverárlandi, þat var akr [And the greatest wealth belonging to Þverárland was a field]," we are told, "er kallaðr var Vitazgjafi, því at hann varð aldregi ófrær [which was called Vitazgjafi, because it was never unyielding]" (22). Its value here is couched specifically in terms of the fertility of the land. There is a parallel to be drawn between Vitazgjafi in *Víga-Glúms saga* and Stakksmýrr in *Egils saga*, both of which are sites of particular importance to the inhabitants of the region and become the focus of legal conflicts, which are in turn expressed through verse compositions. We might recall also the *akrar* that Ǫnundr laments leaving in Verse 5 of *Grettis saga*; there would seem to be a sense embedded in the term of its potential for harvest. The famous "bleikir akrar and slegin tún [pale fields and mown meadows]" (182) to which Gunnarr turns in *Njáls saga* suggest through the juxtaposition of the two terms and their qualifiers a contrast between crops yet to be harvested and land that has been worked—both of which have their distinct appeals. This particular *akr* is identified as the major point of contention between Glúmr and Astríðr and Þorkell and his son Sigmundr: though

"honum hafði svá skipt verit með landinu, at sitt sumar hǫfðu hvárir [the land had been divided between them so that they each had it for a summer]" (22), Þorkell denied Ástríðr access while Glúmr was abroad. This conflict over Vitazgjafi reaches a bloody climax when Glúmr slays Sigmundr on the site itself—a powerful image of the bloodying of the field which emerges also in the verses of the saga, as we will see.

It is in the aftermath of Sigmundr's death that Glúmr composes his second verse, once again framed quite deliberately in terms of the claim he is attempting to make: we are told that he had a dream, in which "Hann þóttisk sjá konu eina ganga útan eptir heraðinu, ok stefndi þangat til Þverár [he thought he saw a woman walking in through the district, and she turned directly towards Þverá]", and "hann þóttisk ganga ór garði á mót henni ok bauð henni til sín [he thought he went out of the farm to meet her and invited her to stay with him]" (30). The passage is acutely aware of positioning: the perspective and relative location of Glúmr and the woman are constantly asserted, and Glúmr's movement beyond the boundaries of his farm—"ór garði"—in order to communicate with her is particularly suggestive. It is this dream that Glúmr recounts in his verse:

Fara sák hólms und hjalmi	I saw move under helm
hauks í miklum auka	in vast shape, of the icy hawk's holm,
Jǫrð at Eyjafirði	Jǫrð through Eyjafjǫrðr,
ísungs, fira dísi,	goddess of men,
þá svát dóms í draumi	so that seemed to me then
dals ótta mér þótti	in a dream death-Guðr of the court of
felli-Guðr með fjǫllum,	the dread of bows between mountains—
folkvandar bjóðr, standa.	bidder of battle—to stand.

[I saw a woman (goddess of silver {the ice of the hand <hawk's holm>}), goddess of men, move in vast shape under helm through Eyjafjǫrðr, so that the valkyrie (death-Guðr of the battle {court of the sword <dread of bows>}), bidder of battle, then seemed to me in a dream to stand between mountains.]

An awareness of space is immediately evident; the verbs "fara [to move]" (2.1) and "standa [to stand]" (2.8) bookend the verse and create a clear sense of trajectory and destination. This is poetry very much grounded in the local, recording a journey

through Eyjafjǫrðr that evokes the initial act of exploration so often included as part of the *landnám*. This association is reinforced by the assertion that Glúmr is described as "úti staddr á bœ sínum ok sjá út til fjarðarins [standing outside on his farm and looking out to the fjord]" when he first sees the figure (30)—a movement from fjord to mountains that again evokes the boundaries of owned land. The use of the first person that we find here is particularly prominent in the verses of *Víga-Glúms saga*. In Verse 1 we find an inscription of the process of composition in "tínik [I recount]"; Verse 3, meanwhile, opens with the assertion "metk [I value]" (3.1). Here the operative verb is *sjá*: that commonplace of saga composition—to look, and then speak a verse—is asserted in the poem itself. We are reminded, too, of the compulsion to look out—*líta út*—over land and sea expressed in the verses of *Víglundar saga*; it is surely significant that the act of looking is so often connected to verses describing the landscape. In this instance, Glúmr is bearing witness to the *landnám* that was absent from the opening of the saga; the sense of poetry as a means of witnessing and recording something is clearly present. As Glúmr's eye follows her movement across the land, he effectively performs the same survey of Eyjafjǫrðr that Helgi does in *Landnámabók* (250). This is, in a sense, a prospect poem.

Heimir Pálsson has emphasised the prominence of depictions of mythological females in the verses of this particular saga ('Vísur og dísir' 191), and Verse 9 is a particularly striking example of this. Each *helmingr* contains an extended mythological kenning centred on a powerful female figure: Jǫrð in the first half, and Guðr in the second. This is not, however, quite the same *draumkona* we find in the verses of *Gísla saga*—an omen of the protagonist's impending death—but a figure infused with strength and certainty in the rightness of Glúmr's claim, a warning rather to those who would challenge it. I have already discussed the assocation of women with land in the course of my analysis of *Víglundar saga*, and Roberta Frank has identified the particular role of the figure of Jǫrð in land-taking narratives ('The Lay of the Land' 180). This choice of name for the goddess in Glúmr's verse is certainly not a coincidence. The woman who moves "í miklum auka [in vast shape]" (2.2) and stands "með fjǫllum [between mountains]" (2.7) bears a strong resemblance to Hallmundr in *Bergbúa þáttr*, and is almost certainly intended to represent that same connection between people and land. Glúmr identifies her as

hamingja, a guardian spirit, which would certainly seem to have positive implications with regard to his claim. It is worth observing, too, that the term *auki* can be translated specifically 'increase' or 'addition', and that Cleasby and Vigfússon note its use in a metaphorical sense to mean "seeds" or "produce of the earth" ('auki, m.'), both of which seem fitting in light of the protracted conflict over agricultural land.

The kenning applied to Jǫrð seems moreover to evoke specific details of the landscape in question. Jónas Kristjánsson noted in his edition of the text the unusual term "ísungs" (2.4), which he argued is most likely to be a dialectical variation for *ís*, meaning 'ice' (31). *Hólmr hauks*, 'the land of the hawk', is of course the hand; where 'the fire of the hand' would serve as a kenning for 'gold', we seem to have here a kenning for 'silver'. We find very similar imagery employed in a kenning in Verse 16 of *Eyrbyggja saga*: "haukaness … drífu [the snowfall of the hawk's land]" (16.2-4). In this case the term for 'headland', *nes*, is used in place of *hólmr* as the base-word in the kenning for 'hand', and the term *drífa*, meaning 'snowfall', is then used to form a kenning for 'silver'. In the context both of the landscape of Eyjafjǫrðr and the figure to which the descriptor is applied, and reinforced by the juxtaposition of *Eyjafirði* and *ísungs* over successive lines (2.3-4), the image created in Glúmr's verse is particularly compelling. This is not a general landscape, but a specific one—the attachment is explicitly local.

Jǫrð's role here is not, however, solely to provide the connection to that landscape. The fact that she moves "und hjalmi [under helm]" (2.1) is highly suggestive, associating her with the "folkvandar bjóðr [bidder of battle]" (2.8) in the poem's closing line. The woman at the heart of the second *helmingr* is Guðr, another mythological figure—one of the valkyries "gǫrvar at ríða [ready to ride]" in *Vǫluspá* (30.3), and identified by Snorri in *Gylfaginning* (30)—whose name also has an evocative secondary meaning: *guðr* is an older form of *gunnr*, a term for 'battle' (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'gunnr, f.'). There is no clear distinction between the enormous figure who moves across Eyjafjǫrðr and the one who stands between mountains; indeed, the symmetry of the stanza, beginning and ending with the infinitive verbs, reinforces the connection. The conceptual transformation of agricultural land into battlefield is common in saga verse: we see it, for example, sustained in a sequence of verses in Chapter 19 of *Eyrbyggja* saga (40-43), as well as

in the description of "goðreið af trǫð [a ride of gods through the pasture]" (6.4) later in *Víga-Glúms saga*. This image of movement through the *trǫð*—fallow land for grazing livestock—in Verse 6 is qualified by the certainty that "mun sverðabrak verða [there will be a clash of swords]" (6.2). Here in Verse 2, Glúmr expresses both a justification for his killing of Sigmundr and a consciousness of impending conflict that informs the rest of the saga. Transformation of the figure of Jǫrð in the first *helmingr* into the valkyrie Guðr in the second half equivocally connects two actions: the initial taking of land, and the defence of that claim. The closing verb, *standa*, is a decisive assertion of presence.

The major conflicts in *Víga-Glúms saga*, clearly, are rooted in an understanding of and appreciation of a distinct local landscape, and expressed most powerfully through physical and poetic engagement with this space. One of the first examples of this is Glúmr's slaughter of Sigmundr on the field Vitazgjafi. Prior to striking the killing blow, we are told, "Glúmr leit yfir akrinn ok mælti: 'Eigi brásk hann Vitazgjafi enn' [Glúmr looked over the field and said, 'Vitazgjafi has not failed yet']" (28). Glúmr subsequently describes Sigmundr's death to his widow in terms of an inability to leave that place: "Sigmundr er eigi einfœrr af akrinum [Sigmundr is not able to go from the field himself]" (28). Location becomes crucial in this instance to determining the social consequences of the action: Glúmr is successful in the ensuing legal dispute precisely because he claims "hann drepit hafa á eign sinni [to have killed Sigmundr on his own property]", which prevents Þorkell from claiming compensation for his son (32). The issue of ownership is thus both at the heart of this particular conflict, and of central importance to its resolution. By choosing this particular site for his confrontation with Sigmundr, by transforming agricultural field into battlefield, Glúmr successfully reclaims his inheritance. His success here is, of course, the foundation for the underlying tensions of the saga: "heðan frá greri aldregi um heilt með þeim Glúmi ok Esphœlingum [from then on, it was never healed between Glúmr and the Esphœlingar]" (34).

This sense of the landscape both driving and informing the outcome of conflicts persists in the text, and emerges particularly clearly in two subsequent episodes. The first of these takes place in Chapter 16, when hostility develops between the protagonist and Skúta of Mývatn over his mistreatment of Glúmr's daughter

Þorlaug.[32] One summer, in exchange for a promise of hospitality, Skúta has a vagrant lure Glúmr out to Mjaðmárdalr, a site that we are told "gengr upp frá bœnum at Þverá ok sel hans standa í [goes up from the farm at Þverá and is where his [Glúmr's] mountain hut stands]" (51). Here the saga demonstrates a clear consciousness of the different spheres of owned land: this is not the fertile flatland embodied by Vitazgjafi, but more recognisable as one of the "complementary components" to "the farmland proper" outlined by Øye in her discussion of the *utmark* in agricultural systems (9). It is deliberately chosen by Skúta as a site for ambush, the implication being that Glúmr is in some respect more vulnerable in Mjaðmárdalr than at Þverá, though both are emphatically located within Glúmr's sphere of influence. The prominence of vagrants in certain episodes of *Víga-Glúms saga* is moreover interesting in light of Glúmr's eventual displacement from Þverá. Vagrants by no means occupy the same position, but seem nevertheless to foreground the question of homelessness, which, as Miller points out, is somewhat problematic for the Icelandic social structure: "The law's requirement of having everyone formally fixed to a domicile was the first step needed to fix people into a grid of accountability" ('Home and Homelessness' 126). In this instance, the unnamed *einhleypingr* enables Skúta's ambush, since he has reason to ask for assistance, and Glúmr by Skúta's description "er þrautgóðr, ef menn þurfu hans [is unrelenting if men need him]" (50).

The ensuing encounter between Skúta and Glúmr in Mjaðmárdalr is described primarily in terms of the space in which it takes place: Skúta's first action is to lure Glúmr out of the building, after which he positions himself deliberately "í milli hans ok selsduranna [between Glúmr and the door of the hut]" (52). Finding himself at a disadvantage, Glúmr flees to a nearby chasm of the river and leaps over the edge; Skúta, in pursuit, believes he has jumped into the water, and so makes his way down to the bank of the river. Here, however, Glúmr's superior knowledge of the

[32] Much of the scholarship on *Víga-Glúms saga* up to this point has been concerned with its uncertain relationship to *Reykdœla saga*, with which it shares an episode. The fact that the encounter between Glúmr and Skúta in Chapter 16 is included in almost identical form as Chapter 26 of *Reykdœla saga* has received a great deal of attention. Theodore Andersson has surveyed previous scholarship on this aspect of the text and argued that the section in question originates in *Víga-Glúms saga* ('*Víga-Glúms saga*' 16). More recently, statistical analysis by Rosetta Berger and Michael Drout of the distribution of vocabulary in *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Reykdœla saga* has supported Andersson's conclusions, and moreover suggests "that the episode is original to the saga and does not have a lost *þáttr* as a source" (12).

landscape—rooted, presumably, in greater familiarity with the area—ensures his escape: "Skúta sér upp ok kennir þar Glúm. Hann hafði raunar vitat, at þar var undir tó ein, er hann fór ofan [Skúta looked up and recognised Glúmr there. He had in fact known that there was a tuft of grass underneath the point where he went over]" (53). There would certainly seem to be a consciousness of relative positioning in the way that this chapter is choreographed: Skúta's determination to isolate Glúmr is expressed first through the choice of location, and then in the way he places himself physically between Glúmr and the *selr*; Glúmr gains the higher ground in the most literal sense in order to outwit his attacker. The verse composed by Glúmr following this pursuit, moreover, expresses the same priorities:

Halfs eyris metk hverjan	I value at half an ounce of silver
hrísrunn fyr á sunnan.	each bush south of the river.
Vel hafa víðir skógar	The wide woods have very
vargi oft um borgit.	often saved the wolf.

[I value each bush south of the river at half an ounce of silver. The wide woods have very often saved the wolf.]

Even in this short verse we find a strong sense of the spaces with which we are dealing: here, *á* and *skógr*, river and forest, are prominent. The two farms between which the major underlying conflict arises in *Víga-Glúms saga*—Þverá and Espihóll—are separated by Eyjafjarðará, and the text seems repeatedly to emphasise the river as a crucial boundary. The banks of the river often function as sites of conflict, and crossings act as declarations of intent—for example, between Arnórr and Þorgrímr in Chapter 11, and again when the Esphœlingar cross at Kvarnárvað in Chapter 22. Here, the positioning *sunnan* seems intended to emphasise Glúmr's connection to the area; *Víga-Glúms saga* has a tendency to set Espihóll and Þverá against one another as *norðr* and *suðr* respectively. The operative verb is *meta*, 'to value', which seems both in keeping with the preoccupations of previous verses with the worth of land, and consistent with the second half of the verse in considering the function of foliage as a means of concealment.

The term *hrísrunn* is most often applied to bushes beside a river—as in Chapter 40 of *Eyrbyggja saga*, when a man's body is hidden "undir hrísrunn einn, er stóð á eyrinni [under a bush that stood on the gravel bank]" (107), or in Chapter 7 of

Bjarnar saga, when Þórðr "settisk undir bakka í hrísrunni einum [sets himself under a bank in a bush]" to avoid being spotted (128)—and seems to be particularly associated with the desire not to be seen. Its use here in Verse 3 seems fitting in light of Glúmr's negotiation of the *tó* in order to evade Skúta. Lines 3 and 4 extend this assessment of value to the wide woods—*víðir skógar*—that provide refuge for the *vargr*, a term that denotes both 'wolf' and 'outlaw'. In this it invites comparison with a verse in Chapter 12 of *Droplaugarsona saga*, in which Helgi Ásbjarnarson attempts to justify his purchase of land at Eiðum, "er allt var skógi vaxit at húsum heim ok mátti hvergi sjá mannaferðir, þótt at garði fœri [where everything was overgrown with forest up to the homestead, and nowhere could he see men's movements, even if they were to approach the farm]" (167). There is simultaneously a value and an anxiety attached to this particular type of landscape; it has the potential to both aid and threaten, and the distinction between the two would seem to lie in the ability to negotiate it.

There is a second, suggestive episode in this chapter in which Glúmr demonstrates particular knowledge of the local landscape by comparison to its other inhabitants. Skúta, hooded and cloaked, meets sixty of Glúmr's men who have set out in pursuit of him, but successfully conceals his identity by means of wordplay they are unable to decipher: "Ek heiti Margr í Mývatnshverfi [I am called Many in Mývatn]," he claims, "en Fár í Fiskilœkjarhverfi [and Few in Fiskilœkjar]" (54). To understand the statement requires recognition that *skúti* is a term for a particular type of cave—one formed of jutting rocks—as well as familiarity with the landscapes of both districts. Glúmr reprimands his men for their oversight: "í Mývatnshverfi er margr hellisskúti [in Mývatn and its surroundings there are many jutting caves]," he explains, "en í Eyjafirði í Fiskilœkjarhverfi hittir engi skúta [but in Eyjafjǫrðr around Fiskilœkr no one finds caves]" (55).

These demonstrations of local knowledge combined with the strong attachment and right to land and inheritance expressed through the saga's verses heighten the sense of loss in Glúmr's eventual removal from Þverá. Chapter 26 is at pains to emphasise Glúmr's physical and social displacement. It opens with another dream, in which Glúmr's kinsmen gather "á eyrunum við ána [on the gravel banks beside the river]" (88) to beg that Glúmr "sér eigi á brott fœrðr af Þverárlandi [not be forced to leave Þveráland]" (88). Glúmr delays his departure as long as he possibly can; even after

Einarr purchases the land, and his men arrive to work it, "settisk Glúmr í ǫndvegi ok gerði eigi á brott ganga [Glúmr sat down in the high seat and made no move to go away]" (89). It is only when Einarr's mother, Hallbera, intervenes that Glúmr is finally forced out: "komit hefi ek nú eldi á Þverárland [I have now come with fire around Þverárland]," she declares, "ok geri ek þik nú á brott með allt þitt, ok er helgat landit Einari [and I now send you and all yours away, and the land is sanctified for Einarr]" (89). The phrasing here is noticeably similar to the description of Helgi's consecration of Eyjafjörðr in *Landnámabók* (252). The final chapters of *Víga-Glúms saga* seem in many respects to represent a reversal of the traditional *landnám* process, in its displacement of the saga protagonist and movement away from the point of settlement.

Composition of Verse 8, notably, is prefaced by a last look at the land Glúmr is to give up. Just as Gunnarr "varð litit upp til hlíðarinnar ok bœjarins at Hlíðarenda [looked up towards the slopes and the farm at Hlíðarendi]" (182), so "reið Glúmr þá í brott ok varð litit um ǫxl til bœjarins ok kvað vísu [Glúmr then rode away and looked over his shoulder towards the farm and spoke a verse]" (89):

Rudda ek sem jarlar,	I cleared, like the earls
orð lék á því, forðum	of old—word spread of that
með veðrstǫfum Viðris	among Viðrir's storm-staffs—
vandar mér til landa.	the way for myself through lands.
Nú hefik, Valþvǫgnis, vegna,	Now I have lost, bender of the stick
Várar skíðs, um síðir	of Valþvǫgnir's Vár, at length
breiða jǫrð með bǫrðum,	the broad earth with its borders
bendir, mér ór hendi.	out of my hand.

> [I cleared the way for myself through lands, like the earls of old; word spread of that among warriors (staffs of battle {the storm of Óðinn <Viðrir>}). Now at length I, the warrior (bender of the sword {stick of the valkyrie <goddess of Óðinn>}), have lost the broad earth with its borders out of my hand.]

Here the two halves of the stanza are set against one another, past and present juxtaposed: the first expressing nostalgia for the action that won him renown—the 'clearing' of the land—and the second lamenting its loss. Glúmr's equation of his social status and reputation with ownership of Þverá is made immediately explicit:

"Rudda ek [I cleared]" (8.1), and consequently "orð lék á því [word spread of it]" (8.2). The conception of Þverárland as "breiða jǫrð með bǫrðum [the broad earth with its borders]" (8.7) in the second *helmingr* demonstrates a keen awareness of it as owned land, with established boundaries, even as he declares it "mér ór hendi [out of my hand]" (8.8). This closing statement feels particularly resigned by comparison to the insistent use of possessive pronouns in Glúmr's first verse (1.1, 1.6), and recalls moreover that description in one of Egill's verses of having won "jǫrð með orðum … Steinari ór hendi [land with words out of Steinarr's hands]" (57.1-2). Again, we see the potential for poetry to function in a legal context—to express possession of land or to cede it.

The verbs used here are particularly evocative: *ryðja*, in the first line, means 'to clear' or 'to rid of', which is suggestive both of farming practices—perhaps even the burning of woodland and scrub to produce grassland that was practiced in Iceland following its settlement (Buckland 599)—and of victory in battle. We should consider, too, the explicit conflation of agricultural practices with physical conflict in Chapter 23: following a significant battle with the Esphœlingar, Glúmr declares, "Harðslœgr var Hrísateigr nú í dag [Hrísateigr was hard-mown today]" (79). Hrísateigr is a strip of land at the edge of the river that divides Espihóll from Þverá, the point from which Glúmr previously dreamed blood would be sprinkled "um heraðit allt [over the whole district]" (71) and the site of this particular skirmish. The term *slœgr* as Glúmr applies it encompasses both the image of tended fields—we might recall, for example, the *slegin tún* of Gunnarr's Hlíðarendi—and defeated enemies. The verb *slá,* from which is derived, means 'to slay' or 'to strike', but is frequently applied to described agricultural land that has been mown. The act of clearing the land, evidently, may constitute two different things: it denotes both an agricultural practice, and the removal of enemies in order to ensure continued possession. Sustaining the metaphor, Már's response is to Glúmr's statement is suitably ominous: "Fyrir þat mun þér ganga, sem harðslœgr hafi verit, því at nú muntu Þverárland hafa slegit ór hendi þér [For you it will turn out to have been hard-mown, because you will now have mown Þverárland out of your hand]" (79). The phrasing here echoes the last line of Verse 8, describing figurative holdings in terms of the literal action: in each case, land is lost *ór hendi*—out of the hand.

The strong consciousness of land lost that we find in Verse 8 is sustained through the final chapters of *Víga-Glúms saga*, which are informed by continued interest in physical space and movement. Following Glúmr's departure from Þverá in Chapter 26, we are told, he settles for two years at Myrkárdalr until "hljóp þar skriða nær bœnum, svá at tók sum húsin [a landslide happened near the farm there, so that it destroyed some of the buildings]" (90). The verb *hlaupa* creates the sense of sudden tectonic activity, its effect similar to the use of *spretta* or *gjósa* we found in the context of the mountainous landscapes of *Grettis saga* and *Hallmundarkviða*. This image of the destruction of property by means of a landslide emerges also in Chapter 18 of *Gísla saga*, where it destroys the farm of Bergr skammfótr and we are told that "sér enn merki jarðfallsins í dag [you can see marks of the landslide today]" (60), but it gains particular weight in *Víga-Glúms saga* due to the narrative focus. Here the image serves both to reinforce our sense of Glúmr's physical and social displacement, and to create a deliberate symmetry in the rise and fall of the saga protagonist: in Chapter 7, it is a *jarðfall*, an earth-slip, that buries Þorkell and Sigmundr's livestock and enables them to bring a suit against Ástríðr to take control of Vitazgjafi (22-23). Glúmr's tragedy, his loss of land, is thus at beginning and end drawn in terms of unstable ground and overwhelming external forces. In the immediate wake of the landslip at Myrkárdalr, Glúmr composes the following verse:

… munat enn sælu	… bliss will not again
menbrjótandi hljóta,	be allotted for the necklace-breaker,
oss kom breiðr í búðir	broad damage came to us at
bǫggr af einu hǫggvi,	home from one blow,
þá's, fleinmarar, fjóra,	when we sat in high spirits,
fullkátir vér sátum,	seagull-feeder of the spear-sea,
nú's, mágrennir, minna	now my pasture's smaller
mitt setr, tigu vetra.	after forty winters.

[… bliss will not again be allotted for the man (necklace-breaker); broad damage came to us at home from one blow, when we sat in high spirits, warrior (feeder of the raven {sea-gull of blood <the spear-sea>}); now my pasture's smaller after forty winters.]

The first line lacks a syllable, as Jónas Kristjánsson noted in his edition of the text (90), but the sense of the stanza as whole is quite clear. This is very much an extension of the previous verse, in which Glúmr continues to lament his loss, and the "breiða jǫrð [broad ground]" (8.7) has given way to "breiðr … bǫggr [broad damage]" (9.3-4)—the latter suggestive of the far-reaching consequences of his altered situation as well as the sheer scale of the physical destruction caused by the landslide. The sense of devastation here is strongest in line 4, where *bǫggr*, 'damage', and *hǫggr*, 'blow', are linked through internal rhyme. The description of a "single blow" seems to evoke particularly well the sudden landslide, but in the context of the chapter as a whole might as easily refer to the loss of Þverá. The term *búðir* in line 3 can be taken to indicate a general dwelling place, but is more commonly used to describe temporary abodes, particularly those used at the þing. The initial consonant of *búðir* is used to fulfill the requirements of the alliterative metre in lines 3-4, thus the choice of word may simply be a case of formal convenience, but it does seem in keeping with Glúmr's loss of his permanent abode at Þverá and the stability that inheritance provides—the consistent narrative preoccupation with Þverárland renders the farm at Myrkárdalr only a temporary residence. It is, moreover, an interesting choice of word when we consider that the subsequent battle in Chapter 27 takes place by the *búðir* at the þing; we might read this as anticipating the final conflict of the saga, or simply framing the loss of land in terms of a legal setting, which would be appropriate too in reference to the legal sentence that ultimately forced Glúmr out of Þverá.

As in Verse 8, past is once again set against present, here even more deliberately: *þá* and *nú*, 'then' and 'now', are positioned at the beginning of lines 5 and 7 respectively to create a contrast between previous "high spirits" and present situation. *Setr*—literally 'seat', or 'residence'—in line 8 is likewise aligned with *sátum*—past tense of the verb *sitja*, 'to sit'—in line 6, again equating ownership with an assertion of physical presence. The use of *setr* to describe this particular property seems apt, too, in light of the location of the farm itself in Myrkádalr, since the term can also indicate mountain pastures or outlands used for grazing livestock; it is used in the opening stanza of *Hallmundarkviða* to describe a distinctly mountainous space (1.3). In this respect, it feels consistent with the forced removal of Glúmr from the agricultural centre at Þverá to a location more identifiable as *utmark*, 'outfield'. In

the context of the *setr*, moreover, *búð* might be used to refer to a shepherd's hut or temporary lodging. The possessive *mitt* emerges in the closing line, while the plural pronouns in this stanza—*oss* (9.3) and *vér* (9.6)—include his son and heir, Már, in this loss of land and inheritance. Though the narrative gives no indication of the audience to whom Glúmr addresses his verse, the use of *már*, 'gull', in the extended kenning for the addressed 'warrior' in line 6 seems suggestive. The consequences of Glúmr's physical and social displacement will be felt by his son also. The description of the land in question as *minna*—'lesser' or 'smaller'—meanwhile recalls that sense of encroachment expressed initially in Verse 1 of the saga, and reiterated in the course of the dispute over Vitazgjafi. Once again, the term encompasses the reduction of both physical space and social status.

Loss of ground is emphasised throughout the climax of the saga, first expressed in terms of physical destruction of an owned space, constructed as a force beyond the protagonist's control, and then made literal in the context of physical conflict. The final chapter of *Víga-Glúms saga* sees a movement outwards to the edge of Eyjafjörðr itself, as Glúmr's position becomes ever more precarious: despite knowing he will be vastly outnumbered, Glúmr sets out by ship to attend the *haustþing*, which we are told takes place "fyrir austan fjǫrðinn skammt frá Kaupangi [east over the fjord, a short way from Kaupangr]" (93). It is along the shore that the inevitable conflict takes place:

> En þar eru melar brattir ok lausgrýttir á milli fjarðarins ok búðanna. En er Glúmr kom gagnvert búð þeiri, er Einarr átti, þá hljópu menn frá búðunum ok báru skjǫldu at þeim ok hrundu þeim af melunum, ok fell Glúmr ok veltisk með skjǫld sinn á eyrina ofan … (93)
>
> [And there are steep sandbanks of loose stones between the fjord and the booths. And when Glúmr came level to the booth that Einarr owned, then men ran from the booths and raised shields against them and pushed them from the banks, and Glúmr fell and rolled with his shield to the gravel bank below.]

The landscape in question is distinctly coastal, and the poetic conceits and vocabulary in the subsequent sequence of verses reflects this; they are, as we will see, comparable to the 'coastal conflict' verses of *Kormáks saga*. In Verse 10, for

example, we have a *brekka*, 'slope' in line 7, and a kenning for 'sea' in line 6 that constructs it once again as a boundary (*fleygarðr*, 'ship-fence'). The final stanzas of *Víga-Glúms saga* thus represent a departure from the concern with agricultural landscapes that generally characterise and dominate its verses in favour of a liminal space that better reflects the position of its protagonist, while retaining and reframing images we have seen in previous stanzas. This is a reversal of the usual progression from coastline inwards towards the highlands that we see in *landnám* narratives, charting the protagonist's loss of land as opposed to his claim. In Chapter 27, the physical confrontation with the Esphœlingar is both highly choreographed and sensitive to details of landscape and setting, and is articulated most powerfully in the paired verses composed by Einarr and Glúmr. The physical acts of the conflict are asserted through these compositions, and a strong sense of dialogue is created not only through their deliberate positioning in the saga narrative, but also in the symmetry apparent in the structure and content of the two stanzas.

After the battle has concluded, we are told, Einarr composes the following verse:

Þrøngvir varð á þingi	Presser of the snake-edge
þremja linns at rinna,	had to run at the þing—
vasat í Ála éli	he was not in Áli's snowstorm
auðlattr, fyr mel brattan;	easily checked—down a steep bank;
þá's marstéttar máttit	when on the stones of Mævill's
Mævils við þrǫm sævar	steed-path at the edge of the sea
geira njótr á grjóti	the user of Gestill's fire
Gestils klauf of festa.	could not fasten his footing.

[The warrior (presser of the sword {snake-edge}) had to run down a steep bank at the þing—he was not in battle (snowstorm of the sea-king {Áli}) easily checked—when the warrior (user of the sword {fire of the sea-king}) could not fasten his footing on the stones of the sea (path of the ship {the sea-king's steed}) at the edge of the sea.]

This immediate characterization of Glúmr as "Þrøngvir [Presser]" (11.1) signifies the reversal of his position at the beginning of the saga, from defender to attacker, and from rightful heir to dispossessed rival; *þrøngt* was the term that Glúmr used to describe Ástríðr's position in his absence and emphasise Sigmundr's wrongful

encroachment on their land (16). There is an immediate sense of the push and pull of battle established in the opening lines: the image of the *þrøngvir* is almost immediately qualified by the assertion that he "varð … at rinna [had to run]" (11.1-2). The "mel brattan [steep sandbank]" (11.4) thus becomes the line of demarcation between the two groups, both as the natural boundary between coastline and *þingstaðr* and as the means by which Glúmr's efforts to enter the space are thwarted. We have seen already a tendency in this text to establish banks as natural sites of conflict. Initially, the river serves as the division between feuding familes; here, the point of contact is relocated to a coastal site. There is surely some significance, too, in the positioning of the two groups: Einarr by the booths, and Glúmr below on the shore. Indeed, Brúsi Hallason's verse seems intended particularly to assert the physical disadvantage of Glúmr's men in having the lower ground: though he claims both parties have "hlut jafnan [an equal share]" (10.4) in battle, Glúmr's men went "an mik varði … fyr brekku … harðara miklu [much harder down the slope than I expected]" (10.6-8).

The consciousness of the liminal setting is clear in the use of "þrǫm sævar [the edge of the sea]" (11.6) to describe the shore: *þrǫmr* can mean 'brim', 'edge' or 'verge', and can be used in conjunction with *jǫrð* to describe 'the ends of the earth' (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'þrömr, m.'). The mythological figures used to form the kennings here are consistent with the littoral imagery: Gestill, Mævill and Áli are all listed by Snorri as *heiti* for sea-kings in *Skáldskaparmál* (109-110), and the reference to the latter in the kenning for 'battle' in line 3 reinforces the sense of a coastal conflict. Particular details of the landscape are central to the assertions of the verse: *grjót*—'stones' or 'shingle'—and *melr*—'sandbank'—literally form the foundations for Glúmr's fall. Again, there is a sense of instability in that final assertion that Glúmr "máttit … klauf of festa [could not fasten his footing]" (11.5-8) on the loose stones, an image that contrasts sharply with the strong assertion of presence and rightful claim in Verse 2, where Jǫrð moves "í miklum auka … með fjǫllum … standa [in vast shape to stand between mountains]" (2.2, 2.7-8). The concept of Glúmr struggling to remain standing in a confrontation with the man who now owns Þverá is a particularly powerful one.

Verse 12 is positioned unambiguously against Verse 11 in the narrative. Immediately following Einarr's composition, we are told that "kvað Glúmr vísu í móti [Glúmr spoke a verse in response]" (95):

Lattisk herr með hǫttu	Men held back from going
hanga-Týs at ganga,	with hoods of hanged-Týr
þóttit þeim at hætta	—they didn't think the risk
þekkiligt, fyr brekku,	pleasant—down the slope,
þá's dynfúsir dísar	when, eager for the din
dreyra svells á eyri,	of the goddess of the wound-ice—
brǫð fekk borginmoða	the raven got his blood's meat—
blóðs, skjaldaðir stóðum.	and shielded, we stood on the bank.

[Men held back from going down the slope with hoods of Óðinn (hanged-Týr)—they didn't think the risk pleasant—when, eager for battle (the din of the valkyrie {goddess of the sword <wound-ice>}) and shielded, we stood on the bank; the raven got his blood's meat.]

We can see a strong impulse towards requital in the major assertions of this stanza: the sandbank that in the previous verse was conceived of as an obstacle for Glúmr is here refashioned as the line that Einarr's men dare not cross: "þóttit þeim at hætta þekkiligt [they didn't think the risk pleasant]," Glúmr declares (12.3-4). In response to Einarr's suggestion that Glúmr "varð … at rinna [had to run]" (11.1-2), Glúmr argues that his enemies "Lattisk … at ganga [held themselves back from going]" (12.1-2). The symmetry in the construction of the two verses is quite deliberate. The interjection in the first *helmingr* (12.3-4) occupies the same position as the interjection in Einarr's verse (11.3-4), and the movement "fyr brekku [down the slope]" (12.4) echoes the description of the fall "fyr mel brattan [down the steep sandbank]" (11.4). Both verses begin their fifth line with "þá's" (11.5, 12.5). In response to the comments in Verse 11 regarding his loss of footing, Glúmr closes a verse once again with the verb *standa*; it is interesting, too, that the image of the *dísir* emerges again in conjunction with *svell*, a term for 'ice' (12.5-6), just as it did in Verse 2. In spite of this final assertion, however, Glúmr's position remains marginal: he no longer stands in the heart of Eyjafjǫrðr, but "á eyri [on the bank]"

(12.6)—at the very edge of it. The result is an impasse, whereby neither party is entirely satisfied, and they go their separate ways.

This final section of the saga builds on the idea of the importance of negotiating landscape to success in conflict, and seems deliberately to raise and dismiss the possibility of legal reconciliation by setting the conflict at the *þing*. If this is, as the final line would suggest, Glúmr's last stand, then it seems appropriate that the encounter be enacted through verse. These final stanzas are the natural culmination of a text in which poetry is used primarily to express legal grievances and to assert ownership: in the wake of the protagonist's dispossession, these stanzas represent both sides of the ensuing physical conflict, demonstrate Glúmr's reduced social standing, and are also framed by aspects of legal process. That the battle takes place on the edge of the *þingstaðr* is suggestive of Glúmr's diminished influence and lack of legal recourse with regard to his loss of Þverá; the stanzas are, moreover, positioned between description of the casualties of the battle and the account of the settlement regarding those killed, creating a sense of testimony given in the form of verse compositions. *Víga-Glúms saga* contains not only vivid poetic depictions of agricultural land, but also repeated examples of feud enacted through verse, of which the final stanzas are particularly notable. In the final section of this chapter, I will examine further expressions of conflict in the verses of *Svarfdæla saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*, all of which are, unsurprisingly, deeply concerned with establishing and undermining boundaries.

Pushing the Boundaries in Saga Verse

As Kirsten Hastrup has observed, land and law are very much connected in the literature of medieval Iceland: "Law," Hastrup argues, "was deeply rooted in the landscape, and, conversely, the landscape was deeply politicised from the beginning" ('Icelandic Topography' 65). We have seen already the tendency for legal terminology to emerge in verses about landscape, even where we might not expect them—for example, in Egill's railings against the drowning of Bǫðvarr in *Sonatorrek.* They are undoubtedly most prominent, however, in the context of agricultural landscapes. In this final section, I will discuss more explicitly some of the aspects that emerged in our reading of *Víga-Glúms saga*: the performative

potential of poetry as a medium, its use in legal contexts, and the prominence of the *garðr* in saga verse.

There is a pervading concern in the sagas with the nature and impact of poetry. *Bjarnar saga* demonstrates this particularly clearly, both in its concern with the medium's potential to damage reputation and social standing, and the fact that the conflict between its protagonists is enacted largely through the verses they compose. At the centre of the narrative of this text is an episode in which Þórðr, in an attempt to determine Bjǫrn's desire for revenge, invites him to stay for the winter. The feud between the protagonists is expressed most explicitly in terms of space in two pairs of verses composed in the course of this visit, in which the refrains are deliberately constructed in opposition to one another. Both Þórðr's negotiation of societal expectation and the codes of hospitality and Bjǫrn's physical intrusion into space belonging to his rival resonate with aspects of Glúmr's visit to the hall of his maternal grandfather in *Víga-Glúms saga,* as well as the final confrontation of that text. Bjǫrn's poems represent repeated challenges to the authority of his host: in Verses 4 and 5, which are spoken at the beginning of the winter, Þórðr's furious declaration that, "Út skaltu ganga [Out you must go]" (4.1) is positioned against Bjǫrn's insistence that "Hér munk sitja / ok hǫtt vel kveða [Here I will stay, and speak metre well]" (5.1-2).

There is a physical push and pull to the exchange, whereby Þórðr repeatedly attempts to re-establish the bounds of his home—of this private, owned space—and Bjǫrn, by his continued presence, *undermines* those bounds. The sense of movement in these verses is only too evident, as is Bjǫrn's consciousness of his medium. At every instance, the text seems to present poetry as something with real, palpable impact. In Verses 14 and 15, which are composed towards the end of Bjǫrn's stay, Þórðr repeats his assertion. "Út skaltu ganga [Out you must go]," he says again (14.1), to which Bjǫrn this time replies, "Kyrr munk sitja [Still I will stay]" (15.1). There is unquestionably a symmetry here—in Bjǫrn's deliberate imitation of Þórðr's *fornyrðislag* metre, the refrains at the beginning and end of each verse, and in the way that the two pairs of verses bookend Bjǫrn's stay. In light of the centrality of notions of repayment and requital to the Icelandic model of feud, this tendency toward paired verses becomes more explicable. The poetic dispute between Glúmr and Einarr in the final chapter of *Víga-Glúms saga* was by no means an isolated

example: paired verses as a means of enacting conflict—social, legal, or otherwise—are common in the *Íslendingasögur*.

We have, moreover, identified numerous instances of spatial and personal deixis in saga verse as a means of asserting presence—whether that assertion signifies the physical movements of conflict, as in *Bjarnar saga*, or expresses resolve to defend inheritance, as in *Víga-Glúms saga*. This spatial quality is combined with a particular fascination with boundaries, and the tendency we have seen toward voicing legal grievances through this medium—for example, lamenting a sentence of outlawry, or accusing a rival of misconduct. It is worth considering, certainly, the potential for verbal acts to be performative in certain legal contexts. Thomas Bredsdorff has emphasised the applicability of speech act theory to saga studies (36ff.), and Kate Heslop has suggested the idea of performativity as a way in which we might read skaldic poems beyond the techniques of "expressive lyricism" ('Gab mir ein Gott' 162). The sagas certainly accord a certain weight to verse compositions in terms of the potential impact of insult poetry on social standing. With all these things in mind, I will conclude this chapter by considering two sequences of verses, the first from *Svarfdæla saga* and the second from *Eyrbyggja saga*, which function respectively as incitement to attack and justification of defence in the context of prolonged feud.

Svarfdæla saga is concerned largely with the same spaces as *Víga-Glúms saga*: immediately prior to his final battle with Einarr, Glúmr is described as travelling to Svarfaðardalr to seek support at the *þing* (92), while the original settlement of Eyjafjǫrðr is evoked through reference to Helgi inn magri in *Svarfdæla saga* (158). The text is similarly preoccupied with agricultural landscapes, juxtaposing problems of agricultural practices—for example, a man who "beitti … upp engjar … ok akra [laid pastures and fields bare by overgrazing]" (158), like Váli in *Kormáks saga*—with heightened depictions of conflict and feud. Unsurprisingly, in light of this, it is also a text in which boundaries are generally prominent and emerge repeatedly as points of contact and confrontation. The central narrative of the saga is the uncomfortably bloody feud between Ljótolfr goði and Karl inn rauði, kinsman of the

berserkr Klaufi, whose death prompts the escalating violence.[33] After Klaufi marries the object of Ljótolfr's affections in particularly underhanded circumstances, she has her brothers ambush and kill him, after which, we are told, "tóku þeir Klaufa ok drógu undir heygarð at húsbaki [they took Klaufi and dragged him under a hay-wall at the back of the house]" (175). His body is deliberately positioned at a boundary.

The following evening, Karl and his men hear a poem spoken from the roof of the house:

Sitk á húsi,	I sit on the house,
sék til þess,	I look towards this,
heðan munu vér	from here we will
oss hefnda vænta.	hope for our revenge.

[I sit on the house; I look towards this; from here, we will hope for our revenge.]

This is the first of a sequence of verses in the saga which demonstrate both a keen awareness of space and movement and an understanding of what it means to cross a boundary. Contained in this short stanza alone we have a first-person assertion of presence—"Sitk [I sit]" (7.1)—followed swiftly by the act of looking, and the use of the positioning "heðan [from here]" (7.3). This verse succeeds in creating a strong sense of the *hús* as the centre of the Icelandic farm. The act of looking in the second line is thus not a survey of land or prompt to memory, as we have seen previously, but is qualified rather by the preposition *til* to create a sense of looking *outward* that is consistent with Klaufi's intentions. His declaration of presence is couched as an incitement to seek revenge for his death, which will necessarily require movement away from the established centre.

The saga is keen to emphasise the importance of this verse to the events that follow: Karl, upon hearing it, declares his certainty that the poem signifies "stórtíðendum, hvárt sem þau eru fram komin eða eigi [great events, whether they have happened already or not]" (175). They gather their weapons and prepare to depart, at which

[33] What little scholarship there is on *Svarfdæla saga* has tended to focus on treatments of female characters in this text: for example, Robin Waugh, 'Misogyny, Women's Language' (1998) and Helga Kress, 'Taming the Shrew' (2002). The saga is relatively late, dating to the fourteenth or fifteenth century (Jónas Kristjánsson, 'Heimkynni' lxxxix-cx).

point “sá þeir ekki lítinn grepp suðr við garðinn, ok var þat Klaufi [they saw a *greppr*, not small, south of the wall, and it was Klaufi]” (175). The term used to describe Klaufi here—*greppr*—has been applied elsewhere to supernatural figures, which is certainly appropriate to Klaufi as *aptrgangr*, but crucially might also refer to his status as a poet. Snorri notes in *Skáldskaparmál* that “Skáld heita greppar ok rétt er í skáldskap at kenna svá hvern mann ef vill [Poets are called *greppar*, and it is correct in poetry to describe any man thus if desired]” (105); interestingly, there is also a particular form of memorial metre in *Háttatal* that he calls “greppaminni [poets’ memory]” (20). Indeed, the word *greppr* is used in several verses by Egill in reference to himself (*Egils saga* 43.3, 47.7; *Arinbjarnarkviða* 2.8), and again in Verse 10 of *Kormáks saga* in the same sense (10.3).

There seems to be a strong consciousness in this episode of the role of the poet in instigating the conflict. Klaufi stands south of the *garðr*, and subsequently speaks a pair of positioning couplets: “Suðr er, ok suðr er, / svá skulum stefna [South it is, and south it is, / so shall we aim]” (8.1-2) followed by “Hér er, ok hér er, / hví skulum lengra? [Here it is, and here it is, / why shall we delay?]” (9.1-2). The verb *stefna*, which is used in the first couplet, has the sense of steering or facing in a certain direction, but in a legal context might also mean to issue summons or declare a case (Cleasby and Vigfússon, ‘stefna’). Klaufi’s compositions seem to function consistently as incitement to conflict. The verses that follow deliberately trace the movement away from the established centre, and underline the significance of that movement to exacting the vengeance desired in Verse 7.

The necessary crossing occurs in Verse 13, again spoken by Klaufi and conceived of in exactly the same terms: as the men move “út ór garði [out beyond the fence]”, they “sá þar fara grepp harðla mikinn gagnvart sér, ok var þar Klaufi kominn; þá kvað vísu [saw there a very large *greppr* moving towards them, and it was Klaufi coming; then he spoke a verse] (178).

Ganga hér fyrir garð fram	They go forwards across the fence here,
gunnhvǫt enni;	battle-bold brows;
eruð vanir vígum,	you are accustomed to war,
sem vér fyrri.	as we were before.
Sét hǫfum sólheim,	We have seen the sun’s abode,

sjá munuð annan,	you will see another,
eruð ér sem vér	you are, as we are,
alls um duldir,	all unaware,
alls of duldir.	all unaware.

[Battle-bold brows go forwards across the fence here; you are accustomed to war, as we were before. We have seen the sun's abode, you will see another; you are, as we are, all unaware.]

The opening line is a declaration of intent: a movement forwards across the *garðr* by those who are "gunnhvǫt [battle-bold]" (13.2). This verse not only continues the trajectory established in previous stanzas, but also creates through use of alternating first-person and second-person plural a sense of 'us' and 'them'—of actions mirrored along a dividing line. To walk the boundaries is, as we have seen, to enforce ownership; it follows that to cross a boundary, intentionally or otherwise, is to incite conflict. Our sense of Klaufi's role in instigating this confrontation is reinforced in Verse 14 when Karl stands on the battlefield and looks up towards Klaufahváli—another example of a place name functioning as a memorial device. Here in *Svarfdæla saga*, this image of crossing is prefaced by assertions of presence and calls to action, prompting a sequence of verses in which the bloody conflict is recounted and concluding finally with an extension of the battle beyond the bounds of individual holdings to encompass the district as a whole. Verse 15 juxtaposes an image of widespread conflict—"Dynr er um allan / dal Svarfaðar [The din is all through the dale of Svarfaðr] (15.1-2)—with the incitement to "liggja / Ljótolf goða / í urð [lay Ljótolfr goði in the ground]" (15.7-9). The central conflict of the narrative is thus conceived of explicitly in terms of the local landscape.

This awareness of the broader implications of a particular episode to the saga as a whole is equally relevant to our consideration of *Eyrbyggja saga*.[34] The structure of

[34] *Eyrbyggja saga* is extant in four medieval manuscripts: the fourteenth-century Wolfenbüttel manuscript, the fifteenth-century Melabók and AM 445 b 4to, and the thirteenth-century fragment AM 162 E fol. (*ONP* 233). Though Einar Ól. Sveinsson in his edition made a case for the composition of *Eyrbyggja saga* between 1200 and 1245 ('Aldur og Heimkynni Eyrbyggju' xlv), subsequent scholarly discussions have favoured dates later in the thirteenth century. For recent reviews and reassessments of dating, see Torfi Tulinius, 'Dating *Eyrbyggja saga*' (2013) and Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'Dating the Archetype' (2013). Louis-Jensen has underlined some problems with Einar's dating, and argued for Wolfenbüttel as "the single manuscript that gives the best picture of the archetype of *Eyrbyggja saga*" (138).

that work has received a great deal of critical attention: attempts to resolve what has been described as "a series of scenes and stories which follow the disordered course of life itself" (Turville-Petre, *Origins* 242) have varied from Bernadine McCreesh's argument for a parallel structure based on "the central pivot of the Conversion" (273) to Paul Bibire's suggestion that the saga is structured around several groups of verses used to signify points of crisis in the narrative (8). A consideration of the text's vivid depictions of landscape and preoccupation with forging a connection between people and land, however, goes some way to identifying an underlying narrative thread. As Jesse Byock has pointed out, Arnkell's pursuit of valuable land at Kársstaðir is undertaken as part of a broader attempt "to create a territorial domain" ('Inheritance and Ambition' 189), while Vésteinn Ólason identifies what he calls a "land-cleansing pattern" in the repeated emergence of supernatural entities to be dealt with ('*Máhlíðingamál*'190). *Eyrbyggja saga*, Carl Phelpstead argues, is on one level "about establishing a stable human community in a previously uninhabited land", which necessarily "involves the construction of boundaries" (17). In light of this assertion, the fascination we find with boundaries in saga verse is even more comprehensible. Those episodes which seem particularly divorced from the overarching narrative nevertheless demonstrate a desire for or concern with ownership of land: Halli the *berserkr*'s suit of Víga-Stýrr's daughter in Chapter 28 is, for example, dependent on his ability to "leggja hagagarð yfir hraunit milli landa várra ok gera byrgi hér [build a field-wall over the lava-field between our lands and make an enclosure here]" (72).

The *Máhlíðingamál* and its associated verses represent another such episode—one that contains seventeen of the thirty-seven extant verses in *Eyrbyggja saga*, but uses them to give voice to a relatively minor character.[35] This section recounts the dispute between Þorbjǫrn of Fróðá, brother-in-law to Snorri goði, and Þórarinn inn svarti of Mávahlíð, who share use of a mountain pasture on which they graze their horses. In Chapter 18 of the text, Þorbjǫrn takes it upon himself to establish a *duradómr*, a door-court, on Þórarinn's property in order to charge him with the theft

[35] This episode and its associated verses have been discussed at length in scholarship on *Eyrbyggja saga*. See, for example: Russell Poole, 'The Origins of the *Máhlíðingavísur*' (1985); Rory McTurk, 'Approaches to the Structure' (1986) 229-230; Vésteinn Ólason, '*Máhlíðingamál*: Authorship and Tradition' (1989); Heather O'Donoghue in *Skaldic Verse* (2005) 93-111; and Ásdís Egilsdóttir, 'Masculinity and/or Peace?' (2015). Poole suggests that the *Máhlíðingavísur* "were most likely composed as an embellishment to a twelfth or late eleventh-century account of the deeds of Snorri goði" ('The Origins' 281).

of his missing horses; Þórarinn objects, both to the accusation and the intrusion without just cause onto his land. Þorbjǫrn's behaviour in this episode is in many ways comparable to the actions of Þorkell and Sigmundr in Chapter 7 of *Víga-Glúms saga*. Two battles take place, the first "í túninu í Mávahlíð [in the meadow at Mávahlíð]" (36), and then again at a boundary, after Þorbjǫrn and his men "riðu upp með váginum ok bundu sár sín undir stakkgarði þeim, er Korngarðr heitir [rode up along the bay and bound their wounds under a haystack-wall called Korngarðr]" (36). As in *Svarfdæla saga*, the ensuing physical conflict takes place both in the context of agricultural land and at the bounds of it. Þórarinn kills Þorbjǫrn in the course of the second battle, and is subsequently asked by various parties to account for his actions. The verses he composes are deliberately framed in the narrative in terms of answers to these questions; the *Máhlíðingavísur*, as they are referred to in the analogous episode in *Landnámabók* (112-115), are prime examples of poetry used as a means of justifying the defence of land and property.

Hannah Burrows has noted the inextricability of law from narrative and plot in this text ('Cold Cases' 43); these are verses which demonstrate particularly well the legal potential of saga poetry, and which evoke images of agricultural land highly effectively in that context. Russell Poole has discussed at length the possibility that these verses originally formed a single poem ('The Origins' 279); if this is the case, then these verses are deliberately framed in *Eyrbyggja saga* through the conversational format in terms of a legal appeal, as Þórarinn recounts the details of the conflict in the process of seeking support. The verses certainly share common imagery and motifs, as well as repeated references to legal processes. Among the first of Þórarinn's verses is one addressed to his wife, declaring his intention to seek support from his brother-in-law, Vermundr mjóvi, in the proceedings:

Myndit vitr í vetri	The wise rouser of law-plunder will not
vekjandi mik sekja,	outlaw me in the winter—
þar ák lífhvǫtuð leyfðan,	I have there a famed life-instigator
lǫgráns, of þær vánir,	for these hopes—
ef niðbræði næðak	if I reach the brother of the murmur
nás valfallins ásar,	of the god of the battle-dead
Hugins létum nið njóta	—we allow Huginn's son to use
nágrundar, Vermundi.	the near plain—Vermundr.

> [The wise rouser of law-plunder will not outlaw me in the winter, if I reach the warrior (brother of battle {the murmur of Óðinn <the god of the battle-dead>}), Vermundr; I have there a famed life-instigator for these hopes; we allow the raven (Huginn's son) to use the near plain.]

The tone of this stanza is comparable to that in Verse 29 of *Egils saga*, where there is likewise a "lǫgbrigðir [law-breaker]" (29.1) responsible for the situation. There, however, Egill's status as outlaw is already determined, and the verse expresses an intention to repay—*gjalda*—the offending party (29.5); here Þórarinn opens rather with the declaration that his enemy "Myndit … mik sekja [will not outlaw me]" (5.1-2). It is unclear whether the "vitr vekjandi lǫgráns [wise rouser of law-plunder]" (5.1-4) refers here to Þorbjǫrn or rather to Snorri goði, who is prosecuting Þórarinn's case on behalf of his brother-in-law; the descriptor *vitr* would suggest the latter, but if that is so then it paints a bleak portrait of a character whose rise to power is one of the central narrative threads of the saga. The compound *lǫgrán* is particularly evocative: at a basic level it indicates a legal injustice, but the term *rán* suggests moreover theft or plunder. This characterization of the case against Þórarinn as unlawful seizure of land or property underlines the eventual outcome—when Þórarinn is outlawed, he loses his land to Snorri.

Our first image of the land that Þórarinn is defending—both through the physical conflict he is recounting and his composition of the verses in question—is as *grund*, which at its most basic level describes an expanse of ground, but can also refer to a field or plain (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 'grund, f.'). The assertion that Huginn's son—a 'beast of battle'—uses this space begins the conceptual transformation of field into battlefield over the course of these verses; that it is *nágrund*, particularly, suggests a concern with proximity. As in Verse 1 of *Víga-Glúms saga*, the assertion of nearness also lends weight to the claim of injustice—there is a clear anxiety attached to conflict on owned land. We have seen already the equation of agricultural practice with killing through the verb *slá* in *Víga-Glúms saga*; in Chapter 26 of *Heiðarvíga saga*, Gísli Þorgautsson expresses certainty that he will be ambushed explicitly in the context of this space. While at Gullteigr with his brothers, we are told, "Gekk Gísli um teiginn nökkut svá ok sá á, er þeir ætluðu at slá, ok nemr staðar ok kvað vísu [Gísli walked out some way into the field and looked out where they intended to mow, and stopped and spoke a verse]" (292-3).

The verse he composes declares that "Hér vildu mik … í stað þessum … sœkja [Here, in this place, you will seek me out]" (9.1-4)—sure enough, he is attacked while working Gullteigr and killed at the boundary, the *garðr*, of that space (295).

Þórarinn makes very similar assertions in the *Máhlíðingavísur*: Verse 7 opens with the statement, "Sóttu heim … mik [They sought me at home]" (7.1-2), while Verse 15 opens with the disquieting image of "hrafn-víns á bœ mínum [raven-wine (blood) at my farm]" (15.2). At every instance, he reaffirms that Þorbjǫrn was the one to cross the boundary and instigate the conflict; this fact is central both to his legal appeal and the defence of his property. If Þorbjǫrn was the initiator in each circumstance, then any violence committed by Þórarinn is justifiable response. The idea of reciprocity in conflict is again foregrounded: he asserts in Verse 11 that, "eggjumk hófs [I was incited to act in proportion]" (11.7). It is Verse 9, however, that offers perhaps the most vivid depiction of Þórarinn's situation in its transformation of agricultural space:

Knǫ́ttu hjalmi hættar	Seeresses of the heavy meeting—
hjaldrs á mínum skjaldi	dangerous for helmets—
Þrúðar vangs ens þunga	of the field of the battle-goddess
þings spámeyjar singva,	did sing on my shield,
þás bjúgrǫðull bógar	when the crooked edge of Fróði's
baugs fyr óðaldraugi,	shoulder was sprayed with blood;
Gjǫll óx vápns á vǫllum,	before the land-log of the shield,
varð blóði drifinn Fróða.	weapon's river grew in the fields.

[Arrows (seeresses of battle {the heavy meeting of the field of the battle-goddess}) did sing on my shield, dangerous for helmets, when the shield (crooked edge of the shoulder of the sea-king) was sprayed with blood; blood (weapon's river {Gjǫll}) grew in the fields before the warrior (land-log of the shield).]

The opening image of arrows singing "á minum skjaldi [on my shield]" (9.2) is consistent with the tendency that Heather O'Donoghue identifies for Þórarinn to characterise himself in terms of "defensive shield-bearing kennings" (*Skaldic Verse* 98), and the insistence in the opening line of Verse 8 that "Urðum vér at verja [we had to defend]" (8.1). Equally interesting here, however, are the terms employed to

describe the landscape. In the opening kenning, we have the component "hjaldrs Þrúðar vangs [field of the battle-goddess]" (9.2-3), whereby the term *vangr*, which is used to refer to an infield or garden, distinctly domestic spaces, is identified emphatically as the site of conflict. Subsequently, in the second half of the poem, we have the assertion that "Gjǫll óx vápns á vǫllum [weapon's river grew in the fields]" (9.7). Not only do we have *vellir*, fields, but also a fascinating use of the verb *vaxa*, 'to grow', which is applied to the rivers of blood rather than to actual produce. This vivid image is very much the culmination of the conceptual transformation of field into battlefield beginning in Verse 5 with the image of the raven and reinforced by the reference to "benlœkir [wound-streams]" (8.8) in the previous stanza.

It seems, moreover, to evoke particularly well the opening conflict of *Eyrbyggja saga* between the Kjalleklingar and the inhabitants of Helgafell, in which the land that has been settled and consecrated is desecrated through violence: "en vǫllinn kallar hann spilltan af heiptarblóði, er niðr hafði komit, ok kallar þá jǫrð nú eigi helgari en aðra [and he declared the field spoilt by the bloodshed from feud, which had fallen, and declared the earth now no more sacred than any other]" (17). There are elements of worship attached to these descriptions of Þórsnes, certainly, but it is also true that the verb *helga*—'to sanctify'—is presented as an integral part of the initial land-taking. To reverse that process is in some way to undermine that initial connection between the settlers and the land they are settling. Depictions of agricultural landscape in saga verse are coloured by a sense of its value, in terms of physical worth, social standing, and as a means of subsistence. The bloodying of the field, here as well as in the case of Vitazgjafi in *Víga-Glúms saga*, is a particularly powerful image. Þórarinn's involvement in battle is both necessary to the defence of his land, and the means by which he loses it, and his verses reflect this. Verse 19, the last of Þórarinn's compositions, reiterates the accusation that he has been "lǫgum ræni [robbed by laws]" (19.4) shortly after he is sentenced.

Just as in the *Svarfdæla saga* verses we saw an extension of the field of conflict beyond the boundaries of an individual's land, the *Máhlíðingavísur* show in their treatment of the character of Nagli an awareness of the boundaries of settled land. While the other verses seek either to justify Þórarinn's actions or to appeal particularly to Vermundr for support in the case, Verses 12 and 13 function only to account for the conduct of this one individual, who is said to have fled the battle.

Nagli has been discussed in reference to the phrase *verða at gjalti*, "to become mad with terror" (for example in Sayers, 'Deployment' 170-73), but the details of landscape in this description seem moreover to be particularly suggestive. In the prose narrative, we are told that, Þórarinn and his men on their way home saw "hvar Nagli hljóp it efra um hlíðina; ok er þeir kómu í túnit, sá þeir, at Nagli var kominn fram um garðinn ok stefndi inn til Búlandshǫfði [where Nagli ran along the higher slopes; and when they came to the meadow, they saw that Nagli had come forward along the fence and was headed in towards Búlandshǫfði]" (33). Þórarinn is positioned in the centre, in the *tún*, and observes the movements from one boundary to another. In the verses, this is expressed more concisely: in Verse 12, he declares he saw Nagli "í fjall at støkkva [flee to the mountain]" (12.4); in Verse 13, he sees him "á sjó hlaupa [run to the sea]" (13.8). This movement between mountain and shore, I would suggest, serves two purposes. Firstly, there is again a sense of broadening the focus beyond a specific location to encompass the landscape as a whole, as we saw in that image of the din echoing all through Svarfaðardalr; both *Svarfdæla saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga* in this way show an awareness of the impact of escalating feud. Secondly, we have seen that to reference mountain and coastline together is to evoke the boundaries of owned land, and that to bear witness to a movement between those bounds—as Glúmr did in Verse 2 of *Víga-Glúms saga*—is fundamental to the process of *landnám*. To evoke it in the context of Þórarinn's defence of his property and appeal against outlawry seems deliberate.

A preoccupation with boundaries has emerged consistently in the texts we have examined: in the 'difficult' mountainous and coastal spaces that are variously transitional, marginal, threatening, and crucial to forming the bounds of collective, inhabitable land; in the fences and natural boundaries that must be observed, walked, and maintained in order to enforce individual ownership; and in the serious social and legal implications of boundaries crossed or altered. Boundaries emerged repeatedly in the context of highland landscapes with the breaking of ground, whether through tectonic activity or the act of *haugbrot*, and in the context of coastal landscapes with the meeting of land and water. They are most present and most explicit, of course, in the context of agricultural landscapes, where a consciousness of the extent and limits of property is crucial to the proper maintenance of land—and thus to livelihood and social standing. This persistent interest in constructing and

reinforcing, walking and crossing, challenging and defending boundaries is perhaps the most consistent way in which these texts present engagement with the natural world. The fact that this interest emerges so clearly in these verses underlines the importance of poetry to that process of engagement, and particularly the potential for poetry to function in a legal context as part of a larger claim to land.

The Poetry of Agricultural Landscapes

In this chapter, then, we have seen varied depictions of and responses to agricultural landscapes in poetry—verses in which identity with that landscape is expressed and explored, and the value of land asserted. Unsurprisingly, references to inheritance and possession emerge repeatedly in these contexts; the idea of ownership is central to the appeal of agricultural land, and the verses in question demonstrate the potential for poetry to function explicitly as part of related conflicts. The strong legal component to these compositions that we identified also in previous chapters, and the tendency towards the idea of repayment or requital, lends itself to the central tenet of Icelandic agricultural poetry. These verses are used variously to express grievances, to incite conflict, and to recount the (often violent) resolution of these disputes. The strong spatial dimension to these verses—most evident in the use of deixis and first-person assertions of presence—lends itself particularly to depictions of physical confrontation and crossed boundaries. Nearness or proximity, here, is most often presented as threatening: there is often a sense of intrusion expressed, as in Verse 49 of *Kormáks saga* or Verse 1 of *Víga-Glúms saga.* Conflicts over land are enacted in verse through these positioning details, through the use of paired verses, and through reference to those features of the landscape which affect the outcome.

There is, moreover, a strong sense of the impact of these conflicts present in the poetry, for example in the alignment of Jǫrð with Guðr in Verse 2 of *Víga-Glúms saga*, in the repeated image of the bloodying of the land, and in the evocative conceptual transformation of field into battlefield. The loss of land, too, is felt keenly and expressed powerfully through poetic compositions—most obviously, in this chapter, in Glúmr's verses, but also by those who have been sentenced to outlawry. As was the case with highland and coastal landscapes, responses to agricultural land in the verses of the *Íslendingasögur* vary depending on the priorities

or the techniques of the text in question, but the centrality of the impulse towards ownership is consistent. In this respect, these agricultural verses seem like natural extensions of the tendencies we have seen in the poetry of previous chapters: most of the verses we have examined have represented, at least on one level, an expression of desire for or right to land. In this respect, the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* is very much consistent with the priorities of their *landnám* narratives.

Conclusion

The intention of this study was, first and foremost, to establish that there is in fact a poetry of landscape present in the *Íslendingasögur*—and, subsequently, that these poems perform particular functions within their respective narratives which contribute usefully to our reading of the texts. A survey of the verses contained in these sagas makes clear that a large number contain depictions of the natural world, are used to varied and sophisticated effects, and are, in many instances, identified in the prose narrative as direct responses to the landscape. Certain sagas show a greater preoccupation with particular geographical areas, or repeat topographical features or images in their verses to produce particular effects, and more often than not the evocation of landscape is not only central to our understanding of the verse in question, but also to the function of that verse in its broader narrative context. The wide variety of topographical vocabulary that we find in these verses ensures that the poetic landscapes of the *Íslendingasögur* are equally varied. This variety, combined with the particular patterns of settlement and habitation in medieval Iceland, has enabled us to talk broadly about 'mountainous', 'coastal' and 'agricultural' landscapes as categories of saga verse, and thus about some of the functions and associations of these different types.

The verses of Chapter 1 demonstrate a keen interest in the Icelandic highland and its associated features—lava fields and glaciers, but also caves and burial mounds—both in terms of its conception as an uninhabited wilderness and the realities of settlement on higher, less fertile ground. It is both a location in which uncivilised or monstrous figures may be encountered and confronted, and a space to be negotiated and explored. Those texts which show a particular poetic fascination with these spaces—*Grettis saga*, *Bergbúa þáttr,* and *Eyrbyggja saga*—are also deeply concerned with the role of the poet in engaging with them. All three texts are informed by the idea of exploration of and response to the landscape through poetry, with the repeated image of poets composing in caves a particularly suggestive one. There would, moreover, seem to be a strong association of burial mounds with highland landscapes evident in a number of these verses, which is consistent both with the potential memorial function of poetry and the idea of landscape as 'temporal' or historicised. Burial as a process by which people engage with land

emerges repeatedly in relation to these texts—in the context of all three 'categories' of landscape, in fact—but it is in those verses attributed to *búar* that we find the idea of dwelling expressed most forcefully, as well as the idea of poetry as a means of engagement and/or communication with the natural world. Hallmundr and the mound-dwellers—and, in some instances, the mound-breakers—speak from *within* the landscape.

In Chapter 2, we looked at a range of verses depicting coastal landscapes as well as seascapes as viewed from both land and sea, which demonstrate the central tensions of littoral space as both the first, vital point of contact for the settler and something that is constantly changing and thus fundamentally unstable. The idea of a landscape in flux is as central to our consideration of the Icelandic coastline as it is to the images of falling rocks and tectonic activity in the highland verses of Chapter 1. Within this category, topographical features like headlands, cliffs and banks all figure prominently, as well as comparable transitional, eco-tonal spaces between land and water like islands and wetlands, which also emerge in saga verse. In the main texts of this chapter we find three very different but equally compelling evocations of the natural world. The verses of *Víglundar saga* employ a combination of coastal landscapes and seascapes deliberately juxtaposed in order to create the sense of a poetic dialogue between lovers, expressing their separation in terms of a real geographical boundary that cannot be crossed. In *Egils saga*, meanwhile, the evocation of coastal topography in the verses of the protagonist serves as part of a larger poetic claim to land, even while acknowledging the inherent dangers of the coastal existence. Through the image of burial on the headland, the idea of 'dying into the landscape' as a means of reinforcing the connection between settlers and land emerges again. *Kormáks saga*, by contrast, explicitly problematizes its protagonist by setting him repeatedly in transitional rather than central spaces, evoking that contrast between land and sea in its verses to very different effect than those in *Víglundar saga*. Depending on the text, images of coastal landscapes and seascapes in saga verse are used effectively either to undermine or to solidify the position of the individual in Icelandic society.

Finally, Chapter 3 examined the treatment of owned, agricultural land—particularly fields and their boundaries—and established that there is often a strong legal dimension to the consideration of landscape in these verses. Agricultural poetry as a

category in the *Íslendingasögur* is quite distinct from the classical pastoral and Georgic modes and derived European traditions, but aligns particularly well with that idea of landscape as something 'shaped'—lived in and through. In these verses we find an especially broad array of topographical vocabulary used to describe worked or owned land, informed in part by the different spaces of the medieval Icelandic agricultural system. Here, the underlying impulse towards ownership or possession of land that emerged also in poetic depictions of mountainous or coastal landscapes is most often made explicit. The verses of *Víga-Glúms saga* are remarkably consistent with regard to their concern with land ownership, presenting examples both of skaldic verse as a medium through which legal grievances may be voiced, and of verses used to enact conflict over land. The *Máhlíðingavísur* in *Eyrbyggja saga*, similarly, represent a legal appeal through poetry in defence of land, as well as presenting a powerful conceptual transformation of agricultural field into battlefield. The sense of impending conflict created in these verses underlies many of the poetic depictions of agricultural landscapes that we find in the sagas—at once suggestive of the need to defend claims to land, and demonstrating a consciousness of the physical impact of battle on the landscape.

Having examined the verses of the *Íslendingasögur* with respect to their depiction of these different 'types' of landscape, then, we are now in a position to consider these categories together. Is there a clear distinction, for example, between the poetic depictions of mountainous, coastal and agricultural landscapes in these texts? While discussion of these categories individually underlines some of the inherent associations of these spaces, in many instances there are obvious intersections between these landscape 'types'—something that is particularly evident when thinking about 'worked' land in these texts. When Kormákr declares, for example, in Verse 9 of *Kormáks saga* that he would rather not venture up the mountain to "mórauða sauði umb afréttu elta [chase yellow-brown sheep around the pasture]" (9.6-7), or when we are presented with a description of a fishing bank in Verse 3 of *Bárðar saga*, depictions of highlands and coastlines are recognisable as the complementary components of the Icelandic agricultural system discussed in Chapter 3. Mountainous and coastal landscapes are objectively less central to Icelandic society than the agricultural landscapes that formed the focus of Chapter 3, yet both are at points presented as sites of settlement, in *Grettis saga* and *Egils saga*

respectively—and the juxtaposition of mountain and coastline together, of course, evokes the bounds of habitable land as established in *landnám* narratives. While these landscapes are both presented in the sagas as marginal to some degree, physical and social conflicts are as just as evident in the context of agricultural land as they are at its boundaries—arguably more so. Rather than consider these spaces entirely distinct from one another, it is perhaps more useful to think of them as complementary.

Clearly, these are helpful categories insofar as they enable us to delineate the major spaces of medieval Iceland, and to identify some of the topographical vocabulary associated with these spaces—but they are also sufficiently varied in their presentation and use in the narrative to deny any easy equations of landscape type with literary function. Skaldic landscapes are not excessively formulaic, and indeed—depending on the text—may be highly nuanced. There is often overlap between the functions of features that emerge in the context of different categories: more physically demanding or dangerous landscapes, like coastal cliffs or steep slopes, are in some texts used very effectively as sites for conflict or confrontation, as an indicator of a precarious position or as physical obstacles that in some way affect the choreography of a battle. Burial sites emerge in the context of all three chapters, and to varying effect within those categories: as individual memorials, as physical monuments affirming the ties of a particular family to the land in question, as visual prompts to poetic composition, and as markers of feud and incitements to further conflict. The act of 'giving land', in some verses, is reframed as a physical threat and a promise to put an enemy in the ground. Different combinations of topographical features are, moreover, evoked to achieve particular effects. Verses 9 and 10 in *Víglundar saga*, for example, present an image of a coastal landscape viewed from the sea that also contains highland terrain, with the mountain itself as a visual reference point for the poet—both a marker of distance and a symbol of the woman he loves. The final sequence of verses in *Víga-Glúms saga*, meanwhile, is used to enact a physical confrontation over land, but evokes a distinctly coastal topography in order to do so, in sharp contrast to the agricultural spaces that dominate the text as a whole. While we can identify the more common associations evoked through these different types of landscape, their use in skaldic poetry is often more complex and interesting than any such generalizations would convey.

The Significance of Skaldic Landscapes

At this point we might consider some of the implications of this study, beginning with the fact that there is a clear consciousness of the natural world present in the poetry of medieval Iceland. There has for a long time been acknowledgement of and interest in Celtic nature poetry, beginning with Kenneth Jackson's seminal 1935 study, which translated and discussed some of the different types of nature poems in Welsh and Irish up to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the field of Old English literature, too, scholarly interest in this area has flourished, particularly in recent years with the development of the field of ecocriticism. Sarah Lynn Higley (1993) has discussed at length the problems of defining and working with nature poetry in both Old English and early Welsh, while Jennifer Neville's survey of representations of the natural world in Old English poetry (1999) acknowledges that any study of 'the natural world' in these texts must necessarily incorporate both supernatural and human elements (2). Alfred K. Siewers (2009), meanwhile, has approached the 'Otherworld' trope in early Irish and Welsh poetry from an explicitly ecocritical perspective, and Matt Low (2009) has applied a similar approach to the Old English elegies. Most recently, Corinne Dale (2017) has examined depictions of nature in the Exeter Book riddles, emphasising the need to resist anthropocentric readings of these texts (29). Though there has been renewed interest in the study of landscape in the field of Old Norse literature, we have certainly not seen the same attention paid to this aspect in its poetry. Yet, as has become clear over the course of this study, there is a well-developed and highly evocative poetry of landscape present in the *Íslendingasögur*, which is used to great effect in these texts.

This poetry is moreover of interest not only to any broader discussion of landscape in the Icelandic sagas, but also to the discourse of skaldic verse itself. These verses about landscape do not fit neatly into any of the genres or categories commonly discussed—praise poetry, *níð* or *mansǫngr*, for example—nor do they necessarily serve the same functions. There are, of course, limitations to the application of generic categories to medieval text: the use of genres in saga studies has for example been frequently disputed, and Edith Marold has discussed problems with too broad

an application of the term *mansǫngr* to skaldic love poetry (239-240).[36] Provided we acknowledge that these generic categories are often modern constructs, and that problems may arise where they are applied too broadly or too rigidly, we can recognise their usefulness to the study of these texts. There is certainly a body of poetry in the *Íslendingasögur* which demonstrates some coherence with regard to its interest in landscape and the imagery employed, which might reasonably be referred to as 'landscape poetry'. We have seen some overlap between certain of these landscape verses and other categories of skaldic poetry: for example, in *Kormáks saga* and *Víglundar saga*, where verses composed about women use landscapes and seascapes as points of reference for expressions of feeling, or the visceral depictions of warfare in the *Máhliðingarvísur* which are nevertheless firmly grounded in depictions of land. Verses with a commemorative or memorial function, like *Sonatorrek* and Verse 11 of *Gísla saga*, unsurprisingly, are often centred on or framed by contemplation of the Icelandic landscape. In the verses of *Bjarnar saga*, we even find examples of coastal landscapes evoked in the context of insult poetry to produce a specific effect. Yet there are equally many verses which cannot be aligned with an acknowledged genre of skaldic poetry, which surely demand that landscape poetry be considered a category in itself.

What all these landscape verses have in common, unquestionably, is a preoccupation with ownership—whether in the context of settlement, land and boundary disputes, or broader social conflicts. This is again expressed in a variety of ways: from the explicit legal challenges and defences of *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*, to the use of 'domestic' vocabulary like *hús* and *bingr* in the context of caves and lava-fields, to Egill's expression of paternal grief in *Sonatorrek*, which is couched in terms of lines of inheritance and the original act of *landnám*. Even where women are described in the context of these landscape verses, as in *Gunnlaugs saga* and *Víglundar saga*, associations are drawn repeatedly between the acts of land-taking and physical intimacy. These verses fall into the category loosely defined by Margaret Clunies Ross as "poetry composed and performed for defined, socially

[36] For key discussions of the use of genre in saga studies, see articles by Lars Lönnroth, Theodore Andersson and Joseph Harris in Vol. 47 of *Scandinavian Studies* (1975). Massimiliano Bampi (2017) provides a good overview of various debates on this subject (6-7). On generic hybridity in the sagas, see for example Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, 'Generic Hybrids' (2005). On the idea of genre as expectation, and the application of genre to oral cultures in the Middle Ages more broadly, see Ardis Butterfield, 'Medieval Genres and Modern Theory' (1990).

identifiable purposes in harmony with the major themes of saga literature as a whole" (*History of Old Norse Poetry* 68), and beyond this demonstrate a broader concern with the relationship of people to the natural world.

In fact, if we think about poetry as a medium through which people can engage with landscape, it becomes clear how central these verses are to the underlying narratives of the *Íslendingasögur*, which attempt to record and reinforce a connection between the Icelandic people and the land they inhabit. The processes by which previously uninhabited land is settled, divided and claimed, and subsequent actions either intended to evoke the initial *landnám* or which represent new ways of engaging with the landscape, are all as embedded in the poetry of these texts as they are in the prose. Verses can establish the position of the speaker in relation to land, whether that position is an emphatic assertion of presence and identity, or an expression of marginality or dispossession—and, as is often the case in the sagas, can be used to trace the movement of an individual from one to the other. As we have seen in the poetry of *Egils saga* and *Gísla saga*, the social function of memorial verses in an Icelandic context is twofold: simultaneously commemorative and a means of solidifying claims to land. The potential for poetry to be framed in a particular legal context, and to utilise legal language, meanwhile ensures that it is used to express grievances over loss of land or unlawful inheritance, and to enact disputes over and at boundaries. In some instances, as in the case of the cave verses, *Hallmundarkviða*, and the *Lóndrangar* episode in *Landnámabók*, poetry may even be used to give voice to the landscape itself—to articulate the other side of the ongoing negotiation between people and land, and to conceive of natural processes like echoes, crashing waves, or volcanic eruptions in recognisably human terms. In this ongoing dialogue between the landscape and its inhabitants, the poet plays a central, communicative role.

Thinking about landscape poetry as a category in these texts enables us to consider and to some extent reassess the role of the poet as presented by the saga writers. In the various examples we find of poets composing verses about landscape, we find that the narrative context often underlines the social, legal, or physical impact of the verse in question. In some instances, this is achieved through an emphasis on the need to remember and/or preserve that verse, as in *Grettis saga* and *Hallmundarkviða*; elsewhere, the consequences of particular poetic compositions are

explicitly shown or discussed. The verses composed by the protagonist of *Bjarnar saga* to undermine his rival, which rely on a particular construction of coastal space as marginal or threatening, are discussed at length by members of the community with regard to their potential impact on the individual's social standing. In *Gísla saga*, Gísli's admission of guilt in his verse about Þorgrímr's burial place is overheard, memorised, and recited as an incitement for further conflict. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, meanwhile, a sequence of verses in which a man recounts defending his property is powerfully framed in terms of an appeal against the legal consequences he faces for his actions. Just as the poetry functions as an essential part of the saga narrative's underlying claim to land, so the poet is presented in these texts as someone with the potential to *make* that claim.

The Afterlife of Skaldic Landscapes

I observed at the beginning of this study that the 'landscape tradition' in art and literature developed differently in Iceland than it did on the continent. Landscape painting was a particularly late import to Iceland, beginning with some early examples in the nineteenth century (Anna Jóhannsdóttir and Ástráður Eysteinsson 143), but only really taking hold at the turn of the twentieth century with the work of artists such as Þórarinn B. Þorláksson and Ásgrímur Jónsson. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the style of painting gained popularity in the years leading up to Icelandic independence as a means of asserting "the beauty of the country, as well as the cultural and historical values inherent in it" (Anna Jóhannsdóttir and Ástráður Eysteinsson 144). Iceland is thus in the position of having produced native landscape poetry before landscape painting. Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson has observed that "the places that [Romantic poets] pick as settings for their poetry are often the same as those the succeeding landscape artists of the twentieth century would visualize in their paintings; for instance, Þingvellir, Hekla, the Laugarvatn area, and other such places that were mediated as pivotal to the Icelanders" ('Nation and Elevation' 139). Many of these 'pivotal' sites of interest, of course, are also locations of importance in the *Íslendingasögur*—landscape and literature together serving as reference points for the formation of a national identity. As Reinhard Hennig puts it, "The preservation of the narrative as well as that of the landscape is imperative, because neither of them can exist without the other" (70).

Klaus Müller-Wille, in his overview of the development of Scandinavian Romanticism, argues that in Iceland, as in Norway, Romanticism cannot be explained in terms of a dichotomy between contrasting literary movements, but instead "is more concerned with the question of national differentiation than the demand for a clear epochal break" (581). He identifies reference to Viking and medieval subject matter as one of the common Scandinavian "national literary strategies" (581), in addition to a tendency to "vary, modify, or criticize positions or writing techniques of European Romanticism" (583). This was certainly true in Iceland, where the development of a distinct national literature—for which the sagas of course formed the basis—was central to the movement for independence from Denmark. Simon Halink has, moreover, emphasised "the spatial dimension of the Icelandic nation-building process" through "the Romantic construction of *lieux de littérature*, or sagascapes" (210-211).

The landscape tradition as we find it in skaldic poetry is by no means isolated. Just as landscape verses function effectively as part of the saga narratives in asserting and/or defending claims to land, and in forging the identity of the Icelandic people with the land they inhabited, poetic landscapes played a crucial role in the formation of an Icelandic national literature in the nineteenth century. The influence of this tradition is particularly evident in the work of Jónas Hallgrímsson, a key figure in the movement for independence, often cited as the father of Icelandic Romanticism, whose poetry was strongly informed by the landscapes of his homeland. In 'Gunnarshólmi' (1839), we will recall, Jónas appropriates a site of significance in *Njáls saga* as a focal point for the expression of nationalistic feeling—a poem which Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson describes as "critical in the development of the visual definition and nationalistic interpretation of Icelandic nature" ('Nation and Elevation' 137). In addition to this interest in saga places, Jonas' work shows a strong consciousness of the effects of evoking both eddic and skaldic metres, and an interest in saga verse more generally. With the first stanza of 'Suður fórumk um ver' (1847), for example, Jónas consciously imitates the opening lines of *Hǫfuðlausn*, effectively aligning his own return home to Iceland with the movements of Egill:

Suður fórumk um ver,	South I travelled over sea,
en eg svarna ber	and I bear sworn
öflga eiðstafi	powerful words

úr úthafi:	from out at sea:
...	...

In this manner, Jónas is consciously aligning himself not only with the saga protagonist, but particularly with the *poet*-protagonist—an effect which is moreover achieved through reference to a particular poetic seascape. Many of the depictions of landscape we find in his poetry are similarly recognisable, not only in the cases of deliberate references to saga sites or verses, but in terms of the effects to which the landscapes are used. In 'Fjallið Skjaldbreiður' (1845), for instance, Jónas looks up at a mountain and imagines the volcanic eruption that formed the landscape upon which he stands. The poem opens as follows:

Fanna skautar faldi háum	It shoots up with a high hood of snow,
fjallið, allra hæða val;	the mountain, choice of all heights;
hrauna veitir bárum bláum	pours with black waves of lava fields
breiðan fram um heiðardal.	forth over the broad dale of the heath.
…	…

This opening image of the mountain shooting up and lava pouring out over the heath again creates that sense that we found in *Hallmundarkviða* of the landscape emerging through processes embedded in the poem itself. Later in 'Fjallið Skjaldbreiður' we moreover find a description of the poet treading the lava-field alone (ll. 83-84), and a concluding address to *heiðabúar* (ll. 81ff.), dwellers in the landscape, both of which recall images we have seen in our survey of skaldic landscapes.

In 'Sláttuvísa' (1844), meanwhile, Jónas deliberately adopts a *dróttkvætt* metre for his depiction of mowing fields:

Fellur vel á velli	It falls well in the field,
verkið karli sterkum,	the work for the strong man,
syngur enn á engi	the spike-edge sings still in
eggjuð spík ok rýkur	the meadow, and the green
grasið grænt á mosa,	grass flies to moss,
grundin þýtur undir,	the ground sounds under,

blómin bíða dóminn,	the flowers await their sentence,
bítur ljár í skára.	the scythe bites in a swathe.

Here we find another image that emerged in the course of our assessment of saga verse: Jónas plays intentionally on that double sense of the verb *slá*—'to mow', and also 'to slay'—and proceeds to extend that image across four stanzas. The tension between idyllic and ominous is evident even in this opening verse, as "blómin bíða dóminn [the flowers await their sentence]" (1.7). This threat of violence in the context of an agricultural landscape strongly recalls those images of the bloodying of the field in *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga.*

In one of Jónas' latest poems, written in the final year of his life, we meanwhile find a particularly powerful depiction of inhabiting the landscape. Ideas of dwelling in or dying into the landscape are, as we have seen, central to numerous verses in the *Íslendingasögur*. 'Einbúinn' (1847) expresses many of the same impulses we find in the sagas' narratives of settlement, but combines it with an expression of poetic frustration:

Yfir dal, yfir sund,	Over dale, over sound,
yfir gil, yfir grund,	over gorge, over ground,
hef ég gengið á vindléttum fótum;	I have gone on wind-light feet;
ég hef leitað mér að	I have looked for myself
hvar ég ætti mér stað,	where I might own a place for myself,
út um öldar og fjöll og í gjótum.	out on waves and mountains and in gaps.
En ég fann ekki neinn,	But I found not one,
ég er orðinn of seinn,	I have become too slow,
það er alsett af lífandi og dauðum.	it is full of the living and dead.
Ég er einbúi nú,	I am a lone-dweller now,
og á mér nú bú	and now own for myself a farm
í eldinum logandi rauðum.	in the burning red flames.

This exploration of the land in order to find "hvar ég ætti mér stað [where I might own a place for myself]" (l. 5), particularly combined with that assertion of ownership in the penultimate line, is surely intended to evoke that original act of

land-taking in Iceland. The sense of belatedness, of there being no place for him, however, resonates not only with the idea that there was limited land to be taken at the time of settlement, but also with the idea of the weight of literary tradition—of both landscape and poetry as in some sense 'full of the living and dead'. Jónas Hallgrímsson was, of course, influenced by classical and continental traditions as well as by his native Icelandic literature, but he clearly had a keen sense of the preoccupations of saga literature—and the verses it contained—which informed his own work. Those poems of his which deal with the natural world demonstrate many of the same conceptions of the Icelandic landscape that we find in saga verse; the similarities between the imagery deliberately employed by Jónas in his work and the poetic responses to landscape that we find in the *Íslendingasögur* are striking. The same poetic techniques and images are employed in each case to create a sense of identity with the landscape.

Even setting aside the influence of medieval texts on the creation of a distinctly Icelandic national literature in the nineteenth century, it is clear that there was already a sophisticated poetry of landscape present in the saga literature. These are verses which depict the variability and the uniqueness of the Icelandic landscape, which consider both its dangers and its appeals, which express the connection of the people to the land through evocation of the initial points of settlement and through conversation with supernatural figures, and which are used to assert ownership over that land. To talk about the development of a landscape tradition in Icelandic literature, and particularly the development of landscape poetry, the verses contained in the *Íslendingasögur* must be taken into account. The verses discussed in this study are not only powerful evocations of the medieval Icelandic landscape, but also function as an important part of the saga narratives themselves, both in terms of the various effects they are used to produce, and the larger claim to land that these texts are making. The relationship between poetry and landscape is clearly of fundamental interest to saga writers, and an understanding of these verses is essential to any study of landscape or poetry in medieval Iceland.

Abbreviations

ÍF	*Íslenzk Fornrit*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
ONP	*Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog / Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*

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