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Autor: Degnbol, Helle

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"Fair words": The French poem *Floire et Blancheflor*, the Old Norse prose narrative *Flóress saga ok Blankiflúr*, and the Swedish poem *Flores och Blanzaflor*[1]

HELLE DEGNBOL, KOPENHAGEN

The French narrative poem of Floire and Blancheflor (*FB/Fr.*),[2] dated to the middle of the twelfth century, was translated, probably from an Anglo-Norman version, into a Norwegian prose narrative (*FsB/saga*)[3] prior to the appearance of a Swedish poetic rendering in about 1312 (*FoB/Swed.*).[4] The saga is almost exclusively transmitted in Icelandic manuscripts, of which there are about 25, spanning the period between c. 1385 and 1900. There are also post-medieval Icelandic rewritings in the form of so-called *rímur* not to be discussed here.[5]

Floire et Blancheflor: the story

In the French story of Floire and Blancheflor the heathen prince Floire, on account of incompatible social status, has been separated from his beloved Blancheflor, the

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1 This paper is a revised version of Degnbol 1998.

2 Two editions from 1980 mark a considerable advance in comparison with the many earlier editions of *FB*. The first volume of the work referred to here as Leclanche 1980a I–II is a synoptic edition of three texts, A, B, and V; the second volume consists of a scholarly study of the manuscript transmission and the entire European tradition. All references in this article, unless stated otherwise, are to verse lines in the A text of this edition. The other edition, Leclanche 1980b, has A as its base text.

3 References to *FsB* are to the standard edition, Kölbing 1896. Kölbing's text is normalised and his reading of the manuscripts is reliable, but the edition as a whole, given that it reconstructs the text without marking the reconstructions typographically, is potentially misleading (cf. note 37 below). It is necessary to consult the variant passages (with their separate chapter numbering), printed in the appendix on 78–85 of the edition, and it is of prime importance to consult xx–xxiii of the introduction (xx, n. 1) where there is text-critical information concerning 54–57 of the saga text. For these particular pages of Kölbing's edition it is, however, safer to use Storm 1874, 24–28. For a general bibliography of the saga, see Kalinke & Mitchell 1985, 41–45; reference may also be made to two lexicon articles: Degnbol 1985; Carlé 1993.

4 For *FoB*, references are made to verse lines in the 1956 edition (Olson 1956). This text has also been pieced together (cf. note 3 above). Even though the number of emendations is limited – and they are clearly marked and well documented – they are, nonetheless, neither error-free nor definitive, making the reconstructed edition impractical to work with. Leclanche unfortunately refers to an obsolete edition with diverging verse numbers, Klemming 1844, yet this does not seem to have had a negative effect on his findings. For bibliography and recent lexicon articles, see note 66 below.

5 The most recent presentation of the saga in the context of European/Nordic romance is to be found in Nyborg 2005, 8–18, 92–100.

daughter of an imprisoned Christian woman. Like the hero of a folktale, he leaves home in search of his bride, equipped with treasures and a magic object (a ring). At every stage of his journey Blancheflor has been there just before him, as a preamble. He achieves his final goal, however, not just by generous gifts and striking cunning, but also by virtue of feudal relationships and, as it seems, genuine friendships; Floire is not the unruffled hero but a character who develops from vacillating lovesick child to resolute youth and promising adolescent. There are no violent episodes during the quest, for Floire is not a warring knight, and he is not exposed to the chivalric challenges of the romances. The magic of the story rests principally in the amazing similarity between the two lovers: in respect to their age, the level of their education and culture, and their beauty; even their difference in gender is almost lost from view.

What was it in this story that made the greatest impact on its listeners?

The audience that followed the hero on his long quest for the heroine and witnessed the love and unbroken comradeship of the two main characters, possibly remembered and retold *FB* principally as an absorbing tale of two children's overriding love that conquers all. Yet alongside this, the accounts of the travelling across seas and rivers, with magnificent feasts in harbour towns, must have engaged listeners however near or far their relation to crusades and pilgrimages may have been. At the story's climax there is a description of the emir's orientally extravagant palace and of his harem in Babylon to which Blancheflor has been sold; here she will meet her grim fate, should Floire not manage to rescue her. The gate and the gatekeeper are the principal obstacles in the hero's path; central to the plot and particularly memorable is the series of chess matches, lasting three days, by which Floire challenges the gatekeeper and finally gains access to the fortress; the importance of the chess matches is accentuated in the narrative structure: each game and every manoeuvre is expounded in advance – only to be subsequently played out in reality as an echo. The parleying at the emir's court on the fate of the young lovers is not just a means of drawing out the suspense; it also matches the audience's interest in the exercise of power and in political strategems.

The denouement of the narrative, the account of how Floire finally wins Blancheflor, is something that I will return to. When love has triumphed in the end, and the hero and heroine have guaranteed the security of their kingdom and of their lineage, Blancheflor remembers her Christian background, and as a result, the audience is pulled out of the world of adventure and placed in a Christian framework, which operates both for the story they have listened to and for their own lives. *FB* is rooted in a heathen-Christian conflict, and thanks to the Christian postlude (cf. below) it becomes the story not only of a hero's but also of an entire nation's conversion from heathendom to Christianity.[6]

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[6] In a freely-composed Icelandic saga, *Sigurðar saga þögla*, there is a reference to *FsB* with special emphasis on the christianisation (Loth 1963, 99–102).

Whatever importance one attaches to the different aspects of this story it clearly had high entertainment value, and from its origins in France it quickly spread and developed throughout medieval Europe. And nowadays we pose questions like: where, when and at whose instigation was the story promulgated? in what sort of milieu was the story transmitted and to what purpose? and how was the retelling carried out?

We will first trace the textual connections between the French narrative and the Nordic counterpart as represented in two forms: the Old Norse saga and the Swedish poem.

Translation vs. transmission

Although research into this literary group, that is to say the works translated from the French, has naturally enough concentrated on translation issues, anyone who wants to look at *Flóress saga ok Blankiflúr* must accept the fact that he is faced with what is both a valuable and multifarious, but in its surviving form also extremely shaky, transmission, in which the individual texts require both an overview and an eye for detail if they are to form the basis for anything resembling a general conclusion about issues such as the nature of the translation.

Tale and romance ('conte' and 'roman'): two French versions

In the field of French studies it is Jean-Luc Leclanche who has shown the way, and it is the multitude of witnesses both within and beyond the francophile area that has inspired Leclanche to give his monograph the subtitle "un cas privilégié".[7] By means of a disciplined philological exposition of the entire European tradition and a clear presentation of the French material Leclanche comes close to one of his goals: a silhouette of the original story. It belongs to the very earliest stage of *roman*-writing, a refined poem in octosyllabic couplets, probably originating close to the court of Louis VII and Aliénor in the middle of the twelfth century. Leclanche chooses to call this older version, usually described as the "aristocratic", by its own designation *le conte* ('li contes'), and he characterises it as having a "ton pré-courtois".[8]

For version II, the *jongleur* version, usually called "populaire", that developed only fifty years later, Leclanche also uses the text's own designation *le roman* ('le romanz'), and he observes that with this composition a change of fashion emerges, since it is aimed at an audience that, while still aristocratic, is younger and consists of

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7 Leclanche 1980a I–II.
8 Leclanche 1980a II, 194.

knights of a more warlike disposition; the clerical ideology of version I is, in this new version, confronted with an essentially chivalric ideology.[9]

'Le conte' (version I) plays the main role in relation to the Nordic transmission, but 'le roman' (version II), of which the final section is missing, should nonetheless be given due consideration when speculating about the apparently rewritten conclusion of the Nordic story.

The continental tradition and the insular tradition: two European traditions

Anyone who wants to study the development of our story must start with Leclanche's dissertation. With the appearance of this work, the efforts of many researchers over a long period of time seem to be placed in perspective, and significant features of the stemmatic relationships seem to be clarified.[10] His comprehensive and inspired contribution represents an enormous step forward but also a renewed challenge. The Romance philologist now has clear guidelines when he wishes to fit the European – not least the Nordic – pieces into his jigsaw puzzle; and whoever wants to work with the Nordic material now knows for certain that he will have to navigate between three French texts of version I.[11]

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9 Leclanche 1980a II, 247–248; cf. 222bis. Leclanche avoids the traditional terms "aristocratic" and "popular" on account of an awareness that *both* versions belonged to an *aristocratic* setting. Although Leclanche lists version II as a *jongleur* version, he warns against any assumption that it is the result of improvisation.

10 For a full history of previous research and bibliography, I refer to Leclanche's work to which the present article is in many respects indebted.

11 A fairly recent study by the Hispanic scholar Patricia Grieve, "*Floire et Blancheflor* and the European Romance" (1997), does not, unfortunately, connect to any of this scholarship. Patricia Grieve remarks that a "French ms." discovered in 1916 "did not receive the attention it deserved" (15), yet this Anglo-Norman text, *Fr.* V, is the very backbone of Leclanche's thesis (cf. also note 46 below). It would have been interesting to see how the rediscovered Spanish *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* fits or does not fit into the puzzle, but neither Leclanche 1980a I–II – this indispensable seminal study – nor the 1966-edition of the Middle English FB, nor the appropriate editions of the Swedish and Norwegian material are referred to by Grieve, and the study thus presents a confused and confusing picture of the European *FB* scene, with disconnected arguments resting on no sound textual foundation. Yet textual criticism is appealed to to lend authority to the notion of the Nordic saga as a veritable "hagiographic transformation" (119; cf. Barnes 1977), a notion which I contest (cf. Degnbol 1979; Barnes 1986–1989). The study, no doubt valuable in parts, has been most favourably reviewed by hispanologists, e.g. Weissberger 2000, but it is not possible to support the statement of the review that the book contains "a concise summary of the prevailing scholarly views on the origins and influences of the European versions of the tale", just as one cannot accept laudatory remarks about "useful appendices" (see e.g. the Nordic material of Appendix B) and an "admirably comprehensive" bibliography. For a more balanced review, see Barnes 2001. The idea of Spanish-Norwegian contacts in connection with this very popular European tale is neither unattractive nor to be excluded, but textual evidence for a specific Spanish influence on the Norwegian translation, based on one particular passage (cf. 50 & 80, with reference to Barnes

In his commentated synoptic edition (1980a I) Leclanche presents these three texts: an Anglo-Norman, V, from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and two continental French texts, A, which is from Picardy and dated to the end of the thirteenth century, alongside B, which is from Ile de France or Champagne, dated to the beginning of the fourteenth century.

All three texts have text-critical significance. V gives the better representation of the original text, but it is unfortunately defect: not only the very beginning but also all of the second half of the story is missing – Floire is only halfway to Babylon when this text breaks off.[12] A and B, which stemmatically share a common position in contrast to V, are, however, complete texts; this is of the greatest importance, since throughout the narrative, where V is available for comparison, they contain readings that are more original. Leclanche plots the nature of the relationship between these three texts by reference to the foreign versions of the tale.

The story did indeed find its way into most of European literature at an early stage, such that we find it, for example, in Flemish, Low German, Low Rhenish, High German, Yiddish, Italian, Spanish, Czech, and Greek.

Leclanche describes A and B as belonging to the *continental tradition*. He was faced with a choice between one of these two complete texts as the base text for his edition in the series Les Classiques français du moyen âge (1980b), and the choice was clearly painful. A, on the one hand, has quite prominent deviations from the original text – mainly a series of interpolations and, at one point in the narrative, regrettable omissions (in the central chess episode) – but fortunately these deviations are readily identifiable. B, on the other hand, has relatively more re-workings, although of a less blatant character, besides some minor errors. The choice therefore fell on A as a "vulgate continentale"; the interpolations are rendered in small print and the worst lacunae are principally repaired with the help of B; there are also modest emendations, based on both B and V.

Alongside the continental tradition Leclanche presents the so-called *insular tradition,* consisting of Anglo-Norman, English, and Nordic texts. The French version, which made its way to England, appears to have been translated into English (*Engl.*)[13] and into Norwegian *before* undergoing some minor changes that are now witnessed in V.[14] These three texts in combination (*Fr.* V/*Engl.*/*saga*) represent a "vulgate insulaire", and "à nos yeux cette vulgate se confond pratiquement avec la version ancienne du poème."[15]

1975, 156) is weak (cf. Degnbol 1979, 75–76). The texts deserve investigation and discussion, and an edition of the *Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor* is a desideratum.

12 The Anglo-Norman manuscript first emerged in 1916 and was for example therefore not used by Kölbing in his 1896 edition of the saga.

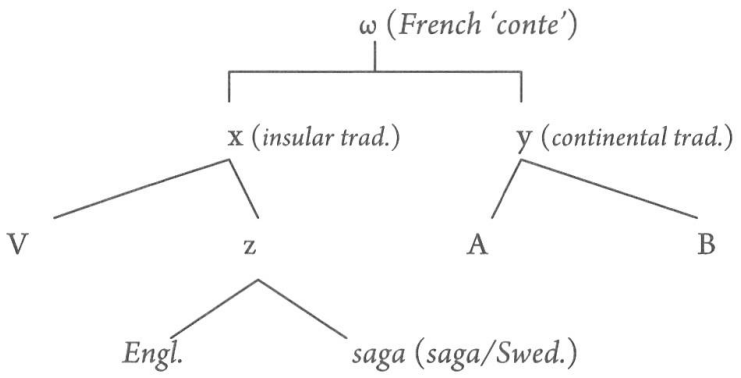
13 Edited by de Vries (1966), a synoptic edition consisting of four manuscript texts, all of which are defect.

14 Cf. Leclanche 1980a II, 168–172. Leclanche presents all his stemmatical hypotheses with great caution.

15 Leclanche 1980a II, 194.

One will immediately understand that the Nordic transmission is of the utmost importance to anyone concerned with speculations about an original version of the French tale: it not only occupies a high position in the stemma, but on account of its being in prose (a *saga* is a prose narrative) it has not been forced to adapt itself to the rhymes and rhythms of a metrical form. The other insular version, *Engl.*, is also important in any reconstruction of an original French text, but it is more difficult to take it into account, given that like its French model it is composed in octosyllabic couplets and is on the whole significantly shortened.

Leclanche gives priority to the following of three possible stemmas:[16]



Here *saga* is to be understood as *saga/Swed.*, since it must be remembered that it is the combined Nordic transmission that points back to an often more original French version than the version represented by the three surviving French texts (V/A/B). The Romance philologist can make use of the above stemma as follows: where *saga/Swed.* agree with AB against V, AB's common reading is to be preferred; where *saga/Swed.* stand alone against a united VAB, the latter has the better reading; where *saga/Swed.* and the Anglo-Norman fragment V show common agreement in opposition to AB, however, there is no way of determining which group has the more original reading.

Two further texts, which Leclanche associates with the continental branch, are relevant for stemmatic purposes: a High German narrative poem by Konrad Fleck and (even more significantly) a Flemish poem (*Flem.*) by Diederic van Assenede.

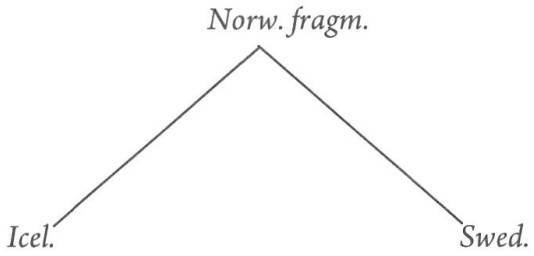
The Old Norse saga and the Swedish narrative poem: two Nordic works

We have seen that it is not possible to refer to one single French text in isolation; the medieval Nordic situation is even more fraught.[17] All that remains of a Norwegian *FsB* is one small fragment; in Iceland on the other hand, the saga had a long shelf-

[16] Leclanche 1980a II, 104.

[17] The post-medieval material has been investigated and is not incorporated in the present discussion.

life; and the Norwegian saga was converted into Swedish verse very soon or immediately after being translated from the French. This produces the following stemma:



The Old Norse transmission is thus almost exclusively Icelandic – but the Icelandic transmission does not give a reliable representation of the original Norwegian translation. The oldest Icelandic manuscript, dated to the end of the fourteenth century (*Icel.*[1]; AM 575 a 4°), contains the comparatively more faithful text, but the manuscript is defect and contains only eight of what was originally twenty folios (i.e. only 40% remains). The other medieval Icelandic manuscript, which is from c. 1450 (*Icel.*[2]; AM 489 4°), gives us the saga from start to finish, but the text spans only 10 folios, about half of the original *Icel.*[1], and is both sharply précised and often corrupt.[18] The two Icelandic manuscripts supplement each other, yet in combination they come nowhere near to giving a trustworthy representation of the original Norwegian translation from the French.

In this situation we are therefore especially fortunate to have remnants of a Norwegian manuscript from the beginning of the fourteenth century (*Norw. fragm.*; NRA 65);[19] though fragmentary, it is nonetheless the nearest we can get to the original translation.

The saga is to some extent, text-critically speaking, also represented by *Swed.*, in that it was translated into Swedish verse prior to the significant corruption of the tradition that is represented in *Icel.*[1] and *Icel.*[2]. The oldest Swedish manuscript is from about 1350.[20]

The text of *Norw. fragm.* is so consistently faithful to *Fr.* that it must be close to the original translation – possibly even identical with it (see below); in the passage

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[18] Kölbing is therefore right in describing *Icel.*[2] as "eine vielfach gekürzte und abgeänderte redaktion des textes" (1896, xviii), while Geraldine Barnes inappropriately dismisses Kölbing's assessment as "an exaggeration" (1974–1977, 432). From the facsimile edition of *Icel.*[2], Blaisdell 1980, fols. 27v–36r, it is evident that the manuscript moreover has suffered considerable physical damage.

[19] I deliberately choose to abandon the traditional but rather confusing convention by which *Icel.*[1], *Icel.*[2], and *Norw. fragm.* are called N, M, and R.

[20] The medieval Danish translation of the Swedish, which is included as a variant text in Olson's edition (1956), is occasionally text-critically significant for the saga.

of text covered by the fragment neither *Swed.* nor *Icel.*[2] contain readings that are *provably* more original.[21]

The Old Norse saga: Norwegian translation and Icelandic transmission

If the translation itself is to be assessed, it is clearly legitimate in the first instance to concentrate on the passage contained in the Norwegian fragment and compare it with on the one hand the corresponding 150 lines in *Fr.*, and on the other hand *Icel.*[2] and *Swed.* (approx. 76 lines). By way of control, *Engl.* and, of other texts, principally *Flem.* can be referred to. The investigation is blurred by the fact that both *Fr.* V (the Anglo-Norman manuscript, to which the Norwegian corresponds most closely) and *Icel.*[1] (the better of the two Icelandic manuscripts) are defect at this point in the narrative, where Floire has arrived in Babylon. Here he receives his friendly host's advice on how to get around the gatekeeper – with the help of three games of chess (and an extra trump, the golden beaker); thereafter Floire carries out the plan, playing the three chess games – thus we have in all six rather similar accounts.

In 1972 Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen arranged *Norw. fragm.* and *Fr.*[22] side by side and showed that the Norwegian translation was reasonably faithful.[23] Halvorsen's conclusion was subsequently confirmed and described in further detail.[24] The Norwegian translation admittedly contains misunderstandings and a number of changes of the type one can only expect in connection with the transfer of material from one language to another, additionally from one culture to another, and furthermore from poetry to prose; nevertheless the translation is remarkably close: the narrative thread is intact; all the details of the story are reproduced in faithful order, with only the final game of chess being slightly shortened. (The plot would have been completely comprehensible even if it had been significantly cut back, which is what has happened in fact in both *Swed.* and *Engl.*)[25] There are indications that the original Nor-

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21 A number of readings could, however, be used to argue that there was once a Nordic archetype that was very slightly closer to *Fr.* Further discussion of this issue lies outside the scope of the present paper.

22 The B text with variants where necessary from A. (By marking the variants "AC", Halvorsen irrelevantly introduces C which is a secondary manuscript.).

23 Halvorsen 1972.

24 Degnbol & Sanders 1982.

25 It is to be noted that there are effectively no changes of content in the relevant passage. On the other hand this observation cannot form the basis for a generalisation about the translation as a whole (let alone about other comparable translations), since this passage, being largely narrative in character, does not provide opportunity for ideological or other types of adjustment.

The study made by Geraldine Barnes of the same passage (1974–1977, 418–432) is erroneous, since she ignores the French B-text and only makes use of A, which at exactly this point is incomplete (cf. Leclanche 1980a II, 160, 162–163bis, 166). As an example, the worst misrepresentation in Geraldine Barnes' synoptic arrangement of the texts (420–431) is as follows: the French segments 27, 29, and 32–38 are registered as being blank (segment 28 ought, as a logical extension of this, also be blank, but is supplied with an incorrectly re-

wegian translation was even a little closer to its French exemplar than was earlier thought. Thus the two Norwegian readings which Halvorsen cites as examples of "des traductions inexactes, ou plutôt libres",[26] are actually supported by *Engl.* and *Flem.*, and the readings in *Norw. fragm.* could therefore represent an older stage in the transmission than the existing *Fr.* AB.[27]

On the basis of the extremely sparse Norwegian material we can make the following observations about differences in style: there is a slightly pedantic tendency to explicate the development of the narrative; and there is a certain smoothening out or slackening in relation to what in the French was already a very restrained narrative style. The verbal games used with fine aesthetic effect, relying on echo and mirror images, which Leclanche brought out especially in the chess episode in *Fr.*,[28] must be reported missing – yet the saga retains a small amount of the narrative rhythm which is inherent in the couplet structure of the original. The generous use in the French of small supportive adverbs such as *moult* and *bien* seems to have got under the translator's skin; thus we find in the Norwegian an even greater surplus of *mjök* (much) and *sem mest* (as much as possible), as well as adjectives like *mikill* (large) and *allr* (all). But if we want to find a courtly style,[29] we will need to use a magnifying glass. Where *Fr.* 2242 *le vergier* becomes *þann hinn góða eplagarðinn (the goodly orchard)* and where B1927 *vostre coupe* and B2003 *sa coupe d'or* is reproduced as *ker þitt hit góða* og *keret sitt hit góða (your/his goodly beaker)*, this, if it is not just a faithful rendering of the French/Anglo-Norman exemplar,[30] is the closest we can get to a rhetorical or courtly style in our Norwegian translation.

We are, in other words, far from the rhetorical/courtly style that characterises thirteenth-century translations such as *Strengleikar* and *Elíss saga.* I would not describe it as "Translator's prose" with "a more rhetorical flavour"[31] or as "vieux norrois

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arranged stump of text). In this process Geraldine Barnes overlooks the existence of *Fr.* B1980–1987 and B1992–2009 and concludes: "Curiously R [*Norw. fragm.*] expands F [*Fr.*] at some length with an extremely detailed and repetitive account of the result of Flóres' encounter with the gatekeeper. The excessive repetition in R..." (430). The Norwegian translator can, however, hardly in this instance be berated for going to extremes, since what he has done is to give an almost word-by-word representation of his foreign model.
Seen from the perspective of Romance philology it is constructive here to note that the saga supports the otherwise isolated French B-text reading and in relation to B1992 actually offers a more cohesive and possibly more original text.

26 Halvorsen 1972, 254.

27 A difference of another type can be mentioned here: The Norwegian representation of *Fr.* 2226 *ostel* as *grasgarðr* (*herb garden*) could suggest that the specific French exemplar used for this translation had the reading *ortel* (*Engl.* has no corresponding reading.)

28 Leclanche 1980a II, 159–166.

29 Cf. Halvorsen 1962.

30 And this is not inconceivable. *Engl.*, which has an equivalent for the first reading only, has as a correspondance to *Fr.* B1927: C364 *þine cupe hol & sund.* (A parallel text in an immediately preceding passage, which is, however, probably just an embellishment, reads: A367 *þi gode cop*).

31 Halvorsen 1959, 10; cf. 20.

evolué"[32]. What we have in *FsB* is the most unpretentious prose that one can imagine; it could be named translator's prose, but as it bears no sign of being a translation it might just as well be called "normal prose".[33]

Before looking for traces of the Norwegian translation in the rest of the saga (that is to say where we do not have *Norw. fragm.*), it is best to comment on the Icelandic transmission in more general terms.

Without the Icelandic transmission there wouldn't have been much saga; but as was already pointed out, the transmission is not trustworthy enough to form the basis for more than qualified guesses as to the form of the original *FsB*. Especially *Icel.*^{2}, which for 60% of the tale is the only text witness we have, is shortened and changed in a manner that can only be described as careless.[34]

We can make fairly well-qualified judgements on the Icelandic transmission at the points where the stubby Norwegian text is available for comparison. We can see that the narrative thread only just survives, while on the surface large and small skips hasten the text down a slide. Where *Norw. fragm.*'s restrained rhythm, as mentioned above, manages to some extent to reflect the structure of the French couplets, the style of *Icel.*^{2} is breathless and occasionally anacoluthic. Where the two versions *Icel.*^{1} and *Icel.*^{2} can be compared, it is clearly demonstrated that the mutilation we meet in *Icel.* is due to what I would call "mindless" scribal activity rather than to conscious re-editing or rewriting.[35] Where one of them has a short summary, the other can give a faithful reproduction of the French in full detail.[36] Where the two texts complement each other, we gain an impression of an earlier Icelandic archetype that was closer to but still far removed from the initial Norwegian translation.[37] Correspondingly,

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32 Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen, pers. communication reported in Leclanche 1980a II, 312.

33 Or, perhaps, "humble prose", cf. Halvorsen 1962, cc. 316–318, concerning Augustinian levels of style for use in sermons, especially *genus submissum* as applied in Old Norse translations, religious as well as secular.

34 Cf. note 18 above.

35 *Icel.* is used here for *Icel.*^{1}/*Icel.*^{2}.

36 One can, for example, compare the description of the horse that Floire is equipped with on his travels, *Fr.* 1176–1212, carried over almost word-for-word in *Icel.*^{1} 29^{8}–30^{5} and supported by *Swed.* 547–566, with the summary *Icel.*^{2} 82^{34-35}. On the other hand, the way the usually better *Icel.*^{1} often, in an apparently unmotivated fashion, cuts back its text, is exemplified on 78–85 of Kölbing's text where *Icel.*^{2}'s text-critically superior readings are marked typograhically.

37 When dealing with the translated *riddarasögur* the handing down of each saga must be considered individually; generally it can be maintained that where there are divergences between a French and an Old Norse text, the possibility of a gradual attrition in the course of the (mainly) Icelandic transmission must be taken into account. It is Geraldine Barnes' prime intent (1974–1977) to portray the Icelandic transmission of *riddarasögur* as a generally speaking trustworthy witness of the original translation. As an overall assessment this must be rejected. A late Icelandic text has, naturally, its own value (see e.g. the "courtly" *FsB* in the rather magnificent 18th century farmer's manuscript Lbs 423 fol), and a post-medieval Icelandic text can be a fair witness of a medieval work, even of the translation itself, but this is not the rule. And it is especially incorrect in the case of *FsB*, which is the saga Geraldine Barnes most often refers to in her argument. She compares the texts and states: 'It is immediately obvious that the Icelandic text by no means drastically deviates from the Norwegian... Although M [*Icel.*^{2}] is slightly shorter than R [*Norw. fragm.*], in content and sentence structure

Swed., especially where the better manuscript *Icel.*[1] is missing, demonstrates many a loss in the Icelandic manuscript tradition. I have not, with any degree of certainty, been able to identify significant developments that could be regarded as specifically Icelandic, that is to say changes that cannot be attributed to the Norwegian translator.[38]

Where we have no *Norw. fragm.*, that is to say for most of the saga, we can nonetheless take some bearings on the original translation.

The closest we get to the translation process is actually in the cases where the translator misrepresents the French.[39]

Yet the most important evidence concerning the translation or the translation's intention is – in spite of the blemishes of the transmission – the many examples of respect for the French source. In the main, the narrative structure and the order of the episodes is preserved. Dialogue is retained, sometimes even elaborated on, in the Nordic tradition. There is a form of loyality towards non-epic passages: in descriptions of material details,[40] psychological descriptions of internal conflicts,[41] portrayals of violent emotions,[42] representations of emotional outbursts,[43] and this applies,

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the two are essentially in agreement' (430). This finding is based on an erroneous treatment of the textual data, in this particular case the Norwegian. Whereas Halvorsen meticulously marks what is reconstructed in his presentation of *Norw. fragm.* (Halvorsen 1972, 258–256), Geraldine Barnes uses Kölbing's reconstructed text of the fragment quite uncritically (cf. note 3 above). Geraldine Barnes states that the fact that Kölbing's text is reconstructed is "without significance for our analysis" (418), yet this use of a reconstructed text is indeed fundamental to her analysis and to her wide-ranging conclusions (438), repeated in Barnes 1989, 73–88, most centrally 74–75. In Kölbing's edition the lacunae of *Norw. fragm.* are naturally enough filled out with the text of *Icel.*[2]. Since Geraldine Barnes compares [*Norw. fragm.* + *Icel.*[2]] with [*Icel.*[2]], *Icel.*[2]'s deviations from *Norw. fragm.* cannot help but appear negligible.

38 It is therefore, in the case of *FsB*, hardly possible to satisfy a requirement of the type Sverrir Tómasson introduces, that the Icelandic transmission of Norwegian translations be treated from a socio-literary perspective *without* first undertaking what Sverrir regards as 'ómaklegt' – the, to my mind, prerequisite comparative studies (1977, 76).

39 The translator's misreading of *canal* as *cheval* has, for example, led to a major misunderstanding concerning a wondrous detail featured in the emir's palace. *Fr.* 1848–1850 *dedens a un bien fait canal / par desus monte une fontaine / dont l'eve est molt clere et molt saine* (B: *froide, clere et sainne)* is reproduced in *Icel.*[1] 48^{4-5} (and almost the same in *Icel.*[2] 84^{26-27}): *En þá er hestr ... ok rennr or munni honum et skírasta vatn kalt (But then there is a horse ... and out of its mouth there runs the clearest cold water)* (cf. Kölbing's note to his edition $47^{3ff.}$).

40 E.g. the exact price to be paid for Blankiflúr, *Icel.* $15^{3ff.}/81^{1ff.}$ ~ *Fr.* 437ff.; or Flóres' equestrian equipment, incl. the horse, cf. note 36 above.

41 E.g. the distress Flóres experiences when he is sent off to school in Montoire, but can only think of and miss his beloved, *Icel.* $13^{11-19}/80^{29-34}$ ~ *Fr.* 373–400.

42 E.g. the parents' grief on parting with Flóres, *Icel.*[1] 31^{4-6} ~ *Fr.* 1225–1228.

43 E.g. Flóres' plaintive apostrophes which he utters alternately to Blankiflúr, whom he believes to be dead, and to Death itself, *Icel.* $22^{11}–24^{2}/81^{47}–82^{4}$ ~ *fr.* 717–792.
An addition to the title of the saga in the oldest of the post-medieval manuscripts, which is otherwise textually very faithful to its exemplar, *ylufloris (howling Flóres)*, gives some idea of the impression the emotional hero made on a seventeenth-century Icelandic scribe.

it should be noted, to most of the narrator's comments and narratorial interventions – these too are reproduced in *saga*.[44]

It can therefore immediately be established that *FsB* seems to occupy a special position in relation to other translated *riddarasögur* in that much of what one typically expects to be removed or cut back is actually preserved.[45] This appearance of a special position may, however, be illusory, in that other *riddarasögur* may in fact have been translated more faithfully than the surviving texts give reason to believe. Ironically, it is exactly *FsB*'s "mindless" transmission that provides additional insight into the original translation.

In the case of what seem to be additions and reformulations in the saga we are therefore forced to speculate as to whether the French exemplar was superior to the surviving French transmission,[46] additionally we can consider, by way of informed guesswork, whether the changes in question should be attributed to the translator or to copyists, keeping in mind the fact that where *Icel.* is supported by *Swed.*, these common readings are presumably the work of the translator and not due to later Icelandic revision.

It is to be expected that culture-specific features are rendered in more easily recognisable and sometimes less well-defined terms. In the Nordic story the emir of Babylon, in French *l'amiral*, becomes *konungr af Babylon (King of Babylon)*, and the emir's wife, who in *Fr.* 2084 is acclaimed *dame du païs*, in *Icel.*^{2} 52^{12} is correspondingly called *dróttning (queen)*, while the *Fr.* 1812 *tor d'antiquité* of the emir's palace becomes in *Icel.*^{1} 46$^{3-4}$ *einn kastali, er jötnar gerðu [Icel.*^{2} 84^{16} *+ forðum] (a castle which giants built [+ in days of yore])*, all of which readings are supported by *Swed.*

More rarely we find a change of a different type: in a passage that is otherwise rather precisely reproduced, some precious clothes *Fr.* 440 *bliaus indes porprins* become in *Icel.*^{1} 15$^{5-6}$ (~ *Icel.*^{2} 81^{3}) *kisla [kyrtla] af vindverskum guðvef (tunics of Wendish cloth)*; but here *Swed.* 300 *"biald"* makes it clear that originally there must have been a more accurate translation, cf. the Old Norse loanword *blíat*.

It is somewhat disappointing when Flóres of the Nordic tradition plans to kill himself, not with the *grafe (stylet, awl used for writing in wax)* that Blankiflúr, his cherished schoolmate, has given him, but with something as straightforward as a *knífr (knife)*[47]. This type of change is so rare that one should consider whether *knífr* does

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44 E.g. the narratorial comment on the parents' grief on parting with Flóres (cf. note 42 above), where the parents behave as if they will never see their son again: *Icel.*^{1} 31$^{6-7}$ *ok um þat váru þau sannspá (and in this respect they prophesied correctly)* ~ *Fr.* V776 *ne il nel firent* and B1031 *non firent il, tretout por voir*. Cf. also two of the instances noted by Geraldine Barnes, where the narrator points out that he has made changes to the story (1974–1977, 411).

45 Cf., especially on narratorial intervention and internal monologues, Barnes 1993, 532.

46 It is interesting to note how the Anglo-Norman fragment, V, which was found in 1916, can help to revise the apparatus in Kölbing's 1896 edition of the saga and supports, at a number of points, his hypothesis that there existed a different and superior original than that witnessed in *Fr.* AB.

47 *Icel.*^{2} 24$^{4ff.}$

not in fact denote (or, in the shortened Icelandic version, is the remains of a word denoting) a writing utensil, cf. Old Norse *skrifknífr ("writing knife")*.

Amongst the more noticeable adaptations, which are generally supported by *Swed.*, are those concerning the allegories which in *Fr.* portray the hero's inner conflicts. In *saga* we also have access to the hero's inner being, but the allegorical discourse is replaced by inner dialogue,[48] a dream,[49] or just a portrayal of an outflow of emotion.[50]

It is quite easy to list missing features in comparison with the surviving French texts, but, stemmatically speaking, you can not make use of "omissions" in the reconstruction of an original translation.[51]

There are no full-blooded recastings, elaborations or extensions of the original French work. I will qualify this statement: when Leclanche, for example, in comparing *FB* with an Arabian tale which he regards as a source, shows how some of the material manages to survive transferral while other material is filtered off during the composition of the French work, he demonstrates true transformation from Arabian tale to French poem;[52] there are, however, no transformations of this type when *Fr.* becomes *saga*. Further, where Leclanche investigates the French manuscript tradition and points out some additions in the Anglo-Norman version, he is able to show that these serve the purpose of accentuating a psychological characterisation of the protagonists;[53] there are, however, no adaptations even on this minor scale in the Nordic transferral.

As a work of literature *FB* is left largely untouched. *FsB* is a translation, containing a moderate element of adaptation, but not a literary reworking.[54]

This assessment does not, however, apply to the end. The conclusion of the narrative is a special case to be returned to. Before that, let us consider how the Norwegian saga may have come about; this will also provide an opportunity to present the Swedish poem.

Norwegian saga: the initiative of a king?

There seems to be no good reason to question the common view that the translation came about in Norwegian court circles[55] – the issue is, which court?

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48 *Icel.*^{2} 40^{14}–41^{13} ~ *Fr.* 1603–1644 (cf. Barnes 1975, 155); *Icel.*^{1} 43^{4-9} ~ *Fr.* 1700–1706.

49 *Icel.* $13^{14-16}/80^{30-31}$ ~ *Fr.* 385–390 (cf. Barnes 1977, 53).

50 *Icel.* $13^{12-14}/80^{29-30}$ ~ *Fr.* 377–384 (cf. Barnes 1977, 53).

51 Where Kölbing 1896, xiv, and Barnes 1977, 52–53, see large "omissions" in the saga in relation to the French exemplar, we are actually dealing with passages that are missing from the whole of the insular tradition (*Fr.* V, *Engl.*, and *saga*). At these points in the text Leclanche assumes interpolations in *Fr.* A or AB (Leclanche 1980a II, 185–188, 173–182).

52 Leclanche 1980a II, 226–230.

53 Leclanche 1980a II, 168–173.

54 There is, of course, no doubt that the narrative has suffered in the course of translation, but it should be borne in mind that *FB*, as a *pré-Chrétien* work, has less *sens* to lose than a courtly romance such as Perceval (cf. Weber 1986).

None of the manuscripts of *FsB* contain details as to the "when and how" of the translation. The work is nonetheless included in almost all the lists scholars compile of the works King Hákon Hákonarson had translated; sometimes it is even assigned to a particular period during this king's reign, which must be regarded as unfounded guesswork.

We have no evidence of export of secular literature from England/France to Norway in the twelfth century,[56] whereas the thirteenth century is the major period for all types of literary activity in Norway as well as in Iceland. In both political and cultural terms this is Norway's "age of greatness" (Norw. "storhetstiden"). Translated literature is an important element in this period of achievement, but the beginning of the fourteenth century ought to be embraced, and there is good reason to go back to the following level-headed formulation concerning "Court Literature in Norway": "As far as we know, the translations were carried out during the period 1220–1320".[57] The scholarly focus on Hákon Hákonarson gamli (HH; king 1217–1263) seems blinkered, and the faith placed in some of the internal manuscript evidence is surprising.[58] It is natural to incorporate HH's court as a possible forum for translation and performance when analysing and interpreting translated literature, but if a set of hypotheses concerning precisely this king and especially his didactic intentions in relation to his court are allowed to dominate, there is a risk that insights into the individual works and a broader view of the milieu will be stifled. The transferral of this literature can hardly have been an exclusive interaction between the king and his court (*hirð*). In part, each individual work deserves a less prejudiced approach; in part, it is constructive to open up for other ideas concerning the milieu where translating may have been promoted; even if we remain within Norwegian court circles, there are other rulers apart from HH to be considered, and there were other people at court than the king and his courtiers (*hirðmenn*).

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55 This hypothesis rests mainly on the Norwegian manuscript material and on the circumstances surrounding the Swedish reworking.

56 For general cultural contact between England/France and Norway in this early period see, however, for example Johnsen 1951.

57 Halvorsen 1959, 13. Kölbing is correspondingly cautious when ascribing dates to the translations from the French (1896, iv–v), and in the case of *FsB* he simply sets a *terminus ante quem* to 1319 (ibid., xi).

58 There is a stream of almost identical statements running through *riddarasaga* studies on "this sole point of almost universal agreement among scholars" (Barnes 1989, 74). As representatives of the standardisation in studies written in French, see Knud Togeby, in the opening lines of a lecture in 1972: " ... la chronologie des versions scandinaves des anciens textes français est très simple ... Avant lui [HH] il n'y a presque rien, et après, rien" (Togeby 1975, 183) and, more recently, Jonna Kjær: "Au cours du règne du roi ... [HH], et probablement sur son initiative, une quarantaine de textes littéraires français ont été traduits dans son pays" (Kjær 1996, 50). Most recently, however, the horizon seems to be opening up again (cf. the more cautious presentation in Glauser 2005, 374–376).
The discussion of Norwegian and Icelandic scribes' statements about how the works they copied came into being, presented in Sverrir Tómasson 1977 and Sverrir Tómasson 1988, has not reached its conclusion.

References to HH in a number of Icelandic *riddarasaga* manuscripts are well known,[59] and not necessarily untrue, yet his successors' courts have had no less potential for the promotion of translations.[60] HH's son Magnús Hákonarson lagabøtir (king 1263–1280) is primarily associated with his major revision and codification of the national laws and with the *Hirðskrá* in the form in which it has survived today (containing rules for military operations, courtly behaviour, and etiquette), as well as translations from Latin (e.g. *Alexandreis* by Gautier de Châtillon). The elder of the two sons who succeeded him on the throne, Eiríkr Magnússon (king 1280–1299), is not known for literary activities, but during his reign we are told that the doyen of the Norwegian aristocracy, Bjarni Erlingsson, travelled to Scotland where he found a story of Olif and Landres[61] and had it translated into Old Norse.[62] His younger brother, Hákon Magnússon (king 1299–1319) is associated with large and ambitious translations of religious works. On top of this it is stated at the start of *Viktors saga ok Blávuss* that he *hiellt mikit gaman at fogrum fra sogum (derived great pleasure from beautiful stories)*, and that he *liet venda morgum riddara sogum jnorænu ur girzsku ok franzeisku mali (had many tales of knights translated into Old Norse from Greek and French)*.[63] This statement, which develops in a playful direction, should not be attributed too much significance, yet on the other hand it carries just as much weight as many other references to royal literary initiatives in prologues and epilogues. It could be taken as a reference to Greek i.e. Byzantine – or Oriental – narrative material in a wider sense, rather than to stories actually composed in Greek, and our story definitely belongs to that category.[64]

Throughout the period there was lively contact with Europe in general, and there were special connections with England/Scotland in terms of diplomatic, mercantile, ecclesiastical, and cultural relations. All these Norwegian kings aimed to consolidate their kingdom and give it new lustre. They all maintained prestigious courts and staged sumptuous feasts which provided the milieu and an audience for literary productions such as *FsB*.

Is it at all possible then, within this period 1220–1320, to narrow down the timespan within which the translation of *FsB* was made? I have made an attempt, without total success, however.

The physical evidence is three pieces constituting 3/4 of a folio of a large and beautiful Norwegian manuscript which was written c. 1300–1320 in south-east Norway, probably in Oslo *(Norw. fragm.)*. The dating and provenance correspond well to HM's reign and place of residence. Before him, HH and his successors had kept court in Bergen, but in 1299 HM moved the royal chancellery to Oslo where he

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59 Cf. Kalinke 1985, 332.

60 His predecessors', Sverrir Sigurðsson's and Hákon Sverrisson's, unquestionable literary alertness and broad international orientation will not be discussed here.

61 Written in English as a version of the French narrative poem *Doon de la Roche*? cf. Skårup 1980, 69–75.

62 Cf. the prologue to the story, in *Karlamagnúss saga* (Unger 1860), 50.

63 Jónas Kristjánsson 1964, 3.

64 For a discussion, see Amory 1982, especially 420–421.

already had a ducal residence. It is tempting to see a connection between literary activity at HM's court and the small Norwegian manuscript remnants, and it would be temptingly simple to see in the fragment the remains of the original translation itself. On text-critical grounds, as was mentioned above, this is not completely out of the question.

And as to the linguistic aspect – I have examined the palaeography and language of the fragment very carefully and tried to place it in relation to various centres of scribal activity in Norway. I was especially keen to note whether an older exemplar could be traced as an archaeological layer behind this text, but there is unfortunately no clear answer.

The fragment has a few distinct dialect features which point to south-east Norway (the Oslo/Tønsberg area); yet its language generally reflects a traditional norm which *could* point to an exemplar from the chancellery in Bergen. The original translation *could* therefore have been undertaken on the initiative of HH or one of his successors at the royal court in Bergen. This same conservative linguistic norm was also dominant, however, at the Oslo chancelleries, making it unnecessary to allow for an earlier exemplar. It *may* be that *Norw. fragm.* is the sole remains of the original translation (or a close copy), and the saga *may* have been translated at the court in Oslo at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

The Swedish poem: the initiative of a queen!

One of the clearest reasons for believing that *FsB* was translated at a Norwegian court is the next link in the chain – the Swedish *Eufemiavisa,* which is thought to have been produced at the court in Oslo.

But why a Swedish narrative poem at a Norwegian court?

Norwegian, Swedish and Danish politics are at this time deeply intertwined; there are conflicts between monarchy and aristocracy both within each individual country and across territorial boundaries – wars are fought and alliances formed in alternating waves.[65]

There are three Swedish epic poems which resemble one another, in their metrical form, in their style, and in that they each recount, with dates, that they are the undertaking of Eufemia, Hákon Magnússon's German-born wife – hence the name *Eufemiavisor*. The works in question are: *Herr Ivan, Hertig Fredrik av Normandie,* and *FoB*.

While King Hákon Hákonarson's legendary initiative in the translation of French literature is left largely unquestioned – and only his alleged purposes are made the subject of debate – Eufemia and her *visor* have been discussed in a decidedly more lively and qualified fashion.[66] I venture to say "Eufemia and her *visor*" since, on the

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[65] The primary sources are *Erikskrönikan* (Pipping 1963) and Icelandic and Swedish annals.

[66] See Ståhle 1967, 379–380, for a bibliography and survey of research on the Swedish tradition. There is an excellent introduction to the *Eufemiavisor,* ibid., 54–67; one of its especially

basis of both linguistic and historical argument, scholars at present accept the evidence of her participation as well as the poems' individual dates.[67]

There has long been a scholarly explanation as to why a German-born Norwegian queen had works translated into Swedish: the three translations are associated with three major royal political events and are regarded as special gestures towards the young Swedish Duke Erik (brother of the Swedish king).[68] In 1302, at the tender age of one, the Norwegian princess Ingibjörg was engaged to be married to Erik; after a break in the engagement there was a reconciliation; finally, in 1312, the wedding was celebrated, just after Eufemia had died. It has been argued that these events gave rise to the composition of the narrative poem *Herr Ivan*, dated 1303, *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*, dated 1308[69], and *FoB*, which dates itself as follows: *Thesse bok loot vænda til rima / Eufemia drøtning ij then tima / litith før æn hon do (Queen Eufemia had this book turned into verse shortly before she died)*[70].

The times were every bit as dramatic as this succession of events suggests. The betrothal was intended to ensure the future of the kingdom, but in this dawn of a feudalistic social order there were stand-offs between the older monarchy and a new aristocracy, represented respectively by King Hákon Magnússon and the modern, upwardly-mobile Duke Erik – resulting in conflict and a broken engagement. Finally, however, a political wedding was held to secure peace. Alongside coronation ceremonies, royal weddings were this period's major opportunity for displays of power and wealth and for demonstrations of generosity, but they also served to consolidate political alliances and cessations of armed hostility: these "princess-tradings" often occasioned peace agreements between the most bitter of enemies.[71]

We get a vivid impression of Queen Eufemia's preoccupation with Duke Erik and his association with the Norwegian royal house on reading the almost simultaneous

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stimulating features is the presentation of a possible translator, 65–66 – not necessarily on account of how probable the hypothesis is, but more because it contains a lively account of the pan-Nordic and international milieu around 1300; for two lexicon articles, see Grimstad 1984 and Holm 1993.

67 Cf. the most thorough study, Jansson 1945; forceful arguments for a later dating of the *Eufemiavisor* have, however, also been put forward. For a recent study, see Würth 2000.

68 If not the earliest, then at least the clearest, presentation of this theory is to be found in Munch 1859 (522, n. 4).

69 Like *FoB, Herr Ivan* was translated from French (Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*) via Norwegian. *Hertig Fredrik* is also an Arthurian tale, contending to be translated from French into German and again from German into Swedish, but we know neither of a French nor a German source, nor has it survived in any other Scandinavian version.

70 Queen Eufemia died on May 1 1312 (cf. Munch 1859, 557).

71 Hákon's and Eufemia's wedding was possibly itself a conciliatory wedding, cf. Munch 1859, 319, yet the most obvious parallel to the 1312 wedding is that of Hákon Hákonarson in 1225. In an attempt to create a lasting peace after one hundred years of civil war, HH married the daughter of his archenemy Skúli *jarl*, but the attempt failed; when Skúli had himself proclaimed King of Norway in 1240, HH had him killed (cf. Holmsen 1961, 255–256). The translation of *Tristrams saga* has sometimes been connected with this wedding.

Erikskrönikan (The Chronicle of Erik),[72] but the real evidence is probably the production of the *Eufemiavisor* themselves.

The *Eufemiavisor,* and therefore *FoB,* are composed in "Knittelvers" ("knobbly verse", a metre with rhyming couplets and with, as a rule, four stressed syllables and a varying number of unstressed syllables per line), a completely new verse form, on a par with the verse form of the French original, but imported from Eufemia's Germany, with which the Swedish monarchy and Duke Erik had close connections. The diction is lively and direct and is thought to be close to contemporary everyday speech. It is nonetheless under complete poetic control – not just by virtue of rhyme and rhythm – part of the musicality of the *Eufemiavisor* can be attributed to a confined and often formulaic vocabulary which is reminiscent of and probably derived from ballad tradition.

Originally *FoB* enjoyed a narrow, aristocratic audience, while manuscript copies from the 1400's reflect a wider appreciation, which then becomes manifest popularity with the appearance of the Danish chapbook, printed in both 1504 and 1509.[73] The appearance of the *Eufemiavisor* with their "modern" style marked a turning point in Swedish literary history; the new verseform was immediately used in native Swedish compositions[74] and was practised throughout the middle ages.

The text-critical importance of *Swed.* for *Fr.* and particularly for *saga* was mentioned above. Where a reading in the Icelandic is to be assessed in terms of its originality, or where missing parts of the story need to be filled out, valuable support can often be found in *Swed.* But in the Swedish adaptation, for that is what it is, the contours of the original Norwegian translation are by necessity also blurred. On the one hand, we see the Swedish poet rhyming and in reality doubling a phrase from the Norwegian prose original, and, on the other hand, there is a tendency to move through the story at great pace. It is stylistically successful, but the content has of course suffered somewhat in the process.[75]

Comparative studies give us no reason to believe that the Swedish poet had a French text to refer to when he did his conversion from Norwegian. Had this been the case, we would have expected to find either correct (more original) readings or attempts at emendation, based on a second look at the French, where there is clumsiness or blatant error in the saga; yet there is no sign of this – the saga's misunderstandings are all reflected in *Swed.*[76]

The onomastic material could appear to pose a problem. Where *Swed.,* in some proper names, shows a greater affinity to the French manuscript B, whereas the saga is closer to French A, it could be explained by the Swedish poet having had access to a French version containing these name forms, and it is not inconceivable that such a French manuscript was available in the court library; but the onomastic material

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72 Pipping 1963, ll. 1884–1887, 1915–1927, 2241–2243, 3102–3107.
73 Ed. Jacobsen, Olrik & Paulli 1925, iii–xxvi, 1–148.
74 *Erikskrönikan,* mentioned above, probably composed in the 1320's, is the first instance.
75 The relationship between the number of lines in *Swed.* and *Fr.* is 75:100.
76 For example, the notorious horse (see note 39 above) appears in *Swed.* 1025–1027.

could also have found its own way north; this popular story could have reached the Swedish poet through other channels, either orally or in written form, and thus he may have known some of the protagonists by a variety of names.[77]

The last part of the saga: the denouement of the drama and the Christian postlude

Let us now take a look at the way the tale ends. Flóres of the saga saves his life and wins his Blankiflúr by way of a formidable fight (a duel) and pure magic (the ring). This rather flat winding-up of the drama contrasts with previous developments and with the tone of the narrative up to this point, and it also deviates completely from *Fr.* where the young lovers save their lives and win each other by virtue of their enchanting beauty and mutual self-sacrifice, and where the protecting ring plays a subtle and refined role. In the saga's conclusion there is a vault into a different tale. This leap into a martial world could be compared to the development on French territory from version I to version II, from the pre-courtly *conte* to the courtly *roman*. Yet the conclusion of version II is not the direct model for the conclusion of the saga. The author of the saga's conclusion may conceivably have known version II in which Floire is victorious in a total of three duels.[78] Whatever the actual background, he found a denouement with a duel dramatically pleasing, just as the ring's redeeming role, as in a traditional folktale, may have had a logical appeal.

By mentioning an author I am making it clear that this final section of the narrative can no longer be characterised as straightforward translation. Where *Fr.* still has a sixth of the story left to tell, the saga changes track. The final and more independent part of the saga tells of legal proceedings and judicial combat and transposes the scene of action partly to Babylon, partly to Flóres' own country where the wedding is held and both kingdom and lineage are ensured. Here the story proper ends.

Now follows a Christian postlude which includes a pilgrimage to Blankiflúr's native land, France, the conversion of Flóres and all his people, and, finally, the retirement of hero and heroine into cloister and nunnery.

The last part of the saga thus has an independent character when compared with the bulk of the saga, which is mainly faithful translation.[79] Yet how independent is it in relation to *Fr.*? Unfortunately *Fr.* (Anglo-Norman) V, the nearest we can get to a representative of the saga's exemplar, is missing here; we have only the continental French AB. Is it possible that the Nordic deviation in fact reflects the lost section of the insular tradition (cf. the stemma above)? Perhaps in some minor features. The Anglo-Norman conclusion may have deviated from the continental ending, but hardly as brutally as our saga. While Leclanche excludes the possibility that the saga

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[77] *Engl.* and *saga* also go their separate ways when it comes to onomastics, cf. Leclanche 1980a II, 90–92, 100–101.

[78] Cf. Leclanche 1980a II, 242–246.

[79] *Swed./Icel.*[2] represent the now lost Norwegian saga conclusion, so there can be no question of a specifically Icelandic development.

in its conclusion reflects its source,[80] and the Nordic duel episode admittedly has no connection with *Fr.* version I ('le conte'), yet, other sections of the saga conclusion, e.g. the conversion episode, do have points in common with *Fr.*, so although Leclanche for practical reasons must nominate the "*Floris angl.*" as the "seul témoin de la vulgate 'insulaire' jusqu'à la fin du *Conte*", we should not ignore the cautious note in the Romance scholar's dismissal of *saga/Swed.* from *Fr.* 2749 (~ *Icel.*[2] 70[13]) onwards: "la *Saga*, à partir de ce passage, diverge complètement de la vulgate, si bien que toute conclusion doit rester prudente".[81]

Norwegian saga and Swedish poem: a queen's co-ordinated undertaking?

By way of text-critical and linguistic-geographical studies I have, as mentioned earlier, sought support for the simple theory that there was no intermediary stage in the transmission between the translation and the oldest Norwegian manuscript material. The theory cannot be definitively proved, but it is not unlikely that the saga was translated during the reign of Hákon Magnússon, bringing the Norwegian and Swedish undertakings close to one another and making it not inconceivable that they were integrated in one and the same process.

There may well have been a king behind such an integrated project, but it is no less natural to see Queen Eufemia as the promotor of the entire enterprise.[82]

Around the year 1300 *FB* had been known in Europe for approximately 150 years. The tale originated possibly at Aliénor d'Aquitaine's court, during the period when she was queen of France, married to Louis VII.[83] After having taken part in a crusade and after her repudiation in 1153 she found her way to the powerful Anglo-Norman kingdom, where, as queen to Henri II Plantagenêt, she held court with a celebrated (and perhaps inherited) involvement in cultural manifestations. She may have taken the story of Floire and Blancheflor with her to England, and from there it may have travelled with a Nordic visitor or an English/French ambassador to Norway.

When was it translated? We are aware of literary activities in connection with all the Norwegian kings from Hákon Hákonarson to Hákon Magnússon, and we know about feasts of major proportions. But what do we know about the part played by the queens? Not much. If HH's wife, Margrét Skúladóttir, kept court on a cultural level in the style of Aliénor, it is something we know nothing about, and nothing

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80 Cf. Leclanche 1980a II, 168.
Engl. follows *Fr.* in the main, but is too abridged to be of any real help in a closer analysis.

81 Leclanche 1980a I, 303; cf. Leclanche 1980a II, 98–99.

82 A scholar like Munch tended towards this idea early on (1859, 410), but both this and other theories about Eufemia's possible involvement in the Norwegian translation have mainly featured in discussions of the Swedish narrative poem rather than in considerations of the saga translation itself.

83 For the historical circumstances which may have favoured the composition of *FB*, see Leclanche 1971, 564–566, and Leclanche 1980a II, 219–222[bis].

illustrious is associated with her as a figure. The opposite may be said, however, of her daughter-in-law, Queen Ingibjörg, wife to Magnús.[84] Concerning their son Eiríkr we may note that both his queens were court-raised Scottish princesses, and that the first of them, the twenty-year old Margaret, tried, according to Scottish tradition, to put her 13-year-old bridegroom into shape: "She improved ... his manners, taught him French and English, and introduced better customs at court with respect to attire and dressing."[85] All these queens kept court, as etiquette prescribed and regal architecture supported[86]. There were role-models enough as literary *patronnes* at the European royal courts, and we must believe that the queens made a cultural-political contribution, even though they, with one single exception, do not feature in prologues or epilogues. Queen Eufemia is this one exception. She, as the last in the succesion of queens in the Sverrir dynasty, had her name immortalised in the *Eufemiavisor*. Her personal and political will shines out of the storybooks, of which *Erikskrönikan*, introduced above, is the first, and in the same source we have glimpses of her court of women.[87] We cannot claim that Queen Eufemia had any influence on the literary formation of the work, but she may have thought *FB* especially worth translating, and we perhaps get a glimpse of her active figure in the Christian postlude to the saga. It is not just that this peaceful story about love between two children may have been suitable entertainment at a conciliatory wedding between two youths, but its feminine ambience may have had a special appeal for the queen who was sending her eleven-year-old daughter, the little queen-to-be, out into the world. *FB* can rightly be called a tale about queens for queens.

Some considerations

Attempts to expand on the circumstances surrounding the translation are unavoidably tentative; here are some considerations.

We think we know a fair amount about *Swed.*'s function and reception. In Denmark the story became a popular chapbook tale. The Icelandic saga's popularity as reading material is attested by the large number of manuscript copies. But when it comes to the Norwegian saga, it is not easy to ascertain its function and reception. When one looks at the saga in all its simplicity, it is a little difficult to believe in its function as high-style court entertainment on a par with some of the more rhetorical, stylistically more embellished, Norwegian translations, like the *Strengleikar*. It is a loyal translation which made no use of the effects of court style as a replacement for the French rhyme and rhythm, yet – read aloud with verve – it may have rung true and, like *Fr.*, dwelt successfully on certain passages; thus the translation conveyed an engaging story with both dramatic highlights and pauses for reflection.

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[84] Cf. *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (Mundt 1977), passim.

[85] Cf. Munch 1859, 31: "Hun forbedrede ... hans Sæder, lærte ham Fransk og Engelsk, og indførte bedre Skik ved Hoffet med Hensyn til Paaklædning og Spise."

[86] Cf. *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (Mundt 1977), 185–186.

[87] Pipping 1963, ll. 1929–1937.

Could we imagine that the saga's outer form reflects other literary habits, perhaps something closer to literature intended for low-key reading aloud?

By comparison, the Swedish verses shine and sparkle through the hall of the wedding feast, in the midst of all the contemporary political turbulence. Comparison of the Norwegian and the Swedish leads to one further thought – is it possible that the Norwegian prose translation was a stage *en route* to the *Eufemiavisa*, a sort of preparation of which no very special literary or performance-orientated demands were made?

As an explanation for the contrast in the saga between faithful translation for the majority of the text and a free-flying denouement as its conclusion, it is simplest to imagine that the French manuscript that was used for the translation had at one point lost the concluding folios of the *FB* text. We could also entertain the idea that the entire French original went missing as the translation was being made, and that the translator, who now became the author of the conclusion, had to create his own denouement, as best he could, with some memory of 'le conte' and possibly under influence from 'le roman'. It is also conceivable, without saying anything about the implied chronology, that there were two different translators at work here, each responsible for his own section.

There is little to be said with certainty. Eufemia may have been responsible for the entire Norwegian/Swedish project, or the Norwegian saga, already in the court library, could have been provided with its present conclusion in connection with the Swedish transformation and the royal wedding.

Fair words

Hypotheses are acceptable in their own right, but dare we put our trust in the whole of this interconnection between politics, marriage, and literary production?[88] *Erikskrönikan*, which was composed shortly after the royal wedding in 1312, reports that *fagher ord (fair words)* were part of the joy and entertainment at that feast. Is it too bold, under cover of this denotation, "fair words", to sense the engaging Nordic transplantation of *Floire et Blancheflor*?

Ther war dust ok behordh	*There was tilt and jousting*
danz ok leek ok fagher ordh	*dance and games and fair words*
gläde ä hwart man sik wände	*joy wherever one turned*[89]

[88] The healthiest skepsis that has been expressed to date concerning the Swedish verses' references to Queen Eufemia comes from Gísli Brynjúlfsson (in Brynjólfur Snorrason 1850, 120).

[89] Pipping 1963, ll. 3518–3520.

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