

Access to the Margins: Outlawry and Narrative spaces in medieval Icelandic outlaw sagas.

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Abstract

The legal and historical aspect of Icelandic outlawry in the Middle Ages has been widely studied and commented by scholars, either by following formal indications from the Grágás or through the use of literary examples spread in the sagas. The two main Icelandic outlaw sagas, Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar and Gísla saga Súrssonar have been so far mainly discussed in connection with other tales on outlaws from Europe (Robin Hood, Hereward), but surprisingly not often together. Through the analysis of the concepts of exile and liminality, this paper will attempt to relocate the two sagas in their specific Icelandic context and underline the specific nature of the Icelandic full outlawry as well as its consequences in the narrative. Icelandic medieval outlaws were excluded from the social space of the island, yet forbidden to leave it (óferjandi). The fact to be stuck on the island but out of the public scene leads to the creation of new original and individualized narrative spaces: the supernatural wilderness for Grettir, the tortured dreams for Gísli.

Keywords: Medieval Iceland, Outlaws, Liminality

Résumé

L'aspect historique et légal de la proscription islandaise au Moyen-Âge a été largement étudiée et commentée, soit en référence aux indications formelles du Grágás, soit à travers l'utilisation d'exemples littéraires éparpillés dans les sagas. Les deux principales sagas de proscrits islandais, Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar et Gísla saga Súrssonar, ont été jusqu'à présent principalement discutées en rapport avec d'autres récits européens de hors-la-loi (Robin-des-Bois, Hereward), mais très peu l'une par rapport l'autre. A travers l'analyse des concepts d'exil et de liminalité, ce papier tente de relocaliser les deux sagas dans leur contexte islandais et de souligner la nature spécifique de la proscription islandaise, ainsi que ses conséquences dans la production d'un texte narratif. Les hors-la-loi de l'Islande médiévale étaient exclus de l'espace social de l'île, mais cependant avaient l'interdiction formelle de quitter cette dernière (óferjandi). Le fait d'être enfermé sur une île et hors de l'espace public conduit à la création de nouveaux espaces narratifs, originaux et individualisés : le sauvage couplé au surnaturel pour Grettir, les rêves torturés pour Gísli.

Mots-clés: Islande Médiévale, Hors-la-loi, Liminalité

The specificity of medieval Icelandic outlawry¹

Hrørnar þöll
sú er stendr þorpi á,
hlýra henni börcr né barr;
vá er maðr,
sá er mangi ann,
hvat scal hann lengi lifa?
(Hávamál 50:24)²

Why should he live for long? This cruel but nevertheless wise rhetorical question sounds like an echo of the condition of Icelandic outlaws. In a society where social ties and solidarity were needed in order to endure the unwelcoming weather and landscape, exclusion and isolation appear as the worst punishment that man can inflict to man, even worse than death. Indeed, being excluded from the social space, the Icelandic full outlaws were still forbidden to leave the island (*óferjandi*), while other remarkable medieval outcast figures from continental Europe were not. For example, when Tristan is suspected of being improperly close to queen Yseut, he is banned from the court, but with the possibility to go away and start a new life under the protection of another lord, and wishing to be one day reintegrated.³ On the other hand, when he is found guilty of sexual intercourse with the queen, he is directly sentenced to death with his beloved one. He succeeds in escaping and inhabits the marginal space of the forest for a time, but in the end, he achieves his goal and joins another court.⁴

That very possibility is theoretically denied to the Icelandic full outlaw, and a direct death penalty only applied in few cases.⁵ Other well-known outlaws (like Robin Hood), decide to recreate an alternative society in order to threaten the power of the authority. The same applies to Hereward, who became a national figure of resistance against the invader William the Conqueror. Some Icelandic outlaws followed that path according to the *Landnámabók* (Jakob Benediktsson 1986: 74-75) and to *Harðar Saga ok Hólmverja* (Amory 1992: 195), yet those were not the ones who attracted the most attention from the *sagamenn* (saga-writers) and their audience. The geographical and social particularities of Iceland triggered a specific way to treat outcasts, as well as a special way to narrate their life. As a consequence, surviving in such a harsh natural and (un)social environment makes the story of such men *söguligr* (worth-telling).

Previous scholarship, sources and authorship.

The legal and historical aspect of Icelandic outlawry has been widely studied and commented by scholars (Spoelstra 1938: 294), either by following indications from the *Grágás* or through the use of literary examples spread in the sagas (See Amory 1992). Those stories have been connected with other tales about outlaws from Europe gathered in the so-called “Matter of Greenwood” (Keen 2000) where outlaw tales are said to be an expression of peasant discontent. The Icelandic outlaw sagas have even been supposed to belong to a large Anglo-Norse common tradition on outlaws (De Lange 1935) because they share similar motifs, especially regarding the English tradition of bands of outlaws from the Robin Hood type of tales. The paradoxical position of outlaws has already been stressed. They have committed real crimes, but they are nevertheless admired and supported and instead of bringing shame on them,

outlawry proves their superiority (Benecke 1973). This can be said of the two main figures of Icelandic outlawry, Grettir Ásmundsson and Gísli Súrsson, the two figures studied in this paper.

The two stories have mainly been discussed so far in connection with other tales on outlaws from Europe, but surprisingly not very often together. For its evident folktale-like elements, *Grettis saga* has been related to as much as contrasted with the Old English *Beowulf* (Arent 1969; Fjalldal 1998), or with the *Gesta Herwardi* (Leach 1975). On the other hand, Gísli has even been denied the status of “authentic outlaw” in a comparative study (Briem 1983) based on the fact that he does not explore wild spaces as the other outlaws do. Indeed, *Grettis saga* and *Gísli saga* might seem too different to be connected beyond the factual sentence to full outlawry given to both main characters. Gísli is a noble and sociable man, trying to build social relationships as lasting and solid as his craftsmanship, while Grettir is an impetuous and bad-tempered warrior: “Similarly it is brought out in the Grettir-saga that one of the causes of Grettir's misfortunes lies in his own character, in contrast to the other two sagas [*Gísli saga* and *Harðar Saga*], which are really tragedies of circumstance” (De Lange 1935: 103). Moreover, both sagas could be even considered as “outlawed” from the *Íslendingasögur* genre; *Grettis saga* for the uncommon amount of supernatural beings and supernatural adventures and *Gísli saga* for the recurrent and contradictory dreams developed in its second part.

More recently Grettir and Gísli, as main characters of a narrative, were allusively compared through the theme of home and homelessness in medieval Iceland (Miller 2004: 125-142), and through the relationship between Icelandic outlaws and women (Ahola 2009). Following that trend, this study is an attempt to strengthen the comparison within the Icelandic outlaw saga genre, legitimated by the bridge of intertextuality thrown between the main outlaw figures Grettir and Gísli in *Gísli saga*: “*Þat kemr saman með öllum vitrum mönnum at Gísli hafi lengst allra manna í sekt gengit annar en Grettir Ásmundarson*” (*Gísli saga* ch. 22: 70). This shows that Grettir was probably already the center of many (oral) tales when *Gísli saga* was written.

According to Guðni Jónsson's standard edition,⁶ *Grettis saga* is a 93 chapter long saga in the genealogical style of the *Íslendingasögur* with a prologue (chapters 1-13), a central biography (chapters 14-84) and an epilogue (chapters 85-93). It is preserved in several manuscripts (“*Eggersbók*” AM556 A, 4to, AM150, fol., AM551 A 4to, AM152, fol., Delagardie 10, fol., Uppsala), the oldest fragment dating from the 15th century. The saga is considered one of the latest of the *Íslendingasögur*, written at the beginning of the 14th century (*Grettis saga* 1936: lxix; Faulkes 2004: x). *Sturla Þórðarson*⁷ is supposed to be the hypothetical author or at least the main source for the saga, because of the numerous statements referring to his life and sayings all along the saga.⁸ But it is more likely, according to evidence from manuscripts, that the priest Hafliði Steinsson (1253-1319) from the monastery of *Þingeyrar* wrote the version of the saga we know (*Grettis Saga* 1936: lxxii-lxxv)

Gísli saga is much more concise. It has only 38 chapters⁹ and is considered one of the oldest *Íslendingasögur* composed about AD 1200 (De Lange 1935: 88; Faulkes 2004: x), even if the complete text is only preserved in the manuscript from the 15th century known as *Eggersbók* (AM 556 a 4to, which also contains *Grettis saga* and *Harðar Saga*). Indeed, the gathering of the three main Icelandic outlaw sagas in the *Eggersbók* underlines the fact that they might have been seen as a sub-genre already in

the late middle ages. The Complete Sagas of Icelanders¹⁰ agreed with that classification and gathered them in the “Outlaws and Nature Spirits” section.

We also have to bear in mind a double context for our study: the time of writing and the time of the narrative both imply different social problematic. *Grettis saga* goes from 860 to 1047 for the whole saga and from 996 to 1031 (according to Guðni Jónsson’s chronology) for the life-time of Grettir. On the other hand, *Gísla saga* takes place during the first generations of the settlement of Iceland, from Gísli’s arrival in 964 to his death in 977. By crossing references from other sagas, we can deduce that the temporal spectrum is only 27 years¹¹ for *Gísla saga*, but almost a century for *Grettis saga*. Therefore, the time of action of both sagas stand at opposite extremes of the *söguöld* (saga-age), with the Conversion at the turn of the millennium standing between.

Exile, liminality and outlawry in the sagas

Some preliminary definitions are needed in order to use properly several concepts along this study. Exile has been historically a procedure which removed trouble-makers or punished for a time men who did not respect the established authority. For example, the Frankish word **bannjan* referred to a legal condemnation which forbade a man to stay in his country for a certain number of years. This Germanic root stayed in modern French language as well as in English in the words “bannissement/banishment” or “abandon”. The so-called *Friedlosigkeit* (“loss of peace”) meant as a legal exclusion caused by treason- is said to be the most fundamental Germanic legal punitive concept (Van Houts 2002: 13).

Regarding the Icelandic context, the English word “outlawry” seems to be semantically adequate because “Outlawry” is a Scandinavian loan-word from *utlaga* with the same literal meaning of being out-of-the-law. In the context of the Middle Ages, practices of separation from society were often used by the Church, either as an exclusion from the law of God (excommunication) or a voluntary reclusion from the secular world (monasticism). Then exile (from latin *exilium*-banishment) can be forced, as by condemnation, and at the same time the situation of a person living elsewhere than where he used to or would like to. The exile is at the same time the situation, the place and the person. From forced to voluntary, this legal and often geographical fact opens wide perspectives in works of literature: wanderings, exploration, loneliness or even creativity.

Exile is a constant thematic element in the saga corpus and can take different shapes in the narrative. Most of the sagas from the *Íslendingasögur* genre have as a prologue a story about an exile. The first actions depicted in many sagas are about how and why the first settlers left Norway for Iceland. Both *Grettis saga* and *Gísla saga* agree that King Haraldr fairhair¹² was held responsible at the time for the massive departures *fyrir vestan haf*.¹³ Even if historically speaking those departures had less clear-cut causes, the narrative stresses that specific reason. The same applies to *Egils saga* (ch.26), *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch.3) and *Laxdæla saga* (ch.2). Moreover, in *Grettis saga* the word *utlaga* (ch.3: 6) is even used to refer to those who resisted Haraldr. The consequences in the narrative are clear. The “outlawry” from Norway is at the origin of the new Icelandic society. But beyond the settlement itself, the consequences of this move on the exiled figure are barely expressed in the saga, with an exception in *Grettis*

saga, where Grettir's ancestor expresses his discontent upon his arrival in Iceland by means of a verse.

Réttum gengr, en ranga
rinnr sæfarinn, ævi,
fákr, um fold ok ríki
fleinhvessanda þessum;
hefk lönd ok fjöld frænda
flýt, en hitt es nýjast,
kröpp eru kaup, ef hreppik
Kaldbak, en ek læt akra (*Grettis Saga* ch. 9, p. 22)¹⁴

The beginning of a new life, freed from a growing oppression in Norway, and ownership of a brand new land are in general perceived as a positive consequence.

After these preliminary chapters, another exile appears as a recurrent motif in the *saga* corpus. In the first days of adult life, the time comes for young men to show their potential. For that purpose, they often decide to go abroad. We can refer for example to the young Kjartan in *Laxdæla saga* who says "I have set my mind on going abroad," and delays his marriage with Guðrún, the promising woman of the district, despite her opinion on the matter (*Laxdæla saga*, ch. 40). Glúmr from *Víga-Glúms saga* states openly the reason behind that voluntary exile: "Glúmr segir móðr sinni að hann vill utan ráðast: "Sé ek at þroski minn vill engi verða en þat má vera at ek hljóti gæfu af gøfgum frændum mínum [...] Þá var Glúmr fimmtán vetra er hann fýstist útan."¹⁵ (*Víga-Glúms saga*, ch.5). Snorri goði utters the same demand, as much as Grettir and Gísli (*Grettis saga*, ch. 37: 125; *Gísla saga* from ch. 7 to 8: 27-29). They want to accomplish what we may call a "rite of passage" by a trans-generational return to Norway. The language kept that dependence on the "native" country by using the adverb *útan*, literally "from the outside" when talking about travelling to Norway. This voluntary and positive departure was an initiatic exile, a symbolic transition from young man to accomplished man. This move was almost socially mandatory. By contrast, a man who stayed at home was *heimskr*, which has the second meaning of "idiot" (Miller 2004: 135).

The anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep defined the characteristic traits of the "rite of passage". The rite is connected to any change of place, state, social status and age. Each rite of passage is made of preliminal rites (separation), liminal rites (transition) and postliminal rites (incorporation) (Van Gennep 1960: 11). In Iceland, in the time of separation, the young man asks help from his parents, and could be given symbolic objects such as a sword or practical ones like a boat, in order to be prepared for his trip. Later, the liminal state shows a change of status (which ranges from being integrated to the *hirð* of the Norwegian king to being under-estimated abroad¹⁶). Finally, they always want to return to Iceland. They often do, and possess more valuables and glory than before.¹⁷ Logically, that time of transition needs to be dedicated to some activities related to business or to achieve glorious deeds. They often go together in the "viking way of life". This stage might be also be an opportunity to rehabilitate a family at the Norwegian court,¹⁸ but it is mainly an opportunity for the figure of the *kolbítir* (like Glúmr, Egill or Grettir) to leave a tense situation at home (*Víga-Glúms saga* ch.5).

Any kind of exile involves a wish of return, either factual or symbolic (Spanu 2005: 165). A large part of the *Íslendingasögur* corpus ends on an exile too, a religious one, performed through pilgrimage¹⁹ or definitive auto-exclusion from the secular

world,²⁰ as in the epilogue of *Grettis saga*, the *Spesar þáttr*. On their own behalf, Þorsteinn and Spes decide to go to Rome and finally leave their possessions to build individual cells where they will pray for their union after life (*Grettis saga* ch. 92: 289). As a consequence, exile in the sagas is generally depicted positively and gives a rhythm to the narrative. Moreover, the regular exiles and meetings with historical key-figures like King Haraldr, Jarl Sveinn, King Eiríkr or Oláfr gives to the audience the tools to trace a precise chronology the narrative is not giving, and makes the reader able to judge the accuracy of the author. Positive exiles in the sagas can thus be said to be liminal and transitory, means of social or spiritual progression.

The “evil twin” of exile is condemnation. It is a negative type of exile, for it is used as a punishment against a member of the society who failed to follow its basic rules. On that aspect, we might refer to the legal system in Iceland. The laws were written down around 1116 (Van Houts 2002: 21), and gathered later on in the *Grágás* lawbook, preserved in the manuscripts *Konungsbók* and the *Staðarhólsbók*, both supposed to be written in the second half of the 13th century (Sandvik and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson 2005: 225).

In the laws, exile as a condemnation is referred to in two different shapes. The first one is a three years exile, called *fjörbaugsgarðr*²¹. Like for the Greek ostracism, the *fjörbaugsmáðr* preserves his rights, but has to leave the island for a time and move regularly. For example, Grettir is *sekr* (sentenced) to lesser outlawry when he kills Skeggi on the way to the assembly and sent *útan*. In theory, exile as a rite of passage as we described earlier and the lesser outlawry are totally different, but in practice there is not such a large difference. In both cases, the man is leaving Iceland for Norway where he is totally free of his actions. He does some business or joins the court of the Norwegian king and accomplishes some deeds, waiting to be reintegrated and be given back his status. It follows the same pattern of a rite of passage: separation-liminality-reintegration. Their main difference is in the sphere they belong to. One is mandatory by law, the other promoted by social norm. Literarily, Greenland owes its discovery to the Icelandic lesser outlawry, for this gives Eiríkr the Red the opportunity to discover and settle the place (*Eiríks saga rauda* ch.2). On that matter, lesser outlawry looks very similar to the *ius exilii* of the Roman Republic, which was a privilege of the Roman citizen to leave the capital before the condemnation was made official. Outside the capital, he was free to circulate. The lesser outlawry then appears more like a way to re-educate a bad-tempered man, pushing him away for a time, and giving him the opportunity to make some accomplishments that will transform him into a better member of society.

All the different kinds of exiles we have described so far have one aspect in common: the possibility of return. But for important crimes, mainly murder(s), the condemnation was stronger and definitive: an exile *ad vitam æternam* from the social space called *skóggangr* (literally “going-by-the-forest”). The *skógarmaðr* (man-of-the-forest) is made by law a total stranger to his own society. He becomes *óæll* (cannot be given food), *óferjandi* (cannot be transported by boat, which means that he cannot leave the island) and *dræpr fyrir hverjum manni* (that anyone can kill without legal consequences) (Turville-Petre 1977: 770). The step from lesser outlawry to full outlawry is not only a change of degree, but a radical change in nature. The horizon of possibilities is growing smaller. The full outlaw is expelled from the law and the places where the law is ruling, which means the settled spaces, but not from the island, and has then to occupy marginal spaces with no apparent possibility of return. The full outlaw

seems then to be trapped in a constant liminal status. His situation is helpless: any person who will help the outlaw will be outlawed himself.²² Though they have been expelled from social life, they are not dead yet, and as a consequence they still have the needs of any human being. In difficult times, standards are logically lowered and reduced to basic needs: food, shelter, personal safety and -if possible- company.

The first action of Grettir as a full outlaw is to steal a horse before systematically performing robberies with one main target: food.²³ But the only way to fulfil those needs is to steal and occupy lands illegally, which is forcing the outlaw into a vicious circle of crimes from which he cannot escape. Being out-of-the-law, those deeds cannot be strictly labelled as “crimes”, but they are still seen as a transgression of social norms. Indeed, Grettir (already a full outlaw) is asking Skapti the lawspeaker for protection, and is rejected: “*Þat er mér sagt, at þú farir heldr óspakliga ok grípir fyrir mǫnnum góz sitt, ok samir þér þat illa, svá stórættuðum manni. Nú væri allt betra um at tala, ef þú ræntir eigi;*” (*Grettis saga*, ch. 54: 177-178). His answer reveals a contradiction: how can Grettir stop robbing, for he is no longer a member of the society yet he is still in need for food, clothes and tools to survive? By this device, they are forced to stay in a liminal status. On the other hand, Gísli is never mentioned as a robber during his outlawry, for he does not need to be one: he stays safe under the protection of his wife Auðr. However, it is highly probable that he -as an historical person- had to rob or commit some felony at some point during his successive moves, but the narrative chooses not to record it.

Moreover the need for company (which is an important issue in both *Grettis saga* and *Gísla saga*) is hardly fulfilled, for the law tries to make impossible any solidarity between outlaws. Indeed, an outlaw can free himself by killing another outlaw (Amory 1992: 94), and this is exactly what Grettir's fellows, who are themselves outlawed, hope for by betraying Grettir and attempting to his life. On different levels, everything seems to be done to prevent the outlaw from escaping the margins. Full outlawry appears to be “virtually a death penalty”,²⁴ but figures like Grettir and Gísli succeed at survival. Nevertheless, their exceptional longevity leaves them stuck in liminality.

The liminality is not only in the places the outlaws have to occupy, but in the names they are given as well. If we refer to the vocabulary used to name outlaws, we can say that, being out of the law, they are no more human, and outlawry change their ontological status. In Old Norse, the same word, *vargr*, was used to designate both an actual wolf and an outlaw in the legal vocabulary.²⁵ Grettir is called by this name while settling in Drangey: “*Sogðu þeir heraðsmǫnnum, hverr vargr kominn var í eynd*” (*Grettis saga*, ch. 56: 229). The word comes from the proto-Germanic **wargaz*, which is used with the shape *wargus* as early as in the *Pactus Legis Salicae* (507-511). There is then a common cultural trait between the Norse culture and other Germanic peoples to equate an outcast with a wolf. The wild outlaw is even considered unholy through the expression *vargr í veum* (“A wolf in the sacred space”), or simply by the adjective *óheilagr*. Living in wild places, they are then assimilated to the creatures living in those places, either real or supernatural ones. This image fits with the situation: the banishment inside an island takes the shape of a hunt-to-death where outlaws are hunted down like wild beasts. An outlaw might be called as well *urðarmadr*, or more formally *skógarmaðr* (See Byock 1993),²⁶ which both keep the association with wilderness, even if in practice the outlaw is not really living in the depths of a wild forest (as it was not truly possible in the deforested Iceland). The image of the wolf might come from the

scary aspects and the crimes he is committing to live, and the fact that he is living in the wilderness, a margin the outlaw is joining. It might be connected to the fact that the wolf was considered an enemy of justice on a mythological level, with the myth of Týr and Fenrir, compiled in the *Edda* (*Gylfaginning* 34). Týr, god of justice, has the monstrous wolf Fenrir, son of Loki, as an antagonist. In the well-known myth, Týr struggles to find the proper way to tie him in order to control him. To succeed, he is bound to sacrifice his right hand. Later Fenrir will be one of the chaotic forces of destruction during the *Ragnarök*. Without surprises, the outlaw can be considered as a potential chaotic figure, as Fenrir is. Those semantic aspects of outlawry then reveal, from a legal and geographic liminality, that the status of the outlaw is ontologically liminal as well.

We must however bear in mind that the Icelandic context is specific and there is a gap between the law-books preserved and the practices embodied in the sagas. First of all the *Grágás*, even if precious as a historical testimony of what were the laws of medieval Iceland, are a collection of laws and not strictly a code. As a result some provisions might be in conflict with others, as the laws were never written down at that time but recited by law-speakers at the assemblies (*þing*) every year and were subject to regular reform. Then, private settlements and conciliations (*bót*) were privileged, often with the help of trusted figures (often prominent in sagas, like Snorri goði or Njáll). Lawsuits were only the second option in case of failure of private settlement. In case of lawsuits, the annual assembly (*Alþing*) was in charge of the debates. Unlike Norway, where the king is described as taking decisions on his own authority (three examples in the sole *Grettis saga*: in chapter 19 the king outlawed two *berserker*, and in chapters 14 and 19 two different kings outlawed Grettir from Norway), the Icelandic condemnation to lesser or full outlawry is a collective decision.

As a consequence of the non-hierarchic social system that ruled Icelandic society during the saga-time and the lack of penal executive power, the law was a large matter of private interest. The prime example of the deep interest of the Icelandic society in legal matters is the long debate on procedure held in the end of *Njáls saga*, from chapter 142 to 145, which results in a bloody fight. But that system has as a consequence to make the law flexible and dependent on the context and emphasizes the importance of the persons willing to defend or to accuse. Both Grettir and Gísli's outlawries are said to result from a bad procedure or bad defence from their relatives.²⁷ Skapti the law-speaker tried to stick to the law, saying that with no defence, Grettir cannot be outlawed (*Grettis saga*, ch. 46: 46-147). Grettir is nevertheless sentenced to outlawry because of the power held by the accusers,²⁸ as is Gísli. But at the end of the saga, Grettir's performance of surviving to the prescription of his penalty was judged so exceptional that he retrieved the possibility of escaping his liminal status of outlaw (*Grettis saga*, ch. 77: 244-245). The *lögmaðr* (law-speaker) decides that no one should be longer in outlawry than twenty years in all. Unfortunately, Grettir dies the year before, after nineteen years of wanderings. It is impossible to know if this legal debate ever happened or if it is an invention of the author to add to the dramatic dimension of Grettir's life (See Guðni Jónsson's note 2 in *Grettis saga*: 245).

Nevertheless, it shows that what has been preserved of the law and what is happening in the sagas is not the same, for they have different purposes. The full outlawry and the fact that outlaws could be killed without any consequences for the slayer, shows a primary and practical function of the full outlawry: to stop the endless

vicious circle of revenge and retaliation. Yet, both Grettir and Gísli are avenged by a member of their family (*Grettis saga* ch. 86: 271-274; *Gísli saga*, ch. 38: 117-118).

Another example of literary adaptation is the case of Þorbjörn, Grettir's killer. He is outlawed from Iceland as long as Grettir's relatives are still alive, so it is a long-term outlawry but with a (small) possibility of coming back one day. This gives the possibility to narrate the epilogue of *Grettis saga*, the so-called *Spesar þáttur*. Narrative is not submitted to the laws as historical facts, but can stretch them and adapt to serve the narrative.

This is what we suppose to have happened in the two outlaw sagas, for Grettir and Gísli are often helped, or Grettir buried in a church when he is not supposed to, or both are avenged (but not on the Icelandic territory). The law is giving the condemnation, but its flexibility in practical application gives works of literature such as *Grettis saga* and *Gísli saga* the possibility to explore the consequences of exile on individuals, on their relatives and on a whole society.

The Narrative Spaces of Outlawry

One of the consequences of a non-voluntary exile is wandering. Unlike exile as a rite of passage or the very similar situation of lesser outlawry, the full outlaw has no goal except trying to survive for some more time. As has already been said, his needs are basic, and as a consequence his movements are connected with them. To make a parallel with what François-Xavier Dillman says about magicians in medieval Iceland, the outlaw inhabits “impossible places” (*lieux impossibles*²⁹). The outlaw is excluded from the social space, which means he cannot share the same space with “standard” members of the society. He becomes “out of sight”, out of what Joonas Ahola calls the “public”, or Kirsten Hastrup the “inside”. Then we might ask: Where is he going? Which spaces are generated through the narrative in order to compensate the lack of sociability and how to interpret them? Even if Grettir and Gísli are both condemned to full outlawry, they react to it in very different ways.

Wilderness and the supernatural in *Grettis saga*

Societies have different ways of dealing with their criminals. Some send them to specific places made for the sentenced: prisons, working camps or galleys. Those places are dedicated to them. But in Iceland, those who have been sentenced do not have a specific place to go. They are sent to what is the antithesis of the society. They seem to be sent to a “non-place”.

In the early years of his outlawry, Grettir seems to move according to the potential protection some of his relatives might be willing to offer him. From chapter 47 to 53 he is moving from his mother's place to other possible helpers: Grímr, Snorri goði, Þorgils, Þorbjörn and Þorsteinn. But the help they are willing to offer decreases quickly: “...leitaði til margra gofugra manna, ok bar jafnan eitthvert við, þat er engi tók við honum.”³⁰ (*Grettis saga*, ch. 52: 172). Each of them sends Grettir to someone else, for none of them is powerful enough to endure the risks of giving him shelter for a long time. But thanks to his ancestors and fame, he is able to find temporary shelter.³¹ The social network of an Icelandic man is therefore not only useful during the trial to avoid condemnation or to accuse, but as well in the wanderings after the sentence, when the stronger supporters reveal themselves.

As a result, Grettir is quickly forced to inhabit other spaces. He is progressively going deeper in marginal ones. He stays first in a *sel* (*Grettis saga*, ch. 52: 166) a remote shed used by shepherds in the summer, but quickly moves to the woods (“*ok lá þar í skógum*”), as he supposes that the marginality of the place would guarantee security (“*...ok svaf ok uggði ekki at sér.*”). The deserted aspect of the asocial margins, regardless of the discomfort, provides security to the outlaw. Grettir then occupies places of temporary passage like roads (*Grettis saga*, ch. 54: 175), and afterwards caves *helli stóran* (*Grettis saga* ch. 57: 184) or what can be transformed in a stronghold (*vígi*) on the edge of a mountain (*Grettis saga* ch. 58: 186).

Once Grettir finds a place to stay, he needs to adapt to it, and to make the place suitable for his stay because those areas are usually not meant to be inhabited. Björn, a free farmer (*bóndi*), gives him precious advice to go to the mountain “*...ok þó fylgsni, ef klókliga er um búit.*” (*Grettis saga* ch.58: 186). Grettir needs to call upon his crafting skills in order to live in those remote but safe places. The transformation of the natural landscape can be interpreted as a way to take possession of the margin and humanize it. Grettir also looks sporadically for shelter in actual houses among other people, but slowly decides to live completely on his own. This can be thought as the mark of a strong will to achieve more independence from the social space, for the margins only exist by referring to the centre. This tendency becomes clear when Grettir decides to cease robbing after his bad experience with a group of free farmers (*Grettis saga* ch. 52: 168), builds himself a hut and catches his food by his own means: “*Grettir fór upp á Arnarvatnsheiði ok gerði sér þar skála, sem enn sér merki, ok bjósk þar um, því at hann vildi nú hvatvetna annat en ræna, fekk sér net ok bát ok veiddi fiska til matar sér.*” (*Grettis saga* ch. 55, p. 178).³² The repetition of the reflexive “*sér*” (three times) concerning the hut (for himself), the net (to take for himself) and the fish (to kill for himself) underlines the fact that Grettir wants to be rid of his dependence on society and own the new space assigned to him. For that purpose, he has to tame the natural environment (caves or the cold winters) and exploit its potentialities for the production of vital resources.

Yet, complete independence is impossible. He is able to take possession of marginal places thanks to deals made with the nearest person in charge. For example, in chapter 52, Grettir is attacked by a band of farmers he was robbing from and saved by Þorbjörg, a powerful woman of the area, under one condition: “*“Þú skalt vinna eið”, sagði hon, “at gera engar óspekðir hér um Ísafjörð; engum skaltu hefna, þeim sem í atförf hafa verit at taka þik.”*” (*Grettis saga* ch. 52: 169).³³ Some characters seem to prefer to cohabit with the outlaws rather than to create tensions with them. Later on in *Grettis saga*, Björn, another *bóndi*, refers to the law and reminds Grettir that “*...hann ætti svá sþkótt um allt land, at menn myndi forðask bjargir við hann um þat, er sekð nemr;*” Here again we have an example of the gap between the law and the practices depicted in the sagas, because Björn offers right away a deal to Grettir: “*en heldr skal ek þér gagn gera, ef þú lætr þá menn vera í friði, sem í minni vernd eru, hversu sem þú gerir við aðra menn hér í byggð.*” (*Grettis saga* ch. 58: 186).³⁴ The deal with the outlaw is in first place made in order to avoid damages in the district (robberies, devastation or even murders) and second to use the potential threat he represents against others. From the margins, an outlaw might then have a strategic function for those who inhabit the “inside”. At the same time, using him from the margins provides them an easy way to avoid suits: they can indirectly commit illegal actions through the outlaw without being charged.

This way, Grettir begins to learn how to survive as an outlaw (which might be the key of his longevity) and to try to keep good relationships with the neighbours for he “*átti jafnan vingott við þá, sen næstir honum váru.*”³⁵ (*Grettis saga*, ch. 58: 188), something he failed to achieve when he was living in the same space. As a consequence, Grettir is not earning a full independence, but at least a division of space, a “contract of cohabitation”. This leaves him in a relative peace in the wild margins, while it still allows him some sporadic incursions into the social “inside” to spend some cold nights inside a warm house.

Therefore the margin is not only a “non-place” in opposition to the social space. The outcast “belongs to the space beyond the social space” (Hastrup 1986: 292). What is social is human, and as a consequence what is beyond the social space is beyond the human space. We do not have to consider where the margin is but what is inside the margin with the outlaw, for he is not entering an empty space.

Mircea Eliade argued that mankind was repeating the cosmography of the gods in the microcosmos of the society (Eliade 1969: 22). If we follow Hastrup on that point as well (Hastrup 1986: 283) then the social structure of *Grettis saga* is the same as the cosmography described in the *Edda*. The centre would be *Miðgarðr*, the “middle” world, and beyond that protected space *Útgarðr*, the “outside”. According to Hastrup (1986: 280) “Cosmologically and mythologically the boundary between society and non-society is reflected in the opposition between humans and non-humans, such as trolls, giants and ghosts.” According to the *Edda*, *Útgarðr* is the place where the giants and non-human creatures are living. To follow this logic, Grettir is not only going to a natural world without men, but to a world already inhabited by creatures. The wild, the non-humanly organized space, is the condition for the supernatural. Indeed, in the margins which he explores even before being outlawed, Grettir is meeting not only supernatural trolls but also natural bears, who in addition share the same space as he, since those creatures dwell in caves as he does. Moreover, he encounters other creatures like revenants (Kárr and Glámr), who are no longer human, yet not totally dead. Being former humans, they are not totally supernatural; for example, they keep their names (as opposed to the nameless trolls of the saga). But as liminal figures stuck in the “limbo”, they occupy the margins as well. The exploration of the (natural) wilderness opens the world of the supernatural and the semi-natural.

In this context, it is important to stress that the connection with the marginal and supernatural places is only possible through Grettir. The meetings between other characters and supernatural creatures are never described. The death of Glámr and the second shepherd, even if caused by strange events in the wilderness at night, are not described by the narrative but only mentioned as facts.³⁶ The mystery of their death stays in the margins, whereas Grettir's fight with Glámr is fully and skilfully described (*Grettis saga*: ch. 35: 118-123). Grettir is the only one to dare encounter him, while others run away or abandon him (the meeting with Kárr, ch.18, the bear, ch.21 or the trolls, ch.65-66). As Torfi H. Tulinius suggests, it might be a reluctance from the author to describe close contact with the supernatural because of the historical time in which the sagas occur (unlike the *fornaldarsögur* genre, where the non-defined time of narration opens a world of possibilities to a creative mind) or a technique to create more tensions for the more relevant meeting between Grettir and Glámr (Torfi Tulinius 2000: 531). It might also be that the author does not have the opportunity to develop those aspects in general, for most of the *Íslendingasögur* are about conflicts between clans and events in the “public” space. Once outlawed, Grettir is no more a public character,

unlike Snorri goði or Njáll who are constantly involved in the “public” issues. Grettir spends his time in a space that is not usually shared with others. The exploration of the margin triggered by the outlawry opens literary perspectives, as it is an unknown space which needs to be fulfilled. There is not more historical information to rely on: the author is left with a space that he has to bring to life.

Following this thread of spatial thought, we can say that the last dwelling Grettir occupies before his death is the extreme “non-place” par excellence (Ástráður Eysteinnsson 2002: 92). After being denied protection for the last time (*Grettis saga* ch. 59: 225), Grettir heads for the island of Drangey in the Skagafjörður. The place is the extreme symbol of his condition: it is a stronghold that can be easily controlled (it is surrounded by the sea and cliffs) with sheep and fish available for food. The time of compromise is over. Grettir has reached the most independent marginal place possible to own, and merges with it to become “the island-like character” (Ástráður Eysteinnsson 2002: 92) a living metaphor of exclusion. It is worth noting that islands could have been mysterious places where outcasts like magicians or witches might have lived.

Indeed, François-Xavier Dillmann remarks that islands were never used as a motif for magical figures (Dillmann 2006: 406). On the contrary, it is the victims of magicians and witches who look for shelter on islands. Grettir is killed on an island because of a curse sent by an old woman (*Grettis saga* ch. 82: 258-264) and Gísli finds protection in an island because Þorgrímr forgot to include islands in his seiðr spell against him (*Gísla saga* ch. 26: 84).³⁷ In his last moment, though not on an island, Gísli reaches before dying a similar liminal space. Wounded to death, he jumps on a rock, *Einhammarr*, which is separated from the cliff.³⁸ Like Grettir, he is in a sort of “non-place” when he dies. To add a final sign of their liminal status, they are both buried next to their place of death, where the ground and the sea meet.³⁹ Grettir and his brother are buried on the island: “*Þeir dysjuðu þá bræðr báða þar í eyjunní*”⁴⁰ (*Grettis saga* ch. 82: 258-264). The verb *dysja* is specifically used for marginal people, criminals and witches,⁴¹ as much as *gotva* which is referring to Gísli's burial⁴². Both have the underlying idea of an improper way to bury, in a geographical “in-betweeness”.

Thanks to the marginal spaces he is not only occupying but tries to self-appropriate, Grettir is depicted as earning a progressive singularity. Moreover, he is the one who dares to visit the marginal spaces and fight their inhabitants. As a consequence, those places only belong to him and his new role becomes to function as the connection between the “non-places” and the social space. The “non-places”, being out of sight, need to be fulfilled, and the author of *Grettis saga* chose to associate in the non-place wilderness and supernatural. The theme of outlawry appears as an explanation for the amount of supernatural motifs in a genre that is usually more concerned with public and historical biographies.

Contradictory dreams in *Gísla saga*

From the description of Grettir's wanderings in the wild and his incredible meetings, we can affirm that he fits the *skógarmaðr* archetype. Unlike Grettir, the situation of Gísli seems -at a quick glance- far more limited. It seems fair to deny him the status of “authentic outlaw” and *skógarmaðr* along with Ólafr Briem, for Gísli does not explore dangerous places as Grettir does. He is not sent “out” to a wild and supernatural “non-place”. This difference is made obvious in *Gísla saga*, when in

chapter 29, Vesteinn's sons are outlawed: they starve, sleep in the forest and meet difficulties an “authentic outlaw” is supposed to face.⁴³ Nevertheless, the narrative develops for him another kind of “non-place”, mental and intimate, in the shape of an oniric “non-place”.

Gísli is not wandering so widely around Iceland and stays very close to social spaces, what is familiar or what Joonas Ahola calls “private” from his tripartite division of space. He expands the binary division of space made by Kristen Hastrup inside-outside (*innan-útan*) by a tripartite one private-public-outside, which we follow here. (Ahola 2009: 24). His movements are cyclic. He is always going back to what is familiar and familial. In the time after his condemnation, Gísli is reported to stay twice in Þorgarðr's house in Barðaströnd (*Gísla saga* ch. 23-25), a woman who used to welcome outcasts, three times (for long periods) with his wife Auðr in Geirþjófsfjörðu (*Gísla saga* ch. 21-22, 24-25, 27, 30 and 33), and once in an island with Ingjaldr, his cousin who came to Iceland with him (*Gísla saga* ch. 24: 78) and another with Refr and his wife.⁴⁴ Moreover he goes regularly to visit his brother Þorkell who fails to give him the support Gísli expected (*Gísla saga* ch. 23-24: 73-78). His stays are not obtained through deals, for Gísli does not seem to be a serious threat for the society (as Grettir was). Characters from the social space do not have to deal with him and divide the space in order to be in peace, but they are willing to help him without setting conditions, as Ingjaldr does: “Ok er þeir hittask, býðr hann Gísla allan greiða ok alla björg, þá er hann mátti honum veita...”⁴⁵ (*Gísla saga* ch. 24: 79). Gísli goes again to what is familiar and familial to him. His relatives welcome him in the “private” space of their houses, or in hideouts near their dwellings.

Among the expected needs of an outlaw (food, shelter, safety and company), Gísli seems in a far more comfortable situation than Grettir. It is not mentioned that he has to take care of his food or his shelter nor the company because he mainly stays with his wife Auðr and their foster-daughter, or with caring hosts.⁴⁶ He is not betrayed by his allies, as it happens to Grettir, betrayed by his fellow outlaws (*Grettis saga*, ch. 55-56: 179-182) nor by his wife even when the possibility is given to her. In chapter 32, she throws to the face of Eyjólfur the purse of silver he offered her to hand over Gísli. She stays faithful to Gísli until the end.⁴⁷ His safety is far more stable than Grettir's, even if it is still a worry. As a consequence, Gísli do not have urgent daily preoccupations as Grettir.

In line with my previous comments, *Gísla saga* is thus not supposed to have uncommon supernatural features, for Gísli never takes over the wilderness, the condition for what the French medieval literary production called *la merveille* (as in Chrétien de Troyes and the Arthurian cycle). Nevertheless, we can notice that a division of the space is still mandatory for safety reasons. Gísli is not really out of the social space but chooses to inhabit under the social space at several occasions (four times) in a *jarðhús*.⁴⁸ This underground is giving him shelter and at the same time keeps him close to the private but still social life of a house. He cannot perform the step Grettir is crossing by humanizing an unwelcoming space. Even if his reintegration is impossible, he did not renounce what is familiar to him,⁴⁹ a common trait of the exiled figure. He is then staying in well-known places with familiar faces, and he is not settling the expected wild space as an outlaw should do. However, if he is not willingly taking over the “outside” space, he is taken over himself by another one: the oniric space.

Indeed, Gísli is said to be “*vitr maðr ok draumamaðr mikill ok berdreymr.*”⁵⁰ (*Gísla saga* ch. 22: 52). Dreams are common motifs of the *Íslendingasögur* genre and

men like Snorri goði, Njáll or Gestr the Wise are said to have prophetic dreams too, which give them the place of counsellor (or even wise leader) for social issues. The function of dreams in the sagas is usually straightforward: they announce the death of a man, either the dreamer or a relative. They often have a supernatural aspect for men are represented by doubles, animals or spectral ancestors like the *hamingja* (Kelchner 1935: 17-35). Most of the dreams are connected to fate and are often inevitable. The two first dreams Gísli has, before his outlawry, are of that type. He dreams about the death of his beloved blood-brother and brother-in-law Vésteinn: “*Þat dreymði mik ina fyrri nótt, at af einum bæ hrokkðist hoggormr ok hjoggi Véstein til bana. En ina síðari nótt dreymði mik, at vargr rynni af sama bæ ok biti Véstein til bana.*”⁵¹ (*Gísla saga*, ch.14: 46). The strangeness of those dreams is not in their narrative but in the fact that Gísli shares them after the murder of Vésteinn. Gísli admits that he willingly kept them for himself because he did not want them to become true.⁵² A clear opposition appears between fate and Gísli's own will. This opposition is present all along the tale, and is connected to his denial of his own outlawry (as he stays with his wife) and to his death (he hides from his enemies for years before facing them in his last fight).

But the very unusual aspect of the dreams occurs after the sentence of outlawry for “...once outlawed, his dreams become self-referential” (Miller 2004: 135). Indeed, Gísli gets tormented with his own death and his after-life expectations. Two women (*draumkonur tvær*) appear successively or together in his dreams, and contradict one another. The first one is said to be the best woman, *betri*⁵³ and is first announcing him his death in seven years, symbolized by seven burning fires.⁵⁴ However she also tells him about the pleasures that he will enjoy with her in the after-life (*Gísla saga* ch. 30: 94).⁵⁵ She promises him an “*annan heim at kanna*” (*Gísla saga*, ch. 33: 102), a safe place where the familiar will not be threatened by fear of death. The “worse woman” (*verri*) comes in second, but becomes more present as the time of death is approaching, washing him with blood and threatening him about his afterlife.

The next dreams are just a variation in intensity of the two first ones. Through the years, the bad woman wins over the good woman: “*...ok koma aptr draumar hans allir ok harðar svefnfarar, ok kemr nú jafnan at honum draumkonan sú verri ok þá hin stundum, in betri.*” (*Gísla saga* ch. 30: 94). The two women are constantly connected in each dream by the use of the superlative, creating a chronic antagonism. The duality of the dreams is abnormal, as much as their contradiction. Two characters can of course be one against another in a dream, but a dream cannot give two prophecies exclusive of each other. The two women clearly contradict each other: “*Nú skal ek því öllu bregða, er in betri draumkonan mælti við þik, ok skal ek þess ráðandi, at þér skal þess ekki at gagni verða, er hon hefir mælt.*” (*Gísla saga* ch. 33: 102).

Many hypotheses have been proposed about the nature of these women. They were assimilated to *valkyrjur* because of the after-death concern and the presence of an image of the good woman riding a grey horse (Langeslag 2009: 65). They might be the image of the *fylgjur* warning about an imminent death, or even the Norns who manage fate, mentioned in the *Gylfaginning*. This last hypothesis makes sense with the contradictory message of the dreams because the bad woman seems to have power over Gísli's destiny for she can reverse what the good woman says. A compromise would be to say that the good woman is Gísli's *fylgjur* warning him about his death but caring for him in his after-life, and the evil woman the image of fate, or a Norn, responsible for his situation.

Those hypotheses give a clue on the motifs used to depict the two dream-women, but not on the reason why they are used in such an original way. Their Manichean aspect might be a sign of important Christian influence, and Gísli's dreams the oniric battle-field between Christianity and paganism (as it is depicted in the medieval allegoric *Psychomachia* and later on in *Le Roman de la Rose*). Indeed, the good woman asks Gísli to adopt the behaviour close to Christian ethical imperatives. She asks him to give up on his former beliefs and to be good towards the deaf, crippled, poor and indigent.⁵⁶ Moreover the bloody visions connected to the bad woman and the tortures she performs can be a glimpse of what Hell might be. But at the same time, Lönnroth interprets that bloody ritual as a Christian purification (Lönnroth 1969: 461). Moreover it is suggested that Gísli will enjoy pleasure and good food in a rich house in the after-life with the good woman,⁵⁷ which is close to the description made of Valhöll in the *Edda*. Anyway, dreams were a medium used in both pagan and Christian times for superior forces or God himself to communicate. It is predictable that at a time of transition, they appear mixed and blurry.

The contradiction and fight between the good and the bad woman are not solved by the narrative. Gísli dies as predicted, but we do not know how his after-life is. In fact, the contradiction does not need to be solved, for we think that those dreams might be an exploration of the condition of the outlaw. The supernatural meetings between the outlaw and the creatures are mainly expressed through the dreams in *Gísli saga*, instead of through wilderness as in *Grettis saga*. *Gísli saga* has an original and impressive exploration of the dreams: self-referential, numerous and repetitive, dual and contradictory, progressive, and with an eschatological care for the after-life. Dreaming seems no more to be the medium of fate but the inner-voice of Gísli in crisis. Those dreams overwhelm Gísli's existence, and are the core narrative of the second part of the saga (from chapter 22 to 35). Gísli's years of outlawry are not dedicated to wanderings and deeds. The first six years are totally hidden from the narrative, and the story makes a jump to the time of the dreams. The switch from a narration of facts to a narration of dreams underlines the focus and the priority given by the story to those dreams and not in deeds made in order to survive as an outlaw.

The last particularity of Gísli's dreams resides in his behaviour towards them. He refuses to share the first ones (*Gísli saga* ch. 13: 59), and then only shares them with Auðr, his wife. No one else in the saga is dreaming, and Gísli is the only one (as far as we know) among the “great dreamers” of the *Íslendingasögur* corpus, to have those kinds of dreams. This specificity turns his dreams into a highly private matter. He is holding the key to what Homer called the gates of horn and ivory in his *Odyssey*. The private aspect of his dreams is also expressed through the possessive pronoun “mín” he uses to refer to the dream-woman : “draumkona mín” (*Gísli saga* ch. 13: 59).

Moreover, he first says his dreams through cryptic skaldic verses, before re-telling them in the prose to his wife. She is his confidante, and through her the reader is able to access the dreams. Out of the public and social place and instead of running into the wild, Gísli occupies (or is occupied by) the oniric space, battlefield of his own inner-tensions and preoccupations.

Conclusions

Beyond the obvious interest of the *sagnamaðr* (saga-writer) for Icelandic

geography, full outlawry gives him an opportunity to describe distant spaces that are usually not relevant for the story. Indeed, for highly social figures like Njáll or Snorri goði, or feminine ones like Guðrún, the main part of the plot needs either a public place (assemblies for example), either a half-private half-public one (such as the farmstead). The impossibility of a social life caused by outlawry forces the *sagnamaðr* to imagine highly fictional places. As Mary Sandbach said: “The less that is known of a person's life the easier it is to make up stories about him. Nothing is simpler than the transformation of such a person into a being with supernatural powers, or one who associates with supernatural beings” (Sandbach 1937-8: 93-106). It results in a union of the wild and the supernatural in *Grettis saga*, and a union of the dreams and torments in *Gísli saga*. The exploration of those new narrative spaces is original (both in quantity and quality) and a common trait of outlawry in the two Icelandic sagas. Moreover those spaces are not just original in their exploration, they denote a sense of exclusivity and privacy, for Grettir and Gísli are the only ones to have access to them. Therefore, we can conclude that the full outlawry thematic in Medieval Icelandic literature gave room for large literary creativity grounded in supernatural themes drawn from local traditions.

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NOTES

¹ An earlier version of these ideas exists in my thesis for the M. A degree, *The Inner Exiles. Outlaws and Scapegoating process in Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar and Gísla saga Súrsonnar*, Ritgerð til M.A. prófs, University of Iceland, 2011.

² The withered fir-tree which stands on the mound/neither bark nor needles protect it/so it is with the man whom no one loves/why should he live for long? For eddic poetry, the Old Norse text is quoted from Neckel (1956). Translations are taken from: Larrington (1996). Poems are quoted following by stanza:page number.

³ "...Si m'en fuirai, n'i os ester. /Bien sai que j'ai si grant prooise/ Par tote terre ou sol adoise,/ Bien sai que u monde n'a cort./ S'i vois, li sires ne m'avot." v 201-210, *Tristan et Yseut* from Bérout, (Marchello-Nizia 1995: 8), "I will run away, for I do not dare to stay here. I know well my reputation, by all land the sun shines on. I know well that, if I go, there will be no lord from any court in the world that will not offer me protection." (Translation is mine).

⁴ According to Eilhart d'Oberg, first his court in Wales, then his court in Brittany. (Marchello-Nizia 1995: 329).

⁵ Many examples are spread throughout the sagas, especially regarding acts of witchcraft. In *Gísla saga*, (ch.19: 60), Auðbjörg is stoned to death for provoking an avalanche in which several men died. All quotations from *Gísla saga* are taken from Björn Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson 1943.

⁶ All quotations from *Grettis saga* are from Guðni Jónsson 1936.

⁷ Sturla Þórðarson (1214–1284) was an Icelandic chieftain and author of sagas and contemporary history during the 13th century involved in the political struggles of his time. He was the nephew of saga-writer Snorri Sturluson. He is the author of the large *Íslendinga saga* (*Sturlunga saga*, *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*) and supposed to have written *Sturlubók*, a transcript of the *Landnamabók*. He is often referred as Sturla lögmaður, as in *Grettis saga*, for he held the position of lawspeaker in Iceland after the dissolution of the Icelandic Commonwealth.

⁸ Three mentions are made. "...þat spjót fannsk á ofanverðum dögum Sturlu lögmanns Þórðarsonar", ch. 49: 157, "... at því sem Sturla Þórðarson hefir sagt." ch. 69, p. 226, "Hefir Sturla lögmaður svá sagt..." ch. 93: 289. Those statements are not found elsewhere according to Anthony Faulkes (2005 : xii).

⁹ There are two versions of *Gísla saga* preserved and used nowadays side by side. A longer version, called L, is defective, and a shorter version, called S, is complete and generally preferred for studies, even though the longer one is thought to be closer to a lost and hypothetical original version. For the current study, we will mainly use the shorter version normally used by scholars, but we also took the longer one in consideration.

¹⁰ Translations from the sagas of Icelanders are taken from Viðar Hreinsson 1997.

¹¹ The birth of Þorgrímr, later called Snorri the goði, is related in *Gísla saga* ch.18, p. 57-58 and *Eyrbyggja saga* chapter 12, pp. 19-20. *Eyrbyggja saga* is quoted from Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson (eds.), 1935.

¹² Haraldr was, according to tradition, the first king of Norway between 872 and 931 AD.

¹³ Vocabulary is taken from Cleasby, Richard, and Gudbrandur Vigfússon, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 187, "Ver". This meant first the British Islands, and then as an extension Iceland itself.

¹⁴ "This spear-shooter's life wavers/ a course from right to left,/ leaving hands and rights: my ribbed ship/ roams the seas like a tame horse./ I have left behind many kinsmen/ and lands to reach this pass: I have struck a harsh bargain, swapped/ my fields for the cold backed mountain. (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 58).

¹⁵ Glúmr told his mother that he wanted to go abroad: "I can see that I'm not going to get anywhere here, but perhaps I may get some good luck from my noble relatives [...]Glúmr was fifteen years old when he decided to go abroad." (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 274).

¹⁶ See *Eyjólfur* in *Viga-Glúms saga*, ch.3, who is insulted for being an Icelander and considered slow, before showing what he is capable of.

¹⁷ We can point out the return of Kjartan with very rich goods and specially the headdress which will be a matter of dispute between his bride and Guðrun in *Laxdæla saga*, ch. 45-46.

¹⁸ *Egils saga*, ch. 35, Þorólfr, son of Grímr, tries to repair the mistakes of his grand-father and is enrolled in Eiríkr's guard.

¹⁹ *Gísla saga*, ch.38, p. 117; Also in *Njáls saga*, ch. 159: 462-464. *Njáls saga* is quote from Einar Ol. Sveinsson (ed.) 1954.

²⁰ *Laxdæla saga* ch. 78., *Grettis saga*, ch. 92: 289.

²¹ *Fjörbaugr* is a fee paid in compensation, and *garðr* a fence: "within a fixed space (*garðr*), the convict was safe, having paid the life-money".

²² For example, Grettir is asking for help from Skapti lögmaðr, but he refuses: "...þá stendr mér eigi at taka við útleððarmönnum ok brjóta svá lugin." *Grettis Saga*, ch. 54, p. 178, "...I am under obligation not to break the law by harbouring outlaws", (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 135).

²³ See *Grettis saga*, Ch. 47, 52, 54, 60. The need for shelter and safety is submitted to the need for food, as Grettir has often to abandon his shelter and safety to fulfill it.

²⁴ "Lesser outlawry meant confiscation of property, dealt with by a confiscation court held at the outlaw's home, and exile for three years but with temporary rights of residence and passage – reasonable arrangements in a remote island with unreliable sea traffic. Full outlawry meant loss of all goods through a confiscation court, loss of all status, and denial of all assistance – virtually a death penalty." (Dennis, Foote and Perkins 2007: 7-8).

²⁵ "a law phrase, metaph. *an outlaw*, who is to be hunted down as a wolf, esp. used of one who commits a crime in a holy place, and is thereon declared accursed", according to Cleasby-Vigfússon. "*Varg(r)*: 1. Wolf (...); 2. Thief, Robber, Miscreant (...) 3. Outlaw", according to Zæga 1910.

²⁶ *Skógarmanninn* is used while he is on the island of Drangey with no forest or trees around (*Grettis saga* ch. 82: 258; other mentions ch. 59: 189).

²⁷ *Gísla saga*, ch. 21: 67; *Grettis saga*, ch.46:146. Moreover, Grettir has no one to defend him: his father died and his brother just got killed in the previous chapter.

²⁸ "Þórir var maðr héraðsríkr ok höfðingi mikill, en vinsæll af mǫrgu stórmenni; gekk hann at svá fast, at engu kom við um sykn Grettis." *Grettis saga*, ch. 46: 147, "Thorir was a powerful figure in the district, a great chieftain and popular among many great men. He pursued the matter so hard that there was no chance for Grettir to be cleared." (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 119).

²⁹ From *La sorcière* by Jules Michelet (quoted by Dillmann 2006: 406).

³⁰ "He called upon many men of great standing, but invariably something happened to stop them taking him." (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 135).

³¹ "Þórhallr kenndisk við Gretti sakar forellra sinna, ok þá var Grettir nafnkunnigr mjök um allt land af atgorvi (o barre) sinni." *Grettis saga*, ch. 53: 174, "Thorhall knew who Grettir was, from his ancestry, although his name was also well known all over Iceland because of his accomplishments." (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 135).

³² "Grettir went up onto the Arnarvatn moor and made himself a hut there, the ruins of which can still be seen. He settled in there and since he wanted to do anything but rob people he took a net and boat and caught fish to live on." (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 135).

³³ "You shall swear an oath" she replied, "not to cause any trouble here in Isafjord. You shall not take vengeance on any of the men who attacked you and captured you." (Viðar Hreinsson 1997:131).

³⁴ "Bjorn told him that because Grettir had enemies all over the country by now, people would avoid giving him protection, so as not to incur outlawry themselves", "But I could give you some help if you leave the people under my protection in peace, whatever you do to anyone else in this district.", (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 139-140).

- ³⁵ "...was on friendly terms with the people who lived closest to him." (Viðar Hreinsson 1997:140).
- ³⁶ "Eigi kom Glámr heim", *Grettis saga* ch. 32: 111. "Því var Þorgautr vanr, at koma heim, þá er hálfþökkvat var, en nú kom hann ekki heim í þat mund." *Grettis saga* ch. 33: 114; „Glam did not return home“, „Thorgaut was accustomed to come back at twilight, but on this occasion he did not return at that time.“ (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 101-103).
- ³⁷ The curse was made *hér á landi* but not extended *til um úteyjar*.
- ³⁸ Ok er minnst er vánin, vizk Gísli við ok hleypr upp á hamar þann, er heitir Einhamarr, ok af kleifunum.". *Gísla saga*, ch. 35: 113, "Then, when it was least expected, Gisli turned around and ran from the ridge up onto the crag known as Einhamar", (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 46).
- ³⁹ As it is said in the Gulaþing law, chapter 23, (quoted by Davidson 1968: 34).
- ⁴⁰ "Then they buried both the brothers in a shallow grave on the island", (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 177).
- ⁴¹ "dysjaað: [Dan. dysse = to hide], to bury in a cairn, heap stones over a witch, criminal, or the like, never used of a proper burying ". According to Cleasby-Vigfússon.
- ⁴² "Nú daga þeir hann ofan ok taka af honum sverðit, gøtva þeir hann þar í gjrótinu ok fara ofan til sjávar." *Gísla saga*, ch. 36, p115; *gøtva* "[akin to gata, a way dug or bored through; the characteristic v is preserved in Goth. gatvo = platea] :- to dig, bury; gøtvaðr (part.), buried (in a cairn)." According to Cleasby-Vigfússon.
- ⁴³ "Nú fara sveinarnir í skóga þá, er þeir megu eigi finnask, ok neyta matarm því at þeir höfðu lengi matar misst, ok leggjask síðan niðr at sofa, er þeir váru mettir, því at þeir váru mjök syfjaðir." *Gísla saga* ch. 29: 93, "The young men went into the woods, where they could not be traced and, having gone without food for a long time, they ate. When they had satisfied their hunger, they lay down to sleep because by then they were very tired" (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 37).
- ⁴⁴ In chapter 27 Gísli meets Refr in the woods and explains him his situation. Refr agrees to help him on one condition: Gísli does not interfere. This condition is the opportunity for a comic scene where Gísli has to hide in their bed and Refr's wife lets her volcanic temper speak.
- ⁴⁵ "When they met, he put himself at Gisli's complete disposal, offering to do for him whatever was in his power." (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 30-3.1).
- ⁴⁶ Þorgerðr offers her "woman's help" without conditions (*Gísla Saga* ch.23: 75) and Ingjaldr, without clear reasons, defends Gísli to death. (*Gísla Saga* ch. 36: 114).
- ⁴⁷ In chapter 34 35, she comes with him to his final fight and face the enemies with him. On the strong relationships between women and outlaws and their "reciprocal solidarity" (Ahola 2009: 26).
- ⁴⁸ "Hon var opt vön at taka við skógarmönnum, ok átti hon jarðhús; var annarr jarðhússendir við ána, en annarr við eldahúsit hennar, ok sér enn þess merki." With Þorgerðr in *Gísla saga* ch. 23, p. 75. Same with Ingjaldr : "Gísli er ávallt í jarðhúsi þá er menn koma í eyra." *Gísla saga* ch. 25, p. 79, then with his wife "...var þar jarðhús undir niðri..." *Gísla saga* ch. 29: 92; "Líðr nú svá sumarit, at Gísli er í jarðhúsum sínum..." *Gísla saga* ch. 33: 102.
- ⁴⁹ "Þegar várar ferr Gísli aprt í Geirþjófsfjörð ok má þá eigi lengr vera í brott frá Auði, konu sinni; svá unnask þau mikit." *Gísla saga* ch. 24, p. 75.
- ⁵⁰ "...was a wise man who dreamt a great deal and whose dreams were prophetic.", (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 27).

⁵¹ "I dreamt the first night that a viper wriggled out from a certain farm and stung Vestein to death and, on the second night, I dreamt that a wolf ran out from the same farm and bit Vestein to death", (Viðar Hreinsson 1997: 15).

⁵² " Ok sagða ek því hvárngan drauminn fyrr en nú, at ek vilda at hvárrgi réðisk. " *Gísla saga* ch. 14: 46.

⁵³ Literally "the better woman". "better" would be the general translation of the comparative *betri*, but it is used as a superlative in the context. The same is true for *verri*.

⁵⁴ "Þeir sátu við elda ok drukku, ok váru sjau eldarnir, sumir váru mjök brunnir, en sumir sem bjartastir." *Gísla saga* ch. 22: 70.

⁵⁵ According to Guðni Jónsson, one of the manuscripts adds "...með mér" "with me", which is a way of insisting on the closeness between Gísli and his good dream-woman in the after-life.

⁵⁶ "...ok hon réð mér þat, meðan ek lifða, at láta leiðask forna sið ok nema enga galdra né forneskju ok vera vel við daufan ok haltan ok fátæka ok fáráða." *Gísla saga* ch. 22: 70.

⁵⁷ "Þau koma nú at húsi einu, því er nær var sem höll væri, ok leiðir hon hann inn í húsit, ok þóttu honum þar vera hægendi í þöllum ok vel um búit. Hon bað þau þar vera ok una sér vel, "ok skaltu hingat fara, þá er þú andask," sagði hon, "ok njóta hér fjár ok farsælu." " *Gísla saga* ch. 30: 94.