

Sturla Þórðarson on Love

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Sturlu þáttr states that Sturla Þórðarson the historian (1214–1284) narrated *Huldar saga* better and more wisely than anyone on the ship of King Magnús the Law-Amender of Norway had ever heard (2, pp. 231–34).¹ A narrative scenario such as this, in which a storyteller transmits tales orally to an audience, represents a model for how the Icelandic sagas were told. In such a scenario, just as important as the existence of the storyteller is the idea of his story not being seen as his own fabrication, that is, that the audience listening to the story take it as true.² *Sturlu þáttr* is only preserved in one of the two main manuscript versions of the *Sturlunga*, the compilation of so-called contemporary sagas, that is, sagas about events in Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, believed to have been collected around 1300. The *þáttr* is thought not to have been included in the original version, and in its preserved form was most likely written in the fourteenth century.³

1. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason, and Kristján Eldjárn, ed. *Sturlunga saga*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1946). Here in the following, the references are to this edition. For quoted translation, see Julia H. McGraw and R. George Thomas, trans., *Sturlunga saga*, 2 vols. (New York: Twayne, 1970–74). Some amendments have, however, been made in the passages quoted from the translation, and the spelling of proper names changed in accordance with the main text.

2. M.C. van den Toorn, “Erzählsituation und Perspektive in der Saga,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 77 (1962), pp. 68–83.

3. See Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason, and Kristján Eldjárn, ed. *Sturlunga saga*, vol. 1, pp. xlviii–xlix.

In *Sturlu þáttr* it is Queen Ingilborg who passes judgment on Sturla's narrative, and through her enthusiasm and high opinion Sturla gains an audience with the king and his favor. Subsequently Sturla becomes the king's faithful retainer. This leads to Sturla's later writing of both the saga of King Hákon, the father of Magnús, and the saga of Magnús himself. Although the *þáttr* follows traditional narrative convention in its description of how Sturla gains the king's favor,⁴ it also suggests strongly that he is favored by the queen, a lovable and knowledgeable person who uses her charm to influence the king's decision regarding Sturla's future at the court. The *þáttr* also suggests the possibility that Sturla's saga-writing had, at least in some ways, roots traceable to women's knowledge of groups of stories and their estimation of storytelling, even though King Magnús had little regard for the queen's opinion of the material. This might indicate, in fact, that the king got the point of the story of the troll-wife told by Sturla, but that the queen, who was Danish, did not. *Huldar saga's* state of preservation does not allow us to know the story's contents. Preben Meulengrach Sørensen suggested that *Huldar saga* was concerned with the sorceress Huld mentioned in *Ynglinga saga*, whose curse on the Norwegian king was "at ættvíg skyldi ávallt vera í ætt þeira (*Heimskringla*, vol. 1, p. 31; that there would always be a murderer of his own kin in their lineage).⁵ Thus the *þáttr* points to the bloodfeud and struggle for power within the Norwegian royal family, as well as to the dangers that could emanate from women's knowledge. It presents an ambiguous view of women in the Middle Ages as being lovable, helpful, charming, and insightful, as well as capricious and dangerous bearers of death. According to this view, men had to take particular care to control both them and their passion for them.⁶

My intention in this article is to study the emotional and intellectual relationship of the historian Sturla with those closest to him, especially the women in his life, as this is presented in *Íslendinga*

4. See Úlfar Bragason, "Um hvað fjallaði Huldar saga?" *Tímarit Máls og menningar* 54.4 (1990), pp. 76–81.

5. Preben Meulengrach Sørensen, *Saga og samfund: En indføring i oldislandsk litteratur* (Copenhagen: Berlinske, 1977), p. 163. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, ed., *Heimskringla*, vol. 1, *Íslensk fornrit* 26 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1974).

6. Cf. George Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. Jane Dunnett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 96–7.

saga, of which Sturla was not only the author, but also the narrator and a main character. It must be borne in mind, however, that the saga's main topics and choice of material are influenced by literary traditions in Iceland in the thirteenth century. The saga thus provides a very limited view of its characters, even though it pretends to tell of events in an objective manner. The narrative actually says more about the saga-writer's own point of view toward the men and women that he describes, and possibly about the public's opinion of them, than it does about how they might have seen themselves and their positions. It must also not be forgotten that the saga-writer was a child of his times, shaped by its ideals. His work thus needs to be viewed in the light of other contemporary witnesses to events, in both Icelandic and foreign sources. In this regard, it would do well to quote the French historian Georges Duby: "We must give up the positivist dream of attaining past reality. We shall always be separated from it."⁷

Íslendinga saga is the nucleus of *Sturlunga saga*. The saga has not, however, survived independently, and it is likely that it was originally conceived as part of a larger work.⁸ Scholars have debated how comprehensive the saga was originally, but most likely it told of events that took place or were supposed to have taken place during the years 1183–1264.⁹ Scholars have had different opinions concerning the age of the saga, but it seems now that most consider it to have been written around 1280, that is, in the last years of Sturla Þórðarson's life.¹⁰

Íslendinga saga tells of the struggle for power between chieftains and families. The saga brings together many different stories and biographies, covering several generations, into its genealogical frame. One of the principal families in *Íslendinga saga* is that of the Sturlungs, and hence the compilation has generally been known by that name. Sturla Þórðarson is considered to be the author of the saga, according to a statement made in the so-called prologue to *Sturlunga saga*. The compiler says:

7. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, pp. 100–1.

8. See Jón Jóhannesson, "Um Sturlunga sögu," p. xxxviii.

9. See Jón Jóhannesson, "Um Sturlunga sögu," p. xxxiv–xxxviii.

10. See Jón Jóhannesson, "Um Sturlunga sögu," pp. xxxviii–xxxix. Cf. Helgi Þorláksson, "Sturla Þórðarson, minni og vald," 2. *Íslenska söguþingið. Proceedings*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Sagnfræðistofnun, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 320–21.

[...] en þær sögur, er síðan hafa gerzt, váru lítt ritaðar, áðr Sturla skáld Þórðarson sagði fyrir Íslendinga sögur, ok hafði hann þar til vísandi af fróðum mönnum, þeim er váru á öndverðum dögum hans, en sumt eftir bréfum þeim, er þeir rituðu, er þeim váru samtíða, er sögurnar eru frá. Marga hluti mátti hann sjálf sjá ok heyra, þá er á hans dögum gerðust til stórtíðinda. Ok treystum vér honum bæði vel til vits ok einurðar at segja frá, því at hann víska ek alvitrastan ok hófsamastan. Láti guð honum nú raun lofi betri. (1, p. 115)

([...] but those stories concerning events that took place later were little written before the skald Sturla Þórðarson dictated the sagas of the Icelanders. For this he drew on both the knowledge of wise men who lived during his early years and also on some documents written by those who lived at the same time as the events that the sagas relate. He himself saw and heard many of the most important events of his time. And we may trust well both to his understanding and his judgment of what to tell, for I know him to be a very wise and a most temperate man. May God allow his experience to prove better for him than praise.)

The *Sturlunga* compiler is generally believed to have been expressing his own familiarity with Sturla the historian and knowledge of his historical writings, although the prologue is probably based to some extent on Sturla's own foreword to *Íslendinga saga*, especially regarding the sources of his saga.¹¹

For many years, scholars have drawn attention to the epic-dramatic form of the sagas and their objective narrative method. The English literary critic W. P. Ker clarified the position of the saga narrator, the sagas' dramatic point of view and their impartial narrative, taking Sturla Þórðarson's *Íslendinga saga* as an example.¹² Ker stated:

11. See Björn M. Ólsen, *Om den saakaldte Sturlunga-prolog og dens formodede vidnesbyrd om de islandske slægtsagaers alder*, Christiania videnskabs-selskabs forhandling 6 (Oslo: s.n., 1910); Sverrir Tómasson, *Formálar íslenzkra sagnaritara á miðöldum: Rannsókn bókmennatabefðar*, Rit Stofnunar Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi 33 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1988), pp. 384–5.

12. W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature* (1897; rev. ed. 1908, rpt. New York: Dover, 1957).

[...] the Icelandic narrators give the succession of events, either as they might appear to an impartial spectator, or (on occasion) as they are viewed by someone in the story, but never as they merely affect the writer himself, though he may be as important a personage as Sturla [Þórðarson] was in the events of which he wrote the Chronicle.¹³

This narrative method naturally makes it difficult for the critic to pin down the views that the saga presents. Nevertheless, *Íslendinga saga* is shaped by its writer's point of view and the opinions that he had toward its characters and events.¹⁴

At about the same time as Ker, the Icelandic philologist Björn M. Ólsen pointed out that the contemporary sagas conformed to the same narrative conventions as the Sagas of Icelanders. In his essay *Um Sturlungu*, Ólsen used the narrator's knowledge, the literal perspective, and the point of view of the narrative to distinguish between the individual sagas of the compilation and to theorize on the identity of the saga's authors. For instance, he used these particular elements to distinguish what parts of the compilation belonged to *Íslendinga saga*.¹⁵

Sturla Þórðarson plays a major role in the events of *Íslendinga saga* after he establishes himself in it. He is also, as mentioned above, the saga's narrator. Naturally, as the narrator he is impersonal, following the general rule for the Sagas of Icelanders, but there are three notable exceptions to this. Twice he expresses himself in the first person (1, pp. 325 and 334). In the third instance the first person is used both for the narrator and his source, Sturla Þórðarson, when he points out the limitations to the validity of Sturla's witness to the course of events (1, p. 470). The identity of the narrator also becomes more prominent due to the fact that his knowledge and that of the source/the character Sturla are often the same.¹⁶ Sturla, however, is always described in the

13. Ker, *Epic and Romance*, p. 273.

14. See Úlfar Bragason, "Sturla Þórðarson og Íslendinga saga: Höfundur, sögumaður, sögupersóna," in *Líf undir leiðarstjörnu*, ed., Haraldur Bessason, Rit Háskólans á Akureyri 3 (Akureyri: Háskólinn á Akureyri, 1994), pp. 139–52.

15. Björn M. Ólsen, *Um Sturlungu*, Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenzkrabókmennta 3 (Copenhagen: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1902), pp. 193–510.

16. Björn M. Ólsen, *Um Sturlungu*, pp. 394–415.

same way as the other characters, in the third person. The story of his life is only one of many that are twisted together in the narrative of *Íslendinga saga*.

Sources of information are usually not mentioned in *Íslendinga saga*. Björn M. Ólsen made it clear that Sturla was a direct eyewitness only to portions of the saga, particularly those following his childhood. Ólsen was of the opinion that the best source for events occurring in the saga before the days of Sturla and during his youth was Sturla's father, the chieftain Þórðr Sturluson, and that all of the other likely sources relied upon by Sturla had been men.¹⁷ This idea certainly gains support from the statement in the prologue to *Sturlunga saga* that the narrative is based in a certain way on the knowledge of wise men, as well as from the saga's limited choice of material—men's struggles for power and position. The Icelandic philologist Pétur Sigurðsson employed similar methods as Ólsen to distinguish the sagas in the compilation and their sources. However, he suggested that the account in *Íslendinga saga* of the Flugumýrr burning in 1253 was to some extent based on the memory of Ingibjörg Sturludóttir, the daughter of Sturla the historian, who survived the event.¹⁸ It is thus not out of the question that the saga's narrative could have been based on stories told by women of events that occurred during their day, or to which they had been direct or indirect witnesses.

The American literary scholar Marlene Ciclamini argues that *Íslendinga saga* displays the affection and respect of Sturla the historian for Þórðr Sturluson, his father: "What he did value was his father's affection and teachings."¹⁹ For Sturla, Þórðr had become a model that he was obligated to imitate. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre has come to similar conclusions about the relationship between fathers and sons in the Sagas of Icelanders and the contemporary sagas, but has pointed out that "fathers demand obedience and are angry when it is not forthcoming; sons above all demand tangible proof (property and advantageous marriage) that they are their heirs, and often their impatience for both is palpable and a source of discontent with the

17. Björn M. Ólsen, *Um Sturlungu*, pp. 415–30.

18. Pétur Sigurðsson, *Um Íslendinga sögu Sturlu Þórðarsonar*, Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenska bókmennta 6 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1933–5), pp. 111–2.

19. Marlene Ciclamini, "Biographical Reflections in *Íslendinga saga*: A Mirror of Personal Values," *Scandinavian Studies* 55 (1983), p. 208.

elder generation.”²⁰ Since Sturla the historian was illegitimate, he was favored with neither power nor wealth, even though his father was a chieftain. *Íslendinga saga* clearly indicates that Sturla was very aware that he was not truly noble by birth. His close relationship to his father was particularly important to him, since his future depended on his father’s supporting him financially and promoting him in other ways. Þórðr also placed his faith in Sturla by granting him an inheritance and sanctioning him on the day of his death, thereby both according him recognition and laying a more stable foundation for his future advancement (I, p. 401).

Sturla’s relationship with the saga-writer Snorri Sturluson, his uncle, is no less important, and Snorri appears in the saga as Sturla’s substitute father. *Íslendinga saga* witnesses to the fact that in his childhood and teenage years Sturla spent a great deal of time with Snorri, most likely to study various subjects under him and other learned men at Reykjaholt: poetry, law, history, and saga-writing.²¹ It was at Reykjaholt that the major works attributed to Snorri were composed: *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla*. Sturla was in Snorri’s service (I, p. 362), and Snorri finds himself obliged to give Sturla a fatherly warning when Sturla makes legal claims that put the two of them at odds (I, p. 450). However, Snorri also trusts Sturla better than his own son for taking over the hereditary chieftaincy (I, p. 447). Despite the fact that *Íslendinga saga* condemns Snorri for fickleness in romantic matters and for having neglected his relationship with his children and foster sons due to his frugality, Sturla feels that it is his duty to avenge Snorri after his murder in 1241, even though this means attacking Klængr, Snorri’s foster son (I, pp. 456–7). Klængr is called Sturla’s foster brother in the saga (I, p. 413), and they stayed together at Reykjaholt. Klængr offered Sturla quarter after the Battle of Örylgsstaðir, in which numerous other members of the Sturlung clan were killed (I, p. 437).

20. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre, “The Emotional Universe of Medieval Icelandic Fathers and Sons,” in *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (New York and London: Garland, 1996), p. 191.

21. See Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, “Sturla Þórðarson,” in *Sturlustefna: Ráðstefna haldin á sjö alda ártíð Sturlu Þórðarsonar sagnaritara 1984*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir and Jónas Kristjánsson, Rit Stofnunar Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi 32 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1988), pp. 11–2.

Georges Duby states that “[t]he Middle Ages were resolutely male.”²² This can truly be said of the image that *Íslendinga saga* gives of Iceland in the thirteenth century. The saga is male-centric, dominated by men’s dealings with each other, their relationships, disagreements, and factional disputes. Nevertheless, women play a part in *Íslendinga saga*, as they did in the life story of Sturla Þórðarson himself, although they function in the saga, as in most Sagas of Icelanders, primarily as accessories to the stories of men. The preparation leading up to the wedding of Ingibjörg Sturludóttir, which took place at Flugumýrr in 1253, supports the idea that to the heads of houses the female body had a generic, one might almost say, genealogical function.²³ It is Sturla who decides to marry Ingibjörg to Hallr Gizurarson, in order to ensure the peace between himself and Hallr’s father, Gizurr Þorvaldsson, one of the most powerful chieftains in the country. Sturla seems not to have had any interest in seeking her consent and was obviously thinking mainly of increasing his own power and influence under the pretext of strengthening bonds of peace in society.²⁴ Otherwise, *Íslendinga saga* witnesses to the fact that men not only desired women but also feared the social disorder that could arise from casual associations with them, their goading and long memories.²⁵ All of Sturla’s actions suggest that he supported propriety in matters of love and maintained an aristocratic view of marriage; a marriage would be most fortunate if it were entered into prudently, the couple would be an equal match, and their children would be a blessing.²⁶ On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that *Íslendinga saga* provides only a miniscule view of the life of most men and women of that time,²⁷ and

22. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. vii.

23. See Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. 54.

24. See Björn Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion: Love and Marriage in Medieval Iceland and Norway*, trans. Betsy van der Hoek (Turnhout: Brepols, 1902), p. 277; Jenny Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 52–4.

25. Cf. Carol Clover, “Hildigunnr’s lament,” in *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*, ed. John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, and Gerd Wolfgang Weber (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986); Jenny Jochens, “Old Norse Motherhood,” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York and London: Garland, 1996), p. 214; Duby, *Love and Marriage*, pp. 97–8.

26. Úlfar Bragason, “‘Hart er í heimi, hórdómur mikill’: Lesið í Sturlungu,” *Skírnir* 163 (1989), p. 62 and 68.

27. See Jón Jóhannesson, “Um Sturlunga sögu,” p. xii.

can thus only be taken as a limited source for knowledge of women's roles, their independence, and power. Marriage was the foundation of medieval society. But just as relationships could increase men's power, a woman's social position was stronger the more power and influence her husband had; as George Duby words it: "The comparable nature of the condition of men and women stems from the fact that the foundation of social organization during the period with which we are concerned was the family, and more precisely, the house, or *domus*."²⁸ A woman's position was based on her marriage, her control of the household, and her rearing of children, especially sons. She could benefit immensely from having her sons support her, not least after she became a widow.²⁹

Since *Íslendinga saga* takes place in the political arena and not within the household, most women appear in it as names in genealogical lists. Björn M. Ólsen was of the opinion that the genealogical section in the *Sturlunga* compilation had roots traceable to Sturla Þórðarson, although the compiler obviously dealt with it rather freely. *Íslendinga saga* was "svo efnismikil og víðtæk að allar þær ættir, sem taldar eru í ættartölubálkinum, snerta hana, sumar meira, aðrar minna" (so rich in material and comprehensive that all of the families that are counted in the genealogical section touch it, some more, some less).³⁰ Duby states: "There is no need to emphasize the importance of kinship bonds in the society we call 'feudal'. They are its inner framework." He continues: "Kinship plays a great part also in the unfolding life of politics, in the game of alliance and opposition, and the advancement of careers."³¹ Knowledge of one's family and heritage was crucial in the Middle Ages, among other things because of hereditary rights and land claims, not least after the church began to restrict marriages between relatives, even to the fifth degree.³² Genealogy also lies at the heart of *Íslendinga saga*, and its narratives recount the histories of the chief families of the country, not least the Sturlungs, to the third or fourth generation.

28. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, pp. 95–6.

29. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. 98. See also Jenny Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, pp. 61–4.

30. Björn M. Ólsen, *Um Sturlungu*, p. 385.

31. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. 105.

32. Úlfar Bragason, "'Hart er í heimi, hórdómur mikill,'" pp. 54–71.

In the genealogical section of the *Sturlunga* compilation, the Sturlung family is counted as being among Iceland's predominant clans. The lineage of Sturla Þórðarson, the grandfather of Sturla the historian, is traced through the female line to Snorri the Chieftain at Helgafell and Guðmundr the Powerful at Möðruvellir, both prominent figures in the Sagas of Icelanders. The genealogies state that the paternal grandmother of Guðný, the grandmother of Sturla the historian, was the daughter of Markús Skeggjason, who was the lawspeaker in the period 1084–1107 (I, p. 52). One might expect that such information about the maternal side of the family had best been preserved in the female line, since more emphasis is clearly laid in the genealogical section on tracing the male line, except when attempts are made to trace the female line to renowned individuals. A distinguished lineage made women more attractive. The Oddaverjar clan was very proud of having Þóra, the illegitimate daughter of King Magnús Barefoot of Norway, among its foremothers (I, p. 51 and 60).

According to *Þorláks saga helga* (ca. 1200), Bishop Þorlákr had at a young age spent a great deal of time “at bóknámi, en at riti optliga, á bænum þess í millum, en nam þá er eigi dvalði annat þat er móðir hans kunni kenna honum, ættvísi ok mannfæðri” (at booklearning, and often at writing, and at his prayers in between, and when he had no other tasks he learned what his mother could teach him, genealogy and tales of great men).³³ The Icelandic literary critic Helga Kress argues that “það hafi einkum verið konur sem í upphafi stunduðu munnlega frásagnarlist og stóðu fyrir munnlegri hefð skáldskaparins” (it was particularly women who originally engaged in the oral transmission of sagas and were responsible for the oral storytelling and poetic traditions in Iceland).³⁴ It must not be forgotten that during the Middle Ages, “we are for the most part dealing with societies which functioned orally.”³⁵ It is therefore most likely that both men and women played important parts in preserving both genealogical lists

33. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, ed. *Þorláks saga byskups in elzta*, Biskupa sögur 2, Íslensk fornrit 16 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2002), pp. 50–1.

34. Helga Kress, *Máttugar meyjar: Íslensk fornþókmennasaga* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1993), p. 13.

35. Marcus Bull, *Thinking Medieval: An Introduction to the Study of the Middle Ages* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 77. See also Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 74.

and oral tales based on them. On the other hand, it might be right, as Helga Kress suggests, that written culture was primarily in the hands of men, and that when this culture became dominant it muted the female oral tradition.³⁶

In *Íslendingabók* (ca. 1130), Ari Þorgilsson the Wise names a woman, Þuríðr, who is a descendant of Snorri goði just like the Sturlungs, and “es bæði vas margspøk ok óljúgfróð” (who was both knowledgeable in many things and a truthful narrator of the past),³⁷ as a source for information on the settlement of Iceland. This information is repeated in the preface to *Heimskringla* (ca. 1230), where it is said that “Ari nam ok marga fræði af Þuríði, dóttur Snorra goða. Hon var spøk at viti. Hon munði Snorra, fǫður sinn, en hann var þá nær háffertøgr, er kristni kom á Ísland, en andaðisk einum vetri eptir fall Óláfs konungs ins helga” (p. 7; Ari also gained much information from Þuríðr, the daughter of Snorri the Chieftain. She was a wise woman. She remembered her father Snorri, who was almost thirty-five years old when Christianity came to Iceland, and who died one year after the fall of King Óláfr the Saint). This and other sources clearly indicate that women in medieval Iceland participated in the transmission of knowledge about genealogy and important people and events.³⁸ Therefore, women in Sturla’s family might have kindled his love for history, and he might have gotten some of his information on the past from female informants.

The genealogical section of the *Sturlunga* compilation tells of the parents of Sturla the historian and their children: “Þórðr [Sturluson] átti frillu, er Þóra hét,—þeira börn Óláfr, Sturla, Guttormr, Þórðr, Valgerðr, Guðrún (1, p. 52; Þórðr [Sturluson] had a concubine called Þóra—their children were Óláfr, Sturla, Guttormr, Þórðr, Valgerðr, Guðrún). Concerning the genealogy of Þóra, the mother of Sturla, nothing more is known. *Íslendinga saga* does not mention that she was Sturla’s mother, but tells of her death in 1224, when he was ten years old, in the following words: “Þetta vár, er nú var frá sagt, andaðist Þóra, frilla Þórðar Sturlusonar, en hann tók til sín Valgerði, dóttur Árna

36. See Helga Kress, *Máttugar meylar*, pp. 13–4.

37. Jakob Benediktsson, ed. *Íslendingabók*, Íslensk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1985), p. 4.

38. Cf. Elizabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 65–92.

ór Tjaldanesi, ok gerði brúðlaup til hennar um sumarit” (1, p. 303; In the spring just mentioned, Þóra, the mistress of Þórðr Sturluson, died, and he took in Valgerðr, the daughter of Árni from Tjaldanes, and married her in the summer). Either Þóra had been of such poor lineage that her son did not consider mentioning her family, or else there had been some sort of violation of canon law in this parents’ relationship that prevented him from going into more detail.³⁹ It has been argued that in medieval times it was the mother who nurtured the small child and that “[t]he woman who taught children to speak also transmitted the oral tradition through songs and taught them their first prayers.”⁴⁰ Most likely, however, Sturla did not spend much time with his mother in his youth, probably because she had all her six children with Þórðr in about ten years. In addition, the rearing of sons was the father’s responsibility once they reached the age of seven.⁴¹ Sturla was, therefore, not as emotionally attached to his mother as his father, and later gave neither of his daughters her name. Finally, it remains unknown if he could have learned from her information about genealogy and tales of important men, as St. Þorlákr had done from his mother.

Íslendinga saga calls Sturla Þorðarson the foster son of Guðný, his grandmother. The saga says that she had overseen the homesteads of her son Þórðr at Staðr or in Eyrr, but that in 1218 she had gone to dwell in Reykjaholt when Snorri Sturluson, her son, went to Norway (1, p. 271). There she died in 1221, when Sturla was only seven years old. Sturla had most likely been under her care in his childhood and

39. See Ciclamini, “Biographical Reflections in *Íslendinga saga*,” p. 208. See also Rolf Heller, “Þóra, frilla Þórðar Sturlusonar,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 81 (1966), pp. 39–56, who suggests that Þóra was the daughter of Bishop Páll Jónsson of Skálaholt (1195–1211), and thus a third cousin to Þórðr Sturluson’s second wife. Others have suggested that she was Þóra Jónsdóttir, the niece of the aforementioned Þóra Pálsdóttir of the Hítardalr family (which could explain the friendship between Ketill Þorláksson, lawspeaker and member of the Hítardalr family, d. 1273), and Sturla (see also Stefán Karlsson, “Alfræði Sturlu Þórðarsonar,” in *Sturlustefna: Ráðstefna haldin á sjö alda ártíð Sturlu Þórðarsonar sagnaritara* 1984, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir and Jónas Kristjánsson, Rit Stofnunar Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi 32 [Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1988], p. 51). The compiler of *Sturlunga* explains his relationship to Helga, Sturla’s wife, in *Geirmundar þáttur heljarskinns* (1, p. 10). It is unlikely that he would not have detailed, in any of the compilation’s genealogical lists, his familial relationship to Sturla, if Sturla, like himself, had been a member of the Hítardalr family, even though Sturla might have preferred to keep his mother’s side of the family as private information.

40. Sulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, trans. Chaya Galai (London and New York: Routledge, 1990; rpt. 1992), p. 114.

41. DUBY, *Love and Marriage*, p. 97.

been dear to her, because she bequeathed to him all of her wealth after her death: “ok var þat mikit fé” (I, p. 303; and that was a great deal of money), says the saga. He was also fond of her memory, as evident from the fact that he named one of his daughters Guðný. Although Sturla was a child when Guðný died, it is not unlikely that she inspired in him interest in genealogy and tales of important men,⁴² although his historical understanding was doubtless better nurtured while he lived during his teenage years at Reykjaholt with Snorri Sturluson. Guðný is also cited as a source in *Eyrbyggja saga* for the story of the transferral of the bones of Snorri the Chieftain and other descendants of the Sturlung clan to the churchyard of the new church in Sælingsdalstunga (I, pp. 183–4), the farm where Sturla’s mother-in-law later lived.

It can be determined from this that Guðný had known stories of past times.⁴³ Nevertheless, Björn M. Ólsen did not count Guðný among Sturla’s sources for *Íslendinga saga*. The saga, however, says that after Guðný became a widow she had an affair with the chieftain Ari Þorgilsson the Strong of Staðr, a descendant of the historian Ari the Wise. She went with Ari to Norway, after he gave his only daughter and heir in marriage to Þórðr Sturluson, Guðný’s son, but Ari died on the trip (I, pp. 229–31). The story of this love affair could just as well have come from Guðný as from her son Þórðr. It is certain, however, that she herself must have told of her dream at the birth of Sturla Sighvatsson, her grandson, in the year 1199. The saga says:

Guðný Böðvarsdóttir bjó í Hvammi ok leiddi mjök fréttum um mátt Halldóru [Tumadóttur]. Ok eina nótt dreymði hana, at maðr kæmi ór Hjarðarholti, ok þóttist hon spyrja at mætti Halldóru. Hann kvað hana hafa barn fætt ok kvað vera sveinbarn. Guðný spurði, hvat hétu. “Hann heitir Vígsterkr,” segir hann. En um morgininn eftir kom maðr ór Hjarðarholti ok segir, at Halldóra var léttari. Guðný spurði, hvárt væri. Hann kvað vera svein ok heita Sturlu. (I, pp. 236–7)

(Guðný Böðvarsdóttir lived in Hvammr and was very concerned about the health of Halldóra [Tumadóttir, her daughter-in-law]. And

42. See Ciclamini, “Biographical Reflections in *Íslendinga saga*,” p. 209.

43. See Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, “Sturla Þórðarson,” p. 11.

one night she dreamed that a man came from Hjarðarholt, and it seemed that she asked him about Halldóra's health. He said that she had given birth to a child and that it was a boy. Guðný asked what the boy was named. "He is named Vígsterkr," he said. And on the next morning a man came from Hjarðarholt and said that Halldóra had given birth. Guðný asked whether it was a boy or girl. He said that it was a boy and was named Sturla.)

Íslendinga saga contains many dream-narratives, and it appears that the narrator accepted their prophetic validity. One might presume that the saga-writer would have put more stock in this particular dream-narrative if he had heard it himself from the mouth of his grandmother and foster mother.⁴⁴ Þórðr, Sturla's father, doubtless had no less faith in his mother's sagacity than he; she was in charge of the household, and he sent Sturla to her for fosterage. It may almost certainly be attributable to her as to Þórðr concerning how much emphasis the saga-writer places on the saga's genealogical lists and faith in a "social order [...], since the existing order was considered both good and proper."⁴⁵ She herself came from a line of aristocrats, and had both been married to one dashing chieftain and had an affair with another. Her three sons were also extremely ambitious, and she doubtless played a part in inspiring that ambition.⁴⁶

As mentioned above, Sturla was most likely supported by his grandmother in Reykjaholt, where she managed the estate of her son Snorri and lived until the end of her life. Several years after her death Snorri became a half-share partner with Hallveig Ormsdóttir, whose grandfather, Jón Loftsson of Oddi, had fostered Snorri as a child. Hallveig had by then become a widow and the wealthiest woman in Iceland. Although Snorri had thought "hennar ferð heldr hæðilig ok brosti at" (I, p. 299; her appearance somewhat ludicrous and smiled at it) when he met her on the road soon after she became a widow, and Þórðr, his brother, had made an unfavorable prophecy about their relationship

44. Gunnar Benediktsson, *Sagnameistarinn Sturla* (Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður, 1961), pp. 15–6, 177–8.

45. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 167; cf. Gunnar Karlsson, "Siðamat Íslendingasögu," in *Sturlustefna: Ráðstefna baldin á sjö alda ártíð Sturlu Þórðarsonar sagnaritara* 1984, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir and Jónas Kristjánsson, Rit Stofnunar Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi 32 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1988), pp. 204–21.

46. Cf. Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, pp. 7–16.

(1, p. 304), they lived together in Reykjaholt until she died in the summer of 1241. Hallveig was thus in charge of Snorri's estate during the years when he was at the height of his power, which was based among other things on her wealth. By that time Sturla Þórðarson had been in Reykjaholt for many years. Hallveig could thus have been a substitute mother-figure for him, even an object of desire similar to the young knight who desires the lady in the castle in chivalric romances.⁴⁷ A statement made in *Sturlu þáttir* might even apply mutatis mutandis to Sturla's stay in Reykjaholt: "Konungr tók þá Sturlu vel ok tærði honum vel ok sæmiliga. Drottning var til hans forkunnar vel, ok svá gerðu aðrir eftir" (2, p. 234; The king then warmly received Sturla into his court and entertained him well and graciously. The queen showed him great friendliness and so did the others thereafter). The narrator of *Íslendinga saga* also conveys Snorri's sorrow when he tells of the death of Hallveig: "[...] þótti Snorra þat allmikill skaði, sem honum var" (1, p. 452; This seemed to Snorri a great loss, and so it was for him). Sturla also takes it badly that Klængr, the son of Hallveig, participated in the attack on Snorri that same fall, and that he needs to take vengeance on him (1, p. 457). It is thus entirely uncertain that the saga-writer had been in agreement with his father concerning Snorri's domestic arrangement. On the other hand, the saga's wavering attitudes toward Snorri could have been colored as much by Sturla's feeling for Hallveig and her stories of her life—Snorri had conflicted with Björn Þorvaldsson, Hallveig's previous husband, and was even responsible for his death (1, p. 280)—as by the fact that Þórðr and Snorri did not always see eye-to-eye.

Although Sturla seems not to have been emotionally attached to his mother, he certainly was to his grandmother, and even to Hallveig Ormsdóttir, two eminent women who gained power at the same time as they became widowed. The third strong widow in Sturla's life was his mother-in-law. The Sturlusons, Þórðr, Sighvatr and Snorri, argued over who was to take charge of their hereditary chieftaincy in the Dalir. Into this dispute was blended the so-called Jóreiðr case, which came about when Ingimundr Jónsson, a supporter of the chieftain Sturla Sighvatsson and a first-cousin of both him and Sturla the historian, proposed to the widow Jóreiðr Hallsdóttir of Sælingsdalstunga, although, as the saga

47. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 218.

tells us, “hon vildi eigi giftast, því at hon vildi eigi ráða fé undan dóttur sinni” (1, p. 309; she did not want to get married, because she did not want to deprive her daughter of her property). In the winter of 1225–6, Ingimundr and Sturla brought her without her consent from her home to Sauðafell, where Sturla was living, and Sturla tried to persuade her to marry Ingimundr; she, however, refused both this plan and food, leaving them no choice but to release her. Later, Magnús Gizurarson, the bishop of Skálholt, made them pay her twenty hundreds for this degradation, which was no small amount of money (1, p. 311). Björn M. Ólsen says that the saga-writer learned at least part of this story from Þórðr Sturluson, who was a party to the dispute.⁴⁸ However, when it is considered that Jóreiðr Hallsdóttir later became the mother-in-law of Sturla the historian, and that his wife Helga was her only daughter, it appears most likely that he learned the story directly from Jóreiðr. It seems that she herself oversaw her household as a widow for a long time, and the saga mentions chieftains going to visit her, which suggests that she must have been considered a prominent person (1, p. 321 and 392). At the very least, her son-in-law portrayed her favorably and with great respect in his saga. Further, her kinsmen and in-laws were among the most loyal supporters of Sturla’s chieftaincy.

It is not certain when Sturla married Helga Þórðardóttir, but it was prior to 1240, because their daughter Ingibjörg was most likely born in that year.⁴⁹ Helga is only once mentioned directly in *Íslendinga saga*, when she goes with her husband to the wedding of Ingibjörg Sturladóttir at Flugumýr in 1253. This is why we do not know about Sturla’s love for his wife, or whether his saga gains anything from her storytelling. The French historian Philippe Ariés mentions that in the Middle Ages “men preferred not to speak of the love they found in marriage [...]. Such silence may indicate indifference or ignorance, a sense or propriety or a desire for secrecy.”⁵⁰ Most likely, Helga was an obedient wife who gained her husband’s respect. This respect may perhaps be seen in a chapter, probably written by Sturla, which is included in one of the two main manuscripts of *Sturlunga saga*, since Helga is called a matron in it (“húsfreyja”; 2, p. 288). The saga says

48. Björn M. Ólsen, *Um Sturlungu*, pp. 413–4, 420.

49. See Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, “Sturla Þórðarson,” pp. 12–3.

50. Philippe Ariés, “Love in Married Life,” in *Western Sexuality: Practice and Perception in Past and Present Times*, ed. Philippe Ariés and André Béjin, trans. Anthony Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, rpt. 1986), p. 135.

nothing of Sturla's love affairs (*amor*) or children outside of marriage; instead he appears to have a respectful marriage (*dilectio*), with respect (*reverencia*) for his wife, and he has four children with her.⁵¹ The conclusion may be derived from *Íslendinga saga* that Sturla, who was born out of wedlock, was a staunch supporter of matrimonial propriety, and he used his marriage to strengthen his position, wealth, and influence.

Sturla lived off his wife's wealth, and her kinsmen held the title to the great estate of Staðarhóll, where they made their home for the longest time. Sturla's first cousin, Órækja Snorrason, wanted to take possession of Staðarhóll and claimed to have greater rights to it than Sturla (I, p. 448–51). The cousins ended up in a dispute over this, and Sturla came out better with the support of his wife's family and kinsmen, although this required digging up old family ties and old hereditary rights.⁵² This information could perhaps have come from Sturla's wife and mother-in-law, although the saga names Páll Hallsson, Helga's uncle, in this regard.

Sturla and Helga had two daughters, Ingibjörg and Guðný. Guðný plays little part in the saga, and it is doubtful that she had been its source, although her husband and his family might have been.⁵³ Ingibjörg was named after Helga's maternal grandmother and would have spent some time with Jóriðr, her grandmother, at Sælingsdalstunga. There she was betrothed, at the age of thirteen, to Hallr, the son of Gizurr Þorvaldsson—obedient daughter as she truly was. Jóriðr donated a considerable part of her dowry (I, p. 480). That same autumn, the wedding was celebrated at Flugumýrr in Skagafjörðr, and was a well-attended and prestigious event. After the wedding, however, the former comrade-in-arms of Sturla Þórðarson made an attack on Gizurr in his home. The saga tells of Ingibjörg and her mother-in-law, Gróa Álfadóttir, after the attackers set fire to the houses at Flugumýrr:

Þá kom þar til Gróu í anddyrit Ingibjörg Sturludóttir ok var í nátt-serk einum ok berfætt. Hon var þá þrettán vetra gömul ok var bæði mikil vexti ok skörunlig at sjá. Silfrbelti hafði vafizt um færtr henni,

51. Úlfar Bragason, "Hart er í heimi, hórdómr mikill," p. 62; cf. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, pp. 97–8.

52. Sveinbjörn Rafnsson. "Um Staðarhólmál Sturlu Þórðarsonar: Nokkrar athuganir á valdsmennsku um hans daga," *Skírnir* 159 (1985), pp. 143–59.

53. Pétur Sigurðsson, *Um Íslendinga sögu Sturlu Þórðarsonar*, p. 20.

er hon komst ór hvilunni fram, var þar á pungr ok þar í gull hennar mörg, hafði hon þat þar með sér. Gróa varð fegin henni mjök ok segir, at eitt skyldi yfir þær ganga báðar. [...]

Þær Gróa ok Ingibjörg gengu nú út at durunum. Gróa bað Ingibjörgu útgöngu. Þat heyrði Kolbeinn grön, frændi hennar, ok bað hana út gang til sín. Hon kvaðsk eigi þat vilja, nema hon köri mann með sér. Kolbeinn kvað eigi þat mundu. Gróa bað hana út gang,—“en ek verð at leita sveinsins Þorláks, systursonar míns,” segir hon. [...]

Þat er sumra manna sögn, at Þorsteinn genja hryndi Gróu inn í eldinn, ok þar fannst hon í anddyrinu.

Kolbeinn grön hljóp inn í eldinn eftir Ingibjörgu ok bar hana út til kirkju. Tóku þá húsinn mjök at loga. (1, pp. 490–1)

(Then Ingibjörg, Sturla's daughter, came up to Gróa there at the front door; she was wearing only her nightdress and was barefoot. She was then thirteen years old, but was both tall and stately in appearance. Her silver belt had wrapped itself around her feet when she had come from her bed; on it were a purse and the many gold rings that she had with her on that occasion. Gróa was very happy to see her and said that now one fate should prevail for them both. [...])

Gróa and Ingibjörg meanwhile went out to the door. Gróa asked that Ingibjörg be allowed to go out. Kolbeinn grön, her kinsman, heard this and asked her to come out to him. She said that she would not come out unless she might choose one person to accompany her. Kolbeinn refused. Gróa then bade Ingibjörg to go out:—“but I must look to the boy Þorlákr, my nephew,” she said. [...]

Some men say that Þorsteinn genja shoved Gróa into the fire; she was later found there at the front door.

Kolbeinn grön ran into the fire after Ingibjörg and carried her out to the church. Then the flames on the house blazed up even higher.)

As mentioned above, Ingibjörg appears to have been one of her father's sources for information about this horrific and unforgivable event, which forms the second climax of his *Íslendinga saga*. Many people died in the attack from wounds or burns, among them Gizurr's

wife and their sons, although Gizurr himself was saved. The burning of Flugumýrr thus represents Ingibjörg's baptismal fire, as events are described in *Íslendinga saga*. The innocence of her youth ends with her marriage, and death is just as quickly revealed to her. The horrible truth of her life crashes down upon her, like the protagonists in a Greek tragedy: as she stands on the porch of Flugumýrr, tall and stately, hardly out of childhood, clad in a nightdress, barefoot, a silver belt wrapped about her feet and a sea of fire all around her, she commands the audience's sympathy completely. The sympathy that the narrative creates for Ingibjörg Sturludóttir causes the audience of the saga to understand in an instant that this age of terror had to come to an end.

Shortly after the description of the burning at Flugumýrr, *Íslendinga saga* says: "Ingibjörgu bauð til sín eftir brennuna Halldóra, dóttir Snorra Bárðarsonar, frændkona hennar, er þá bjó í Odda. Fór hon þangat ok förunautar hennar með henni. Var hon þrekuð, barn at aldri" (I, 494; Halldóra, the daughter of Snorri Bárðarson, who was living then at Oddi, invited her kinswoman Ingibjörg to stay with her after the burning. Ingibjörg went to Oddi with her companions. Still a child in years, she was quite worn out). The pathos of these words emphasizes the cruelty of the times, as well as the way that the father, the narrator of the story, shares the pain of his daughter, whom he himself has placed in peril.⁵⁴ Her innocence is powerless against the works of men without scruples. The saga chorus, in the meantime, judges the burners at Flugumýrr harshly, while the narrator asks for God's mercy on them: "Þessi tíðindi spurðust brátt, ok þótti öllum vitrum mönnum þessi tíðindi einhver mest hafa orðit hér á Íslandi, sem guð fyrirgefi þeim, er gerðu, með sinni mikilli miskunn ok mildi" (I, 493; The news now spread quickly, and it seemed to all the wiser men of the land that this was perhaps the most significant event that had ever occurred here in Iceland—may God in His great mercy and mildness forgive them). The objectivity of the narrative is clearly broken, and its emotional perspective revealed. W. P. Ker emphasized the tragic undertone of *Íslendinga saga*: "[T]he Icelandic tragedy had no reconciliation at the end, and there was no national strength underneath the disorder, fit to be called out by a peacemaker

54. See Pétur Sigurðsson, *Um Íslendinga sögu Sturlu Þórðarsonar*, p. 111.

or a ‘saviour of society’.”⁵⁵ This view is most clearly expressed at the climactic points of *Íslendinga saga*, especially in the description of the Flugumýrr burning. One may even ask whether it is Ingibjörg Sturludóttir’s cruel experience and knowledge, and in her father’s empathy with her, that the saga has its emotional origin.⁵⁶ Thus the plainness (*bersögli*) of *Huldar saga* is connected to the “truth” of *Íslendinga saga*; the love of Sturla for Ingibjörg, his daughter, and his anguish over the suffering that he caused her as a child, is tied to Queen Ingilborg’s appreciation of the sagacity of the saga-master.

After the burning of Flugumýrr, the saga says that the following occurred:

Þá var borinn út á skildi Ísleifr Gizurarson, ok var hans ekki eftir nema búkrinn steiktr innan í brynjunni. Þá fundust ok brjóstin af Gróu, ok var þat borit út á skildi at Gizuri.

Þá mælti Gizurr: “Páll [Kolbeinsson] frændi, “segir hann,” hér máttu nú sjá Ísleif, son minn, ok Gróu konu mína.”

Ok fann Páll, at hann leit frá, ok stökk ór andlitinu sem haglkorn væri. (1, 494)

(Then borne out on a shield was Ísleifr Gizurarson, and nothing was left of him but his torso, fried inside his armor. Gróa’s breast was also found, and it was born out on a shield to Gizurr.

Gizurr said: “Páll [Kolbeinsson], my kinsman, here you can now see Ísleifr, my son, and Gróa, my wife.”

And Páll saw that Gizurr turned away, and tears poured from his eyes like hailstones.)

The description shows that Sturla the historian understood a husband’s love for his wife and children. It displays the sympathy that the saga writer has for Gizurr in his sorrow, the shame that comes with the burnings, the indiscriminate violence against women, and Gizurr’s right and responsibility for taking revenge. Gróa’s breast becomes a symbol of the power of life that can do little against the destructive urges of men. This symbol takes on even deeper meaning when one

55. Ker, *Epic and Romance*, p. 257.

56. Cf. Gunnar Karlsson, “Siðamat Íslendingasögu,” p. 220.

considers that it is the motherless child, Sturla Þórðarson, who tells the story; it might even also indicate his “nostalgia for the maternal breast” from which he had been removed,⁵⁷ an experience that could have colored his position toward women all his life.

It therefore seems almost pathetic when the narrator continues by saying, after having counted all the losses in the fire, that “[þ]ar brunnu ok margir gripir, er átti Ingibjörg Sturludóttir” (1, p. 494; Many of the treasures that Sturla’s daughter Ingibjörg owned also burned up in the fire). In the context of the disaster, the loss of a part of Ingibjörg’s dowry was a mere trifle. As Björn M. Ólsen has indicated, however, *Íslendinga saga* deals with “ýmislegt, sem snertir fjárhag Sturlu [Þórðarsonar] beinlínis eða óbeinlínis” (various things that touch on the financial situation of Sturla [Þórðarson], directly or indirectly).⁵⁸ Among other things, it deals with the disputes over Sturla’s inheritance from Guðný, his grandmother, the Jóreiðr case, and the Staðarhóll case. In all of these events, women in Sturla’s life play important roles. They were the source of both his wealth and power, and subsequently supported his aristocratic position.

In spite of the objectivity of the saga, Sturla the historian was capable of communicating his concern and love for his daughter Ingibjörg in *Íslendinga saga*. However, she is taken care of after the burning by her third cousin, not her father or grandmother (although this might have been seen as appropriate, since she had been married off). But it might also indicate her father’s fear of her memory of the burning, and serve as a reminder that he might be obliged to support Gizurr in his revenge.⁵⁹ After all, the Flugumýrr burning was incited by a woman, who slandered her husband’s courage in suggesting that her father had not been avenged well enough (1, pp. 480–1). Illegitimate child as this woman is, she is portrayed in the saga as both a devourer and bearer of death, which like all weak creatures uses its serpent-tongue as a weapon.⁶⁰

Íslendinga saga is a masculine saga. Nevertheless, it is possible to contend that the saga has its roots in the paternal love—and fear—of the saga-writer. The cruelty that his daughter suffered as a child might

57. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. 97.

58. Björn M. Ólsen, *Um Sturlungu*, p. 413.

59. Cf. Clover, “Hildigunnr’s lament.”

60. Cf. Duby, *Love and Marriage*, p. 97.

have opened her father's eyes to the fear that feuding in Icelandic society would have no end. Sturla's love and respect for the women in his life shine through his storytelling. But women played little part in the disputes of the Sturlung Age, which the saga described; their domain was the home, even though they might have kindled disputes. Overall, they had little to do with the material of *Íslendinga saga*. What ties together the narratives dealing with women in the life of Sturla is the fact that nearly all of them concern his financial affairs. The women in his life could have been, in some instances, his source for genealogical knowledge and story-events, and they most likely kindled his love of storytelling. But it is a cold, hard fact that Sturla Þórðarson the historian was much more occupied in his *Íslendinga saga* with the property rights that he obtained from women than with his love for them and what he might have learned from them. According to the saga, it seems that his domain was built much more on the wealth of the women in his life than their knowledge and his love for them.

TRANSLATED BY PHILIP ROUGHTON.

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