

WILLIAM OF PALERNE AND ÁLAFLEKKS SAGA

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*William of Palerne*¹ is a noteworthy Middle English non-cyclic romance which combines ancient werwolf legend with specific forms of the "expulsion-return" and "love-marriage" patterns of action common in the romances; it combines myth, popular tale, and romance in such a way that Charles Dunn styles this "primitive wonder tale with its overtones of courtly sensibility . . . a worthy fore-runner of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*."² Another text, possibly structurally homologous and of similar date to *William*, combines the three themes of the werwolf, the alienation of a mortally-threatened prince from his patrimony, and the prince's trials in love, but it is decidedly more archaic in its use of the transformation theme and is less given to refined sensibility. This work, *Álaflekks saga*,³ is an Icelandic "lying-saga" (*lygi saga*) of the late-fourteenth century, and both in structure and in detail its relationship to *William of Palerne* is most interesting.

Comparison of those two texts touches upon the flexible generative process by which such texts were derived and specifically upon the relationship of fabulous romance and *fornaldar sögur*,⁴ which in turn depends upon the relationship of folk-tale with such literary romance and saga texts, each matter one of fairly broad interest. I therefore propose to investigate the relationship of these two works, focussing principally on the freely elective way in which the English and Icelandic authors develop their common material.

As neither the romance nor the saga is widely familiar, a précis of each, stressing pertinent elements of the matter and aspects of its treatment, is necessary. This will be followed first by a brief consideration of the relationships of these two works to the earlier *Guillaume de Palerne*, and thereafter by a consideration of how the adaptation of the werwolf transformation motif in the two works differs from its use in folk-tale as studied by G.L. Kittredge; the latter consideration will help to indicate how the literary romance and saga flexibly differ from tales more suggestive of oral literature.

The plot of *William of Palerne* is an efficient interweaving of three sub-plots concerning the two princes' transformations, the recognition of William as prince and the recovery of his patrimony, and the fulfilment of William's love for Melior. The romantic story of the love of the exiled William (seemingly a page, but a prince of Palerne and heir to Apulia) for the princess Melior of Rome is framed by the werwolf tale of Alphonse, a Spanish prince who has been enchanted because his stepmother Braunde wants her son Braundinis to supplant Alphonse as heir apparent of Spain. Alphonse has been transformed into a werwolf by his stepmother before the poem opens and is disenchanting only in the closing action of the poem; he serves throughout the poem to succour first William and later Melior. William himself suffers a pseudo- or sublimated-transformation, for he must assume bestial disguises, although he is not actually changed into a beast: when the lovers must flee from Rome, Melior's companion Alisaundrine ("ful conyng . . . of charmes and of chauntemens," lines 653-54) sews them into the skins of white bears, for bears "be alle maners arn man likkest" (see lines 1679-94), and they adopt a second disguise of deer when the bear disguise is discovered. But first, Alphonse the werwolf "abducts" the child William, thereby rescuing him from a murder plot framed by his uncle who villainously aspires to the throne of Apulia. William then suffers exile. He is succoured first by Alphonse, then by a cowherd who finds him (William), and thereafter by the Emperor of Rome (Melior's father), until his return to Palermo (or Palerne, capital of Apulia). He then martially defeats the Spanish forces besieging his mother, Queen Felice (now widowed). Thereby he wins his patrimony in a sequence of actions in which he also divests himself of his disguise and proves himself worthy of his inheritance. In the course of William's exile, he and Melior fall in love,

but their happiness is threatened when Melior is betrothed to Partenedon of Greece. Under this threat of an enforced marriage, which would separate them, the lovers flee, aided by Alphonse and Alisaundrine as described. Their flight from Rome constitutes William's return to Palermo and his self-discovery and recovery of the throne resolve their romantic plight. That is, the basic expulsion-return and love plots are closely *assimilated*;⁵ and assimilation of the werwolf frametale, which involves Alphonse and Braunde, with the central plot, which involves William and Melior, is also effected through the designs of the Spanish King and Braundinis in besieging Felice.

The courteous-sentimental love affair of William and Melior is typically presented and is advanced through a series of external threats. Initially divided by their seeming difference of station, each lover endures a long internal love debate, followed by love sickness on Melior's part, before they are secretly betrothed with the helpful intervention of Alisaundrine.⁶ William then distinguishes himself in battle, when the Duke of Saxony invades Rome, and captures the Duke Almayn himself. Thereupon the Saxons pledge fealty. A following brief romantic interlude is interrupted by the suit of Partenedon for Melior, which prompts the lovers' flight. Near Benevento the fleeing lovers are almost captured by a search party led by the local provost and seeking the "bears," the lovers in disguise. They escape, however, when the werwolf distracts pursuit by abducting the provost's son. Adopting their second disguise of hart and hind, the lovers cross the Straits of Messina to Reggio, again escaping capture through the werwolf's wiles.⁷ Then they come to Palermo through war-torn country wasted by the besieging King of Spain.

William defends both Melior and Queen Felice, and the Queen's role is strikingly curious. As Melior sleeps in the garden, the Queen goes to bed and first dreams prophetically of the coming of a werwolf and of two bears. The bears change to a hind and hart, and the Queen then dreams of these beasts rescuing her and going on to imperial triumphs. After offering up a mass to the fulfilment of this happy dream, Felice sees the hart and hind embracing in the garden and watches them through the day. On the following day, another mass having been offered and the hot sun having cracked the hides so that "here comli cloping" is seen, Melior and William are recognized as the Emperor's daughter and her bold knight. None the less, in order to contrive their entry into her

chambers, Felice has herself sewn into a hind's skin and slips by a "prive posterne" into the garden, where a happy alliance is soon made. All three return into the castle, baths are prepared, the queen unlaces the hides, and William and Melior are soon in court attire; though undisguised, William is not yet recognized as the missing son of Felice. In her curious assumption of disguise as an animal, Felice's role is comparable to Melior's, while in the scene involving the bath where the lovers resume their proper appearance her role anticipates that of Braunde, who later disenchants Alphonse by using a ritual bath, a book of lore, and a magic talisman. However, as Felice's assumption of disguise is not clearly motivated and the undisguising of William is a simple literal process, this doubling of the character roles, like the doubling both of the transformation-and-exile motif that involves both William and Alphonse and of the abduction motif, where both William and the provost's son are taken by the werwolf, seems simply a part of the artful interweaving of the different plot threads, a process more decorative than significant. That is, the poet carried on here a process of elaboration and embellishment, which is not thematically required, flourishing the basic motifs of transformation and abduction beyond the demands of the poem's argument. Similarly, the repeated threats to the love affair of William and Melior exploit the romance's capacity to extend plot by a repetitive sequencing of episodes similar to the recursive sequencing of embedded sentences in transformational grammar.⁸

In the royal stable at Palermo, Felice has Sandbruel, her late husband King Ebroun's "sturne sted," which no one has been able to mount since the king's death; the horse is tied with stiff iron chains and fed and watered by a "queyntlliche corue[n]" way, men otherwise being afraid to move near him. Sandbruel knows who William is, however, and breaks all his bonds for joy, kneels to the prince, and proves a docile mount (lines 3225-57). Thus mounted, William exhorts his troops and, in a series of battles during which the werwolf is twice seen, defeats the besiegers, slaying the Spanish steward and his nephew and capturing the Spanish king himself.

The subsequent appearance of "Williams werwolf . . . [before] þe ladies & his loveli maister [holding] up his foure-fet in fourme to crave mercy" (lines 3482-84) leads Felice to tell the story of her son's abduction and supposed drowning. This misleads William into believing

he cannot be her son. Thereafter, the werwolf soon appears again and courteously kneels and bows to them all "buxumli as any best by any resoun shuld" (lines 3714 ff.). Then, during the settlement of hostilities, it enters the hall of state, kisses the feet of the Spanish king, salutes the others, and departs. All of this leads the king to reflect on how his son was lost, how "trewe men of [the] reaume" accused the stepmother of enchanting the child, and how she had accused those men of malice and had told him "pat mi semli sone was in the see sonken." "I leved hir pan lelly & lett it over-passe," he adds, "but now witerli i wot pis werwolf is my sone . . ." (see lines 4096-115). Queen Braunde is brought from Spain to Palermo where she is terrified by the wolf, but is promised mercy; she then effects the transformation of Alphonse back into a man. Alphonse then identifies William as Ebroun's heir, the abducted son of Felice, and the tale proceeds to a comic resolution: William marries Melior; Alphonse marries Florence, William's sister; Braundinis marries Alisaundrine; while the cowherd who fostered William before the Emperor found him is richly rewarded. William soon succeeds to the imperial throne and Alphonse to the throne of Spain.

As noted, the three principal themes of *William* are interrelated. The werwolf theme frames the other two, with a great deal of plot assimilation providing unity, on the one hand, and with considerable doubling of characters and episodes amplifying the story, on the other. *Álaflekks saga* exploits this same basic combination of themes and attendant motifs, with some striking similarity of detail, but is most strikingly independent in the framing of the tale, in characterization of the antagonists, and in deployment of some other detail, notably with respect to its more archaic mythic aspect. As in discussing *William* above, I shall first consider the broader issue of the saga's thematic structure and then some details of its expression.

Álaflekks saga tells the history of *Áli*, the son of King Richard of England, whose adventures take him into the march-land dwellings of trolls, to Tartary, Scandinavia, Africa, India, and lands "allt . . . út við heimisendann" ("at the utter end of the earth," c. XIV: 12), and later through Mirkwood to Russia. At the beginning, King Richard orders that his yet unborn child be exposed if a boy. Initially unexplained, this action at first styles Richard as a cruel enemy of *Áli*, but Richard is "far-seeing," prescient;⁹ his is an attempt to forestall fate, the ill-

fate (*óskap*) which he knows Áli will necessarily suffer if he lives. Left in the forest, Áli is found by the carl Gunni and fostered by Gunni and his wife Hild (cf. the cowherd in *William*), but Áli's noble quality, when a youth, is recognized by the king (cf. the Emperor of Rome encountering William); Richard as a loving father then brings Áli back into the royal court. While the child is with Gunni and Hild, no name will stick to him until he is styled by a birthmark (*flekk*) on his right cheek, a king-mark like Havelok's;¹⁰ at court, he is confronted by Blátǫnn (Blacktooth), a "bondswoman . . . fitted for all ills" who loudly bawls¹¹ that Áli has never greeted her kindly; she bespells Áli so that he must go into the forest to the troll-wife Nótt (Night) and serve her. After an exchange of *álþg* (spells) Ali disappears, and King Richard sadly explains:

"Nu er þat framm komit, er ek vissá fyrri, at þessi svein mundi fyrir míklum ósköpum verða. Veit ek, at hann er horfinn í trǫlla hendr, ok mun ek ekki leita hans."

("Now that which I foresaw has come to pass, that this lad would suffer ill-fate. I know he has fallen into the trolls' hands, and I will not search for him." C. IV:5-6, p. 90)

Thus, Áli is a prince who suffers the infant trial and alienation of William. Fated from birth to suffer a like exile, he is returned to his own court in the midst of his story. The werwolf transformation does not take place thus early in the plot; it occurs in the central chapters VIII-X as one episodic turn of Áli's fortunes. The plot none the less is framed by the overhanging threat to the prince, for, as in *William of Palerne*, a figure who initially seems to threaten but who indeed fosters the child, King Richard (cf. the "wolf" in *William*), understands a real enmity which threatens the hero, the rooted antipathy between Áli and the kindred of Blátǫnn (cf. the greed and ambition of Braunde and William's uncle in the romance).

Blátǫnn, Glóðarauga, Nótt, and Jptunoxi ("sibling" trolls) are avatars of the troll-hypostasis of this antipathy.¹² Although Hlaðgerðr, a *blendingr*, the bi-natured daughter of a man and Nótt, is a mediating figure who suggests that there may be some affinity between man and the trolls, some psychological or spiritual import in this motif, in

Álaflekks saga the primary role of these redoubled characterizations of the antagonist is to shape the hero's period of exile and his trials in winning his wife.

William's early romantic languor was resolved by the charms and enchantments of Alisaundrine, coupled with his achievements in conquering Duke Almayn and the Saxons. In *Álaflekks saga*, Hlaðgerðr plays a tutelary role somewhat similar to Alisaundrine's (and to Lunet's in *Yvain and Gawain*): meeting Áli on his way to Nótt's cave, she reveals an awareness of his plight, warns him against the erotic and tabu temptations of Nótt, and devises his escape from Nótt's stone cave. Later, after his own trials, Áli will search far and wide for Hlaðgerðr, in the eleventh hour rescuing her from burning, as Yvain rescues Lunet. At this earlier point, however, he simply uses her aid to forestall Nótt by laying swine's flesh upon his track, then wends his way into Tartaria. There, incognito as "Stuttheðinn" or "Short-Cloak," he admires the "maid-king"¹³ Thornbjörg and wins betrothal to her in his defeat of the Indian jarls Álfr and Hugi.¹⁴ Thereupon they swear not to harry Tartary, much as the Saxons swore loyalty to Rome when William, newly betrothed, defeated them in the Emperor's name. These battle scenes involve a double encounter with the Indian steward Gergin, which is closely similar to the double passage involving the Spanish seneſchal and his nephew in *William* (lines 3377-96, 3418-45): like the Spaniard, Gergin leads his lord's host against the embattled queen (cf. Felice) and first encounters Björn, Queen Thornbjörg's commander (c. VII). Then, as Björn is seriously wounded, "Stuttheðinn" (Áli) takes up the leadership (c. VIII), literally cutting down Gergin in a manner very similar to William's cutting down the steward's nephew who has replaced his uncle.¹⁵ The common motifs and their pattern -- the embattled queen, her champion, the double encounter, the antagonist halved with a broadsword -- are marked enough to identify these passages as variations on the same scene (as *alloscenes*), but, while in the romance it is the antagonist's role that is doubled, in the saga it is the hero's role, and the scene is incorporated much later in the romance. Thus, the free doubling and re-ordering of elements observed in the opening of these works is also observable here.

William's flight from Rome took place after the Saxon contest when the marriage suit of Partenedon threatened Melior and himself. In *Álaflekks saga* martial challenge and threatened marriage are assimilated

in the role of Álfir and Hugi, the besieging suitors, and Áli's "flight" takes place thereafter, forced on him by Glóðarauga. Through another exchange of *alög*, Áli, standing in linen underclothes,¹⁶ is transformed into a werewolf, whereupon he ravages Tartaria and then England. The king's hunt, as in Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, twice pursues the wolf, but, in the interim, the wolf visits the small yard of Gunni and Hild. There, where it is briefly at peace, Hild notes its eyes:

"Engi aug{u}hefi ek líkari sét, en í vargi þessum ok var í
Ála flekk!"

("No eyes have I seen, but in this wolf, more like Áli
flekk's!")¹⁷

Captured by the king, the wolf is spared at Hild's entreaty, because "veita mundi Áli þér, Hildir! þessa [b]oen, ef hann væri her . . ." ("Áli would grant you this boon, Hild, if he were here . . ."), and Hild cures Áli naturally.¹⁸

Áli, however, is still separated from Thornbjörg and is again "transformed" when Nótt visits him asleep, beats him, and leaves him with wounds which can only be healed by her brother.¹⁹ His very flesh rots and only Thornbjörg, now summoned, can stand to tend him. Their search for a cure takes them widely about the world and finally to India, where Álfir directs them to the troll-realm of Jǫtunoxi and promises to aid them. By a false promise of betrothal and aided by two humans (Andán and Mandán), "Gunnvǫr" and "Gunnvarðr" (alias Thornbjörg and Áli) beguile Jǫtunoxi's brothers into healing Áli, Jǫtunoxi into slaying Nótt, and Jǫtunoxi and two hundred giantess-guests into a fatal "bridal" where the hall is fired.²⁰ Jǫtunoxi in his dying moments curses Hlaðgerðr. This necessitates Áli's search for and rescue of her from the stake, but thereafter a round of marriage and celebration, involving the gift of the horse Krákr, resolves the plot. The tale ends with a happy assurance that stability was known in Áli's reign and that he, like William, divided his realms happily among his sons.

Earlier, I suggested that *William of Palerne* and *Álaflekks saga* were possibly structurally homologous. The basic structure of a plot of alienation of the royal hero from both his station and his bride is, in the two works, remarkably similar. In each, the infant hero is exposed to mortal danger, left in the woods, rescued and fostered by a churl,

adopted by a foreign ruler and brought up at court, winning the heroine but having a normal relationship postponed when he is forced to flee into the wilds and suffer transformation into a beast. The pattern continues with the hero's defense of a beautiful queen's realm, the compelled undoing of the hero's transformation, a comic resolution of happy marriages, and the establishment of a powerful ruling house. Comparison with *King Horn* and *Havelok* reminds one of how common much of this matter and pattern is, but the incorporation of the werwolf theme in this pattern is not usual. There are also some correspondences in inessential detail which, together with the werwolf theme, suggest a relationship between the romance and the saga more specific than simple coincidence or the formulaic nature of their composition might give rise to.

For example, the figures of magic who transform Alphonse and Áli into werwolves are named Braunde and Glóðarauga (Brand and Glede-eye). Thus each seems characterized by the traditional burning eye, although in each case this is a matter of name only, having nothing explicitly to do with the actual events of the story. Similarly, in each story the hero is given a valuable steed on overcoming his trials, with the element *brúnn* in each name or description: Brunsandbruel in *Guillaume de Palerne*, Sandbruel in *William*, and Krákr, "brúnt at lit" (Raven, "brown" in colour)²¹ in *Álaflekks saga*. In each case the horse is inessential to the plot; it is part of the traditional matter being used, its original function in the tale now obscured. Early in *Álaflekks saga*, where a fetish concerning pork is explicit (cf. above, p.143), Áli is being warned against Nótt's tabu meal of "hrossakjöt and manna" ("the flesh of horses and men"); this may preserve a hint of similar earlier equine ritual significance, but the passage bears no evident relation to the much later Krákr episode.²² And as discussed, William's slaying of the Spanish steward and his nephew suggests the double encounter with the Indian steward Gergin in *Álaflekks saga*. These details are not essential and are not necessitated by the plot in either case; thus, as nothing in the story explains their presence or requires their preservation, their coincident retention is noteworthy and suggests affiliation.

The question of a specific stemmatic affiliation also arises. It involves consideration of the relationship of these works to *Guillaume de Palerne*,²³ the Old French source of *William of Palerne*. The text of *William of Palerne* (E) was translated "of frensche . . . / In ese of

englysch men" (lines 167-68), ca. 1350-61, after some version of the late twelfth-century *Guillaume de Palerne* (F), and the saga (Af) perhaps dates from some forty or fifty years later (ca. 1390), antedating the sixteenth-century Irish prose translation (Ir) of *de Worde*.²⁴ M. Kaluža, in a detailed study of the relationship of *William* and *Guillaume* (of E and F),²⁵ firmly established the previously understood derivation of E from F, but denied Michelant's assertion that "la traduction suit presque pas à pas l'original" (p. xvii).

He notes that the translation "sollte natürlich keine wortgetreue Übersetzung sein," stressing the general looseness of mediaeval translations (p. 199), the special demands that translating into alliterative verse makes (p. 271), and various ways in which the translator-redactor curtailed or expanded the text of F (pp. 255-59 *et passim*). Addressing the question of whether E derives directly from F or through an intermediate French text (*f), Kaluža deems direct transmission probable despite the marked freedom of E, given that "der englische Dichter sich grosse Freiheiten gestattete" (p. 271). Stressing the basic identity but superficial textual differences of the poems, he asserts that the English redactor "hat die Grundfabel des Gedichtes unverändert beibehalten, zeigt aber in der Schilderung der einzelnen Szenen eine grosse Selbständigkeit . . ." (pp. 271-74).

The relationship of *Álaflekks saga* to the other texts is more problematic, for it is in prose and is not a translation of either E or F. Editing the Irish redaction *Eachtra Uilliam*, Cecile O'Rahilly demonstrates that the Irish tale, "a translation of an English prose version of E [of the early sixteenth century] . . . , is not a mere adaptation or free rendering. The general plot agrees, incident for incident. . . . It has, however, taken a completely Irish colour . . ." (pp. xvii-xviii). *Álaflekks saga* is even more independent, not following the *Guillaume* or *William* "incident for incident" at all. None the less, the similarities in structure, themes, and details discussed above indicate that this saga is specifically related to the romance, for their common use of the werwolf theme and their interrelation in inessential details makes it clear that the parallelism goes beyond the basic formulaic character of folktale.

Given the localization of the story in King Richard's England and the possibility that the name *Áli* (flekkr) was related to the English

werewolf *Al*-name (*Alphouns*, E: cf. *Alpheus*, Ep; *Ailpius*, Ir, as opposed to *Amphouns*, F), affiliation of the Icelandic text with an English rather than French recension is suggested, but there is very slight evidence on this latter point.²⁶ Thus, from F (*Guillaume*) derive the prose versions Fp (s. xvi), *ep from which derive Ir (*eachtra*, s. xvi) and Ep (*de Worde*, s. xvi), and the alliterative verse E (*William*, s. xiv²). *Álaflekks saga* (prose, s. xiv²) probably derives from an English text, but its early date makes it unlikely that this was an English prose redaction: comparison with the translation (s. xiii²) from Middle English verse of *Landres Thattr*²⁷ seems more appropriate.

It is, however, the great flexibility shown in managing the details of parallel motifs, shaping some of the singular points in these works, which one especially notes. For example, Braunde herself disenchant Alphonse, whereas it is not Nótt herself but her brothers who unspell Áli; and just as William and Alphonse are in the romance doublings of the hero represented solely by Ali in the saga, so the many trolls in the saga are all avatars of the antagonist represented by Braunde and William's uncle in the romance. Similarly, Thornbjörg the "maid-king," already in possession of her patrimony, assumes alone the roles given Melior and Felice in *William*. Perhaps it is in Áli's successive plights, as a prisoner in Nótt's cave, as a werewolf, as a chanced "leper," and as a giant-killer, that differences between the stories seem most apparent. Neither folktale elements, such as Áli's climbing the gigantic steps to Nótt's cave by hooking his beaked axe over the lip of each successive step and hauling himself up or Áli's illness, have any part in *William*, even though the disenchantment of Alphonse in *William* suggests both Áli's rescue by Hild and the cure of his leprosy. It is notably here in the *topoi* of gigantism and morbidity that the independent quality of the saga is expressed.

William of Palerne is a tale of adventure, coloured by sentiment, artfully structured, and graciously expressed, yet morally simplistic both in its comic plotting of vulnerable but resilient innocence overcoming malign ambition and in its black-and-white characterization. The application of the werewolf legend portrays the transformation as wholly negative, an extrinsic constraint wholly imposed by a wicked stepmother. *Álaflekks saga* is less sophisticated in narration, rhetorical colour, and matters of fashion, but perhaps more complex in the presentation of the

hero and notably in the use of the werwolf legend, wherein the transformation relates to the beast implicit in the man, a potential aspect of the heroic character; hence it is not so simply extrinsic. Thus, these two presumably homologous works develop the same basic materials, each flexibly adapting plot, character, sentiment, and theme to its quite distinctive ends, yet remaining clearly in the broad stream of late mediaeval romance. For if the courteous refinement of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* suggests *William of Palerne* but not the saga, the Gawain-poet's concern with moral ambiguity and with the mysterious intimacy of terror and faith is as surely closer to the enchantment of *Álaflekks saga* than to the conventional magic of *William*. Furthermore, there is something in the very flexibility with which the werwolf theme is developed in these works that is of the romance rather than the folk-tale.

This latter distinction is important enough to draw the argument into consideration of the nature of the werwolf theme and of the usual reasons for transformation in these tales, before specifically considering the instances of the romance and saga in question. First, as to the nature of werwolves, they might be constitutionally shape-shifters, or might be transformed into werwolves by a *fée*/wife or by an enchantress/stepmother.²⁸ Two points concerning the constitutional or natural werwolf are worth noting here. First, he is born a *loup-garou*: his transformation derives from his very nature and may be periodic; it does not proceed from enchantment. Kveldulf, the grandfather of Egil Skallagrimsson, is a constitutional werwolf; the protagonist of Marie's *Bisclavret* has been cited as a partial example of this type.²⁹ *Áli* is also a partial example, for although he is transformed by *Glóðarauga*, the motif of his clothes and the natural way in which he resumes his human form suggest the return of the constitutional werwolf.³⁰ Secondly, the transformation of the constitutional werwolf is not necessarily negative: in the case of Kveldulf, being a werwolf seems to make him not less but more than a man. To his *mennskir* or human abilities is added an intuitive quality, perhaps related to the magic knowledge of the *vættir*, a quality related not only to his power but also to his wealth and wisdom, to the capacity for success, propagation, increase seen in him and in his descendants, their uncanny "luck."³¹ On the other hand, transformation by enchantment -- whether into a natural beast or a troll -- is never a positive change and sometimes can herald a descent into ferocity or malignity.

G.L. Kittredge in 1903 studied a number of variants of the "Werewolf's Tale" in which a *fée* or wife causes a man's transformation, distinguishing between "the Werewolf tale proper" (O), "the fairy mistress story" (x), and further types of framed tales (y) involving the motif of "Defense of the Child." In his type O (e.g. *Bisclavret*) a natural werewolf discloses the secret of a talisman which controls his transformation, enabling his wife to force him to retain his wolf shape for a long time while she accepts another lover (presumably the fate of Malory's "Sir Marrok the good knyghtte that was bitrayed with his wyf, for she made him seven yere a werwolf"). The story then turns upon the wolf's disenchantment by a protecting king, the punishment of the false lover, and the fate of the wife. In the fairy mistress story or type x (e.g., *Melion*) the *fée* marries a mortal, and then the *fée*'s Other-worldly lover wins her back and, in the werewolf tales, transforms the hero in order to prevent his pursuit. In type y (e.g., *Arthur and Gorlagon*) the wife is not a *fée*, and emphasis falls upon the penance which she must undergo. Kittredge was non-committal about the relationship of *Guillaume de Palerne* to the werewolf tale and, having then only a partial text of *Álaflekks saga*, was "inclined to regard the Icelandic story as an offshoot of the Irish x" (i.e., of the fairy-mistress story).³²

The stories of William and *Áli* clearly fall outside this pattern and equally clearly differ markedly from each other in motivation of the transformation and in its function within the story. In *William of Palerne* it is the stepmother's jealous political ambition for her son which motivates the transformation, for the enchantment of Alphonse is an expression of Braunde's ambition and will to dominate and is wholly comparable to the evil uncle's plot to have the infant heir apparent William murdered. Thus the motive for the action is wholly rationalized, and the transformation motif is simply decorative; it is effectively handled in a sentimental manner but drained of significance. As for the "transformation" of William, nothing in the romance really prompts one to see his forest escapade with Melior as more than a romantic idyll with a fashionable element of adventure, and William and Melior voluntarily adopt the wer-bear costume to escape from the threatened marriage of Melior to Partenedon and to stay together (turning the motive of type O upside down). Similarly, Queen Felice's adoption of the hind costume, while it may seem quaint or queer, no longer seems significant.

On the other hand, in Áli's savaging of the flocks, his wasting illness, and his later search for and rescue of Hlaðgerðr, there is matter of more importance in the characterization of the hero: the werewolf motif here functions to tell us something of an inner struggle suffered by the hero, expressing psychological interest suggestive of that found in Malory's tale of Balin and Balan³³ and more profoundly developed in *Grettir's Saga*. Thus, in the saga, the motif is yet an active symbolic device, not yet emptied of symbolic content, even though no longer suggestive of the totemic or ritual significance of the ancient werewolf legend.

Áli is a psychologically bi-natured hero, associated most closely with the *blendingr* Hlaðgerðr, quite closely with figures which suggest bestial and humane projections of himself (the werewolf on the one hand, Hild and Thornbjörg on the other), and more broadly with his antagonists and his benefactors (the trolls Blátönn, Nótt, and their kindred on the one hand, and the courtiers Mandán and Andán and the Kings Richard and Eiríkr on the other). As in *Peredur*, where the hero and his kindred are pitted against the Witches of Caer Loyw and such non-human enemies as the Addanc and the giants of Dyffryn Crwnn, a contest between monstrous and human kindreds is essential to the saga; but in *Álaflekks saga* the contest is internalized in the hero,³⁴ whereas it is not in *Peredur*.

Blátönn's malignant enmity is sparked by a natural antipathy existing between the prince and herself. Nótt, too, is consistently jealous or malevolent, sometimes savagely malicious, as in her second encounter with Áli when she so morbidly wounds him, occasioning his leprosy and long delaying the consummation of his marriage with Thornbjörg. None the less, in her initial appearance at the cave mouth she appears grotesquely tempting,³⁵ and Áli must be warned by Hlaðgerðr against both the erotic and the cannibalistic temptations of Nótt, surrender to either of which presumably would surrender Áli into the trolls' power, betraying his human nature. Thus, his bestial life as a werewolf and later his physically morbid condition are arbitrarily imposed on Áli, yet it is clear that he must be tempted and must volitionally fall if he is to be finally dominated by his antagonists. A theme of temptation is stressed, and it is the addition of this theme that distinguishes Áli's case from that of Alphonse or of the werewolf in *Bisclavret*.

As to the nature of this temptation, both the strange reference to Nótt's beauty and to her offering of tabu flesh as food suggest that she

represents utter carnality; moreover, an utter want of grace informs her brutal hatred, in contrast to Thornbjörg's remarkable devotion during Áli's illness, when no one else can endure being with him. Nótt is a temptress who would entrap Áli into trolldom and who represents all that stands opposed to the gracious, humane fulfilment of the prince. The enmity of her kindred toward Áli expresses the uneasy jealousy of the simply carnal confronted by the soul. Áli's story is not simply one of adventure but also one of spiritual implications.³⁶ These, however, are not explicitly stressed in the saga, in which marriage consummation and sovereignty are the prizes rapidly realized after Áli overcomes the trolls' power. Thus, the resolution of the love-marriage and exile-sovereignty plots is stressed, whereas the symbolic or mythic implications of the triumph over these antagonists are not explicitly dwelt upon.

Despite having some matter common to the tales studied by Kittredge, such as the involuntary transformation of one whose inner nature goes untouched, by an enchantress who, in the romance only, repents, the romance and saga differ freely from the tales in plot elements and motive. That is, neither the several "anecdotes" or type episodes of folk-tale which Kittredge identified with his type *y*,³⁷ nor the congenital talisman of type *x*,³⁸ are found in the saga or romance, while the motivation of the enchantress differs radically from that of the *fée*/wife of Kittredge's study. Even Braunde's penitence is most perfunctory, for penance is but a pious afterthought in the romance. Furthermore, even the character of the enchantress and the behaviour of the wolf are largely elective elements, freely handled: Braunde is basically euhemerized and Nótt is not; Alphonse retains "his witt . . . after as well as to-fore" (line 142) and appears as a marauder only in supplying William and Melior with food or decoying pursuit away from them, finally showing submission to the king in Felice's garden; but Áli ravages herds and is pursued by the king's hunt until he leaps on the king's saddle-bow and thereby finds mercy in the field (cf. *Bisclavret*). Both stories suggest that the transformation takes place when the hero is divested of his clothes, but this is obscure and inessential in *William* (lines 136-40). While the restoration of human shape is effected by magic in *William*, it is effected naturally (suggesting periodicity) in the saga.³⁹ Thus it is only in the sparest terms of lycanthropic metamorphosis-trial-recognition-restoration that this type-story compares with Kittredge's "Werewolf tale proper," even

though diverse common motifs and episodes are variously deployed to develop the several narratives.

Kittredge's broadly-diachronic analysis of the popular tale involving the werewolf assumes the identification of a particular meaning or motive with each motif. This accords with the view in the popular tale, or in the basic story of a work like *Peredur*, that the natural world is opposed to the magic world, that the hero struggles or mediates between these worlds, and that each element of the story carries a traditional meaning derived from a traditional perception expressing a relatively simple pre-ideological dualism. *William of Palerne* and *Álaflekks saga*, however, display a freer selection and application of the story elements than is found in such story, with the meaning of each element primarily determined contextually. The dualism of the popular tale is supplanted by the less rudimentary moral and spiritual ideologies of the romance and saga, and even though the works seem structurally homologous the meanings of the transformation allomotifs in them are quite distinct.

The enchantress's action in *William of Palerne* is not the traditional amoral action of a polyandrous fée, but is a morally vicious act inspired by ambition.⁴⁰ Love, marriage, and penance all are seen principally in terms of social or political trust and loyalty, rather than of personal commitment and fidelity. In *Álaflekks saga*, however, where the hero's adversaries first try to corrupt him morally and then vengefully transform him, their evil and its failure are contrasted to the triumph of devoted love depicted in Áli's relationship with Thornbjörg and of grateful fidelity in his relationship with Hlaðgerðr. Ironically, for all its incidental sentiment, *William of Palerne*, essentially played out on the socio-political map of its Mediterranean lands, is less concerned with the compassionate relationship of the hero and heroine than is the saga with its contrast of deceit springing from jealousy and personal fidelity founded on trust. Each work shapes the werewolf motif to its own end. For Alphonse and William, their "bestial" roles mean alienation from their proper station and their restoration means social restitution, the regaining of "pat trie ordere" symbolized by Alphonse's garments. For Áli, his alienation means a real descent into savagery and his restoration means the triumph of faith and kindness as well as social restitution, the kindred relations of Hild as foster-mother and Richard as father also being important.

This innovative capacity to develop independently the very meaning of a motif is characteristic of mediaeval romance, most notably of such works as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* but also of works like *William of Palerne* and *Álaflekks saga*, and it relates to the generic distinction between folk-tale and romance. The folk-tale gives perennial expression to and reinforces received positions concerning social, political, and natural matters, but the romance adds to this its characteristic impulse toward novelty, its essentially curious probing and stretching of conventions. *William of Palerne* and *Álaflekks saga*, both deriving from but innovatively and diversely developing matter found in *Guillaume de Palerne* and in traditions attendant upon the elements of that romance, illustrate something of the flexible way in which formulaic or typical content is exploited in late mediaeval narrative. Incidental to this but also of considerable interest is the fact that these two works also provide another instance of a relationship between the verse romance and saga of this period which goes beyond mere translation, and a story in which the interrelation of popular or "folk" and romantic elements can be studied.

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NOTES

¹ Ed. W.W. Skeat, EETS, E.S. 1 (London 1867).

² Charles Dunn, "William of Palerne [11]" in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500: I. Romances*, ed. J.B. Severs (New Haven, Conn. 1967) 37; cf. pp. 223-24 for bibliography.

³ Ed. Åke Lagerholm, *Drei Lygisögur* (Halle 1927) lii-lxxi, 84-120. *Álaflekks saga* is an example of the conflation of the "saga of antiquity" (*fornaldarsaga*), the fantasy world of fairy and folk-tale, and the influences of Continental romance to produce the "lying saga," legendary fiction or *märchen saga*. Lagerholm dates the saga late fourteenth-century, the earliest text being of the fifteenth century (MS. AM589e).

E.O. Sveinsson (cited S. Einarsson, *A History of Icelandic Literature* [New York 1957] 164) places it in the fifteenth century.

⁴ Concerning the relationship of Continental prose romance and saga developments, see Carol J. Clover, *The Medieval Saga* (Ithaca and London 1982), who argues that the foundations of classical saga literature "cannot indeed be rightly understood in isolation . . . from contemporary literary developments on the Continent" (p. 60), the development of classical saga and of prose romance "represent[ing], at least in the early stages, independent responses to a common medieval aesthetic" (p. 188).

⁵ On *assimilation* as a means of structural economy, a story's component serving two or more functions at one time (as in serving diverse sub-plots simultaneously), see S. Wittig, *Style and Narrative Structures in Middle English Romances* (Austin and London 1978) 153, who adopts the term from Vladimir Propp, *Morphologie du conte* (1928), trans. C. Ligny (Paris 1970).

⁶ See lines 433-579, 500-876 and 1006-9 respectively.

⁷ See lines 2713-81. A curious element herein is that of the wolf's being struck in the water so "þat he . . . dived to the grounde, / & had neiȝ lost iȝ lif" (lines 2756-60), apparently copied from *Melion* (lines 241-44); see Dunn, "William of Palerne [11]" (at n. 2) 37. This suggests details of the viking battle of Elfarskar discussed by A. Leroy Andrews as a repeated motif and a source of the *Hromundar saga Gripssonar* (in "Studies in the Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda," *Modern Philology* 10 [1912-13] 601-30). Any connection might seem slight, yet *Thorsteins saga Vikingssonar* in adapting the Elfarskar incident uses the name Qtunfaxi, suggestive of Jötunoxi in *Álaflekks saga*.

⁸ See, e.g., R.A. Jacobs and P.S. Rosenbaum, *English Transformational Grammar* (Toronto 1968) 45-47, regarding "a recursive sequence of rules" governing expanded noun phrases.

⁹ "allra konunga vitrastr. . . hann vissi fyrir óorðna hluti" ("the wisest of kings, . . . he had foreknowledge of things to come," I: 1, p. 84).

¹⁰ Noted by Leach, *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia*, p. 327, cited Lagerholm (at n. 3) 87.

¹¹ "grenjaði halt": Lagerholm (at n. 3) notes the association of this verb with the howl of the berserk (IV: 1, p. 89 n. 2).

¹² Like the witches of Caer Loyw, the Addanc, and the giants of Crwnn

Dyffryn in *Peredur*, these figures represent a non-human ætt or kindred group of antagonists naturally and inveterately opposed to the hero.

¹³ Cf. the amazonian Thornbjörg in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, trans. H. Pálsson and P. Edwards, *Hrolf Gautreksson: A Viking Romance* (Toronto 1972) 34-36, 39-43, 62-68 (cc. 4, 6, 13). Re Stuttheðinn, "Short-Cloak," cf. "La Cote Mal Tayle" in Malory (Caxton's Bk.IX: 1).

¹⁴ Called the sons of Ingifers, but of Ingi-freys in another important manuscript. Both Nótt's being stopped by swine's flesh (above) and Álf's later aid of Áli and Thornbjörg against Jötunoxi suggest Frey's traditional opposition to the trolls.

¹⁵ Cf. *William*, lines 3442-45; *Guillaume*, lines 5790-98; *Álaflekks saga*, VIII: 8, p. 98.

¹⁶ I.e., without his normal clothes. Cf. the divesting of the werewolf's clothes in his transformation and their necessity in his regaining human form in, e.g., Marie de France, *Bisclavret*.

¹⁷ This brief rest (c. X: 2, p. 102) is in contrast to its ravages the following night, when cattle are torn apart and three herd-boys slain. See Kirby F. Smith, "An Historical Study of the Werewolf in Literature," *PMLA* 9 (1894) 26, regarding recognition of the eyes: "The soul remains unchanged. It is thus that the *eigi einhamr* ["not of one form"] is often detected under his disguise." Again, it is in *Bisclavret* that the werewolf similarly is spared by a singular perception on the king's part.

¹⁸ Magic is *not* associated with Hild. Hild watches over Áli, but in the middle of the night (presumably about 1:30, between *náttmál* and *rismál*) drowsiness overcomes her. Nevertheless, she wakes in time to see a man, Álaflekk, sleeping, a wolf skin beside him. She quickly rouses Gunni, who burns the skin while she drips wine into Áli's mouth, reviving him.

¹⁹ Smith (at n. 17) 30-32 considers the relation of the succubus to the werewolf legend.

²⁰ Presumably a parody of the Kriemhild-Etzel story in the *Nibelungenlied*.

²¹ Raven, though *brúnn* or "dark-brown," presumably is a black horse, inasmuch as *svartr* was never used of a horse in Icelandic, while a bay is *jarpr* (cf. Cleasby-Vigfusson, *Icelandic-English Dictionary: brúnn*). The lexical association *per se* is, however, the point in this comparison, however the colour was perceived.

²² The relationship of eating tabu meat to the transformation presumably would be understood. It figures prominently in the tale of Björn and Bera in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, and also figures in *Melion*, that werewolf tale studied by Kittredge which most closely relates to *William* and to *Álaflekks saga*: see G.L. Kittredge, "The Four Versions of the Werewolf's Tale," pp. 162 ff. in "Arthur and Gorlagon," *Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, VIII (Boston 1903) 149-275. Smith (at n. 17) discusses the association of the tasting of human flesh with the Zeus Lykaeos cult and the transformation of Lycaon (as, e.g., in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, II. 239 ff) 13-19.

²³ Ed. H. Michelant, *Société des Anciens Textes Français* (Paris 1876). As to an anterior source, the author/translator of *Guillaume* claims, lines 9655-59, to be working from a Latin source, although this has been doubted (see L.A. Hibbard, *Medieval Romance in England*, p. 215, cited in O'Rahilly, *Eachtra Uilliam* [Dublin 1949] x, n. 5).

²⁴ *Eachtra Uilliam* (at n. 23) xi-xvii.

²⁵ "Das mittelenglische Gedicht *William of Palerne* und seine französische Quelle," *Englische Studien* 4 (1881) 197-287. (Capitalization of German nouns silently supplied in citations from this article.)

²⁶ Cf. O'Rahilly (at n. 23) xiv, who notes that the Irish text retains a few details closer to F than E, which suggests that its source *ep had details of F wanting in de Worde's Ep.

²⁷ *Landres Thattr* was translated from Middle English into Norse in Scotland during the winter of 1286-7, being translated for the Norse-speaking Queen of Scotland by her regent Bjarni Erlingsson. See *Karlagnús saga og Kappa hans*, ed. Bjarni Vilhjalmsson (Reykjavik 1950) I, 101-57; translated H.M. Smyser and F.P. Magoun, Jr., *Survivals in Old Norwegian of Medieval English, French, and German Literature* (Baltimore 1941) 1-27.

²⁸ See both Kittredge (at n. 22) and Smith (at n. 17), who distinguishes between (i) constitutional werewolves, (ii) those who willingly undergo magic and whose transformation is periodic (e.g., Sigmund and Sinfjötli), and (iii) those enchanted against their will, who remain enchanted until unspelled.

²⁹ For *Kveldulf*, v. *Egil's Saga*, c. 1. Bisclavret periodically changes his own form, and, deceived but not enchanted by his wife (who steals his clothes only, using no magic), Bisclavret regains his form

alone in a room when the clothes are regained.

³⁰ See n. 18 above.

³¹ See *Egil's Saga*, c. 1 et passim. Kveldulf's cousin, Ketill Hoeng, was an ancestor of Grettir Asmundarson and in *Grettir's Saga* a superhuman aspect of the hero's character is developed, the "luck" of his heirs also being stressed, while the troll-motif is again very important. Complete transformation does not take place, but the growth of "trollness" in Grettir, and his redemption from being troll-like through development in the hero of a humane sensibility (knowing sympathy and a proper fear of what he sees in Glám's eyes) provides the basis of character study in the poem. (*Hrafnkel*, hero of *Hrafnkel's saga Freysgoða*, suggests a wholly euhemerized instance of a hero inheriting such luck, inasmuch as the supernatural associations of Kveldulf, Ketill, and Grettir do not attach to Hrafnkel's lucky character).

³² Kittredge (at n. 22). For the stemma relating these variants, see p. 175; re *Guillaume*, see p. 184, n. 2; re the saga, see pp. 255-56; and for Jiriczek's text see "Zur Mittelislandischen Volkskunde . . .," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 26 (1893) 17-22.

³³ See Sir Thomas Malory, "Balin or the Knight with Two Swords" in *Malory, Works*, ed. E. Vinaver (Oxford 1971) Bk. II.

³⁴ As in *Grettir's Saga*. Usually dated ca. 1325, Jónas Kristjánsson suggested a later date, c. 1400, for this saga during a lecture delivered to the Icelandic Seminar at Oxford (Spring, 1976).

³⁵ "Hon var í skorpnnum skinstakki; hann tók eigi á lendar á baki, en á tar fyrir. Engu skepnu þottiz Áli ferligri sét hafa." ("She was in a shrivelled skin-cloak, which didn't cover to her waist at the back but reached to the toes in front. To Áli it seemed that he had not seen a fairer creature," c. V: 12, p. 93).

³⁶ Concerning this enmity, see *Grettir's Saga*, cc. 32-35, where Glám, having become a *draugr*, in this case an unclean spirit associated like Nótt with nightmares (cc. 32-3) and the trolls (c. 33), represents what Grettir might have become had his course not been reversed. Grettir dies of a morbid wound and through the malignant enmity of Thorbjörn Öngul, but is apparently spiritually redeemed by the increasingly kind influences of his later life. I.e., the plot of his story is the tragic (and much more profound) obverse of Áli's, both stories ending in the spiritual victory of the hero. Benevolent and maleficent dealings with humans or spirits without souls are also the subject of lamia transformation tales:

e.g., Melusine's transformation marks the fact that her cruelly treated father will no longer be able to deliver her out of the soulless spirit world, and her redemption thereafter depends upon her achieving a sustained sympathetic relationship with a human spouse. See *Melusine*, ed. A.K. Donald, EETS, E.S. 68 (1895) 15-16.

³⁷ These include "The Quest of the Sword of Light," "The Abduction of the Wife," and "The Defense of the Child," this latter episode involving "The Faithful Dog" and "The Hand and the Child," with or without "The Calumniated Wife." See Kittredge (at n. 22) 213-45.

³⁸ The "flekkr" or king's mark is congenital and a token but is not a talisman or separable charm.

³⁹ Cf. *William*, lines 4421 ff. where magic is used and where the clothes are not essential to the metamorphosis but rationalized as a sign of the man's social station: "what gom wol 3e þat 3ou give 3our garnemans noupe?/. . . I wol take myn a-tir & þat trie ordere / of þe worplest wel3 þat weldes now līve" (lines 4460-66). Re *Álaflekks saga*, see p. 10 and nn. 16, 18 above.

⁴⁰ Cf. Kittredge (at n. 22) 189-90: ". . . but fées were not subject to the laws of human society," frequently having a spouse in each of their worlds. Cf. also Medb's statement, "I never had one man without another waiting in his shadow," *The Tain*, ed. Thomas Kinsella (Oxford 1969) 53.