



IMAGES AND METAPHORS, MIRRORS OF SOCIAL CONCERNS IN THE SAGA OF VIKTOR OK BLÁVUS

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All literary texts are social communications and play a part in the life of their audience. Even though the *Saga of Viktor ok Blávus* contains elements that were moved from one cultural context to another, they were adapted to the concepts of an Icelandic audience and in the process acquired new meanings. Since the saga pertains to the genre *lygi sögur*, it contains strong elements of entertainment and escapism. Those elements do not, however, preclude that under the cloak of imagination and invention the saga responds to the issues of its time and place. On the one hand, the saga liberates itself from the world of reality by depicting a fantastic world, while on the other hand, it reflects the world that created it and can be fully comprehended only from its cultural context with which it is inextricably connected. In studying the reflection of the milieu that created the saga, I examine the images and metaphors incorporated in the *Saga of Viktor ok Blávus* in relation to historical and social conditions as well as to religious preoccupation. Included among the metaphors are the human beings who populate the saga. They are not characters but types, and are therefore themselves metaphors.

The *Saga of Viktor ok Blávus* tells the story of Viktor, son of King Vilhjálmr of France. At his father's death he becomes ruler of the country. Indulging in a prodigal and extravagant life style, he dissipates the whole wealth of his kingdom within three years and finds himself compelled to deliver the government of the land into the hands of his mother. He starts on a journey on which he encounters a series of adventures, such as the combats with the two famous warriors Randver and Öundur and the berserks Falr and Sóti. The most decisive encounter, however, is the meeting with King Blávus which takes place at the beginning of his journey. Blávus awakens Viktor to his goal, so that he feels called upon to accomplish difficult tasks. He also puts him into contact with the dwarf Dímus, a powerful supernatural being, who provides Viktor and Blávus with magic gifts which are crucial in establishing their fame as the greatest warriors the world knows. With Blávus' help Viktor gains a kingdom of unearthly splendour and the mysterious Fulgida who turns out to be Blávus's sister.



Important for the interpretation of the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* is the prologue. The anonymous author refers in this prologue to Hákon, King of Norway, the son of Magnús¹ and stresses that King Hákon *hiellt mikid gaman at fogrvm frasögnvm, ok at hann liet venda morgum riddara sögvvm j norænu úr girdzku eda franzeisv,*² (took great pleasure in storytelling, and had many chivalric stories translated into Norwegian from Greek or French). With this statement the anonymous author places the saga in the context of romances and lays from the French courtly tradition introduced by another Norwegian king, Hákon the Old. He creates a link between the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* and the literature which was translated when Norway, liberated from its existence at the margin of the Western world, knitted a close relationship with important European countries, and a European culture began to flourish within a limited upper class. Just as the translated *riddarasögur* were a literature written for the members and servants of the royal court, so the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* belongs to a literature created for the new service aristocracy that developed with the end of the Icelandic freestate in 1262, when Iceland became part of the patrimonial domain of the King of Norway.

Even more important for the interpretation of the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* than its mere association with the translated *riddarasögur* is the emphasis conveyed by the anonymous author that the saga occupies the same level as the translated chivalric stories, which he considers as being of instructive value, wherefore he expects men to model themselves on the lores propagated by them (*at...menn vilia likia sig...eptir hans fögrum frædvvm*).³

The only evidence for the purpose of the translations encouraged by King Hákon the Old is to be found in the first part of the prologue to the *Strengleikar*.⁴ There the translator explains, in what is his own declaration and not found in the French, that the exemplary conduct and virtues of Marie's heroes, their nobility and goodness are considered a notable assistance in man's endeavour to acquire the kingdom of God by means of fitting behaviour and good deeds.⁵

Since the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* ranks together with the translated *riddarasögur* amidst a literature written for the members and servants of the royal court, we may take the emphasis on the instructive value of the courtly romances expressed in the prologue to the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus*, and the accentuation of Marie's heroes as role models in the prologue to the *Strengleikar* as an indication that the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* is concerned with the court and with kingship. This assumption is further strengthened, as I will later show, by the striking



image of a splendid carpet with a king mounted on a white horse which Viktor perceives moving through the sky, an image which initiates Viktor's trajectory from a squanderer who has brought his realm to the brink of ruin to an apt king.

But first I wish to tackle another question. The *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* was written in Iceland, and why should the autonomous Icelandic chieftains who had hitherto adhered to a constitution which shut out royal authority be interested in issues of king and kingship? In the first half of the thirteenth century civil war broke out in Iceland between the most powerful men and families. The war for control of the country came to an end when at the Althing of 1262 the Icelanders swore allegiance to the Norwegian King.⁶ Despite dissatisfaction with the state of affairs caused by the union with Norway, such as the inadequacy of imports especially during periods of famine, failure to achieve improved social conditions, the disposition of the Norwegian government to treat Iceland as a dependency etc., the Icelanders never refused to ratify their agreement with the Norwegian king.⁷ This attitude shows that the Icelanders had abjured the Icelandic state system as an outdated remnant of bygone times, and adhered to the idea that at the time prevailed in the rest of Europe i.e. that royal rule was a divine institution to which all Christians owed submission.⁸ The Icelandic attitude towards kingship was, without doubt, further influenced by the cult of St. Olaf that had given kingship a special consecration. Moreover, in the kings'-sagas the Icelanders had glorified the achievements of the Norwegian kings who had forged the unity of the Norwegian realm as champions of Christianity.⁹

I have mentioned earlier that the saga's concern with kingship is highlighted by the introduction of the image of a splendid carpet that Viktor perceives moving in the sky. A king mounted on a white horse is on the rug. The scene is depicted through the eyes of Viktor who is standing on the ground looking up at the sky. The narrative effect in this passage consists in making the carpet the frame around the central element, the king on the white horse. The narrative device tells us that Blávus is no ordinary man. The form of transportation he employs, a splendid carpet, heightens this impression.¹⁰ The image appears to derive from the Midrash 'Solomon and the Ant'.¹¹ In this Hebrew narrative Solomon travels through the air on a carpet of silk to all the places he wishes.¹²

The overt effect of depicting Blávus as a king travelling through the air on a costly carpet is to evoke in the informed audience a recollection of the Biblical King Solomon. Blávus is no



ordinary visitor. He is a king. The king stands as an image of ascent to the highest achievable rank. To be a king is a metaphor for absolute self-realisation. Blávus foreshadows what Viktor is going to be at the end of his trajectory, but there is one major exception: Viktor will be a man who has attained humility.

The link between Blávus and Solomon is further enhanced by the parallelism between both men, which becomes apparent in the ensuing course of events. Blávus displays Solomon's chief attributes, which are wisdom, honour or glory and wealth. Berit Olam states that the term 'wisdom' is broader in Hebrew than in English and can include such morally neutral ideas as shrewdness, cleverness, and even skill at handicrafts.¹³ Solomon is depicted in the First Book of the Kings as a shrewd and successful bargainer, and as a result he enjoys far-flung international contacts and unparalleled economic gain.¹⁴ Blávus displays wisdom in insisting that he alone will have control over both wherever they go, because he knows that Viktor excels in bravery but lacks wisdom for world conduct (*eg vil einn hafa ráðagiord fyrir ockr badvm. bædi áá sió ok lande. þviat eg veit at hamingian hefir meir gefit þier...röskan riddaradóm enn visdóm til veralldar framferdar*).¹⁵ This evaluation of Viktor's character is confirmed by his spendthrift habits as former ruler. Blávus's wisdom matches Solomon's in that he proves to be as shrewd and successful a bargainer as the Biblical king when he offers the aged Samarion a coastal town and three castles with tributes in exchange for his fleet. Samarion, delighted with the offer, cedes him not only his fleet but also the astute counsellor Kádor who is an expert in all things related to sailing and piracy. The fleet and Kádor's counsel will aid in laying the foundation for Blávus and Viktor's renown and wealth.

In *Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry*, Berit Olam draws attention to a progressive darkening of the portrayal of Solomon which becomes evident in his moving away from wisdom for the sake of justice to wisdom for the sake of display and gain. Solomon's wealth once provided prosperity and security for Judah and Israel alike. Now all the gold Solomon accumulates is for the royal coffers. There is no mention of the people's benefit.¹⁶ The same may be said of Blávus and Viktor. They amass immense wealth in gold and silver in their fights with Randver and Öundur and the berserks, but nothing flows through them to others unlesse when it furthers their own profit.

I mentioned earlier that a closer relationship was established with Norway. As a result the Icelanders became more exposed to the ideas of the time prevailing in the rest of Europe. The



perfect prince is the central figure in the political thought of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, and numerous treatises have been written on the subject. It is precisely the love of wealth in a ruler that is condemned in many of these treatises. John of Salisbury points out in *The Policraticus* (1159), that ‘the prince should never be avaricious and always look upon his wealth as belonging to the people’.¹⁷ Gilbert of Tournai writes in *Eruditio Regum et Principum* (1259) that ‘great wealth and avarice are to be shunned, because they obscure the glory of the kingdom’.¹⁸ Love of wealth for its own sake may be seen as one of Viktor’s flaws. His love of wealth is perceptible in the narrator’s comment on the riches in gold and silver and the many other treasures with which his ships are repleted (*hafdi hann þa aud nógann j gulli ok sílfri á skipum sinum ok morgum ódrum dýrgripum*)¹⁹ and receives additional accentuation when Viktor grasps with his hand the treasure he has poured down on the cloth (*ok hafði hönd j fénu*).²⁰ The trick Fulgida, the maiden king, plays on Viktor then becomes a punishment for this flaw. While Viktor, at Fulgida’s request, is letting the carpet down into the tree to pluck an apple for her she uses the opportunity to escape with his wealth back to India. Viktor returns to his kingdom a poor vagrant.

The apple-tree is not only the place where Viktor, deprived of all his riches, is punished for his excessive love of wealth, it is also an image that bears Biblical connotations which have a different significance. It bears connotations of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Eden. Following early Christian thought, the Middle Ages deemed the forbidden fruit plucked by Eve to have been an apple. Ambrose remarks in his Sermon 45, *De primo Adam et secundo* that *Eva nos damnari fecit per aboris pomum*²¹ (Eve made us to be damned by an apple of the tree), and in the Old Icelandic *Marthe Saga ok Marie Magdalene* we read:

Konan skenkti sinum bonda i paradiso sáran dauda fyrir áto hins
bannaða eplis...²²

[By eating the forbidden apple, woman served her husband as a drink in
Paradise dire death....]

The apple tree evoking the tree in Paradise leads to a typological correspondence of Viktor with Adam and Fulgida with Eve. While Eve sees that the tree and fruit are beautiful to look at, Fulgida is not tempted by the apples, but with devious efficiency the temptress pretends to be lured by the delicious looking fruit. There is irony in this that unlike Eve it is not Fulgida who gives Viktor the apple but Viktor who stretches his hand into the tree after the fruit. With



gentle and persistent cunning Fulgida persuades Viktor to let the rug down at the fruit tree and pluck the apple.²³ Sated with the triumph he obtained over Fulgida by trickery and abduction, Viktor is blind to any suspicion. No thought of danger enters his head when he lowers the carpet into the fruit tree.

Adam loses everything and becomes dispossessed when he accepts the forbidden fruit from Eve. Viktor loses his bride and a considerable part of his wealth when he trusts Fulgida's beguiling words, lets the cloth down and stretches his hand into the tree after the apple. His action equates Viktor with Adam, Solomon and Samson, with all those famous men from the Old Testament who were deceived and weakened by love and female wiles.

Viktor's trajectory towards becoming an apt king comprises two combats. The encounter with the warrior-kings Randver and Önundr constitutes the first of those combats. The second is the battle against the berserks. In both clashes Viktor and Blávus take on senior heroes and challenge the entrenched establishment of power. The position of power Randver and Önundr occupy is revealed by such observations as that *allr siórr er svartur fyrir þeira herskipvm*²⁴ (the whole sea is black with their battleships) and that they have cleansed the whole sea of Viking marauders (*ok hittazt eigi þeir vikingar j eystra sallti at úti liggi so hafa þeir hreinsat allann sio*).²⁵

The adventure with Randver and Önundr calls to mind the great importance the Icelanders attributed to the ownership of a fleet for the establishment of power. The episode points to the Icelanders' awareness that the reduction in the number of ships they owned was a vital element in the fall of their political system.

The importance of a fleet for import and export becomes further evident in that the chief cause of public discontent with the Norwegian crown was the unsatisfactory arrangement with regard to commerce, which is reflected in the insistence of the Icelanders that the Norwegian king should send six ships a year to Iceland.²⁶

Moreover, it was well known that King Hákon IV (1217-63) largely owed his extraordinary influence abroad to his fleet. During the war with Denmark in 1256-1267, the awe his naval force inspired was so great that it induced Danish King Christopher to make peace on Hákon's terms without venturing a battle.²⁷ These historical facts provide the context for Viktor and



Blávus's determination to destroy the sea kings Randver and Önunder by whatever means at their disposal including betrayal and trickery.

The sea kings are introduced as defenders of order and security. Viktor and Blávus challenge them because they are eager to enhance their own fame and renown. Unlike the fight against Randver and Önunder, the fight against the berserks is morally justified.

Viktor and Blávus's fight against the berserks can only be fully appreciated if we recognise that the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus*, although apparently a secular story, incorporates certain aspects of the Christian history of salvation. One of these aspects is the idea of searching for God or the truth which reappears in the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* in the form of a quest. Viktor is a searching knight. He is in transit. That the adventure retains its characteristics of salvation becomes evident in the idea of returning home which in the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* is realised in a secular form when after fifteen years of adventures Viktor finally finds his way back to his homeland France. That the saga partakes of the history of salvation also becomes evident from the intervention of divine grace that is secularised, but still discernible in the encounter with Blávus and the other helpers and the gifts they bestow upon Viktor. Moreover, we find in the saga the problem of guilt which is ultimately the guilt of mankind. This guilt consists of Viktor leading his country to the brink of ruin by squandering its wealth. The evocation of the theme of mankind's first guilt is strengthened by his being expelled from his realm for an undetermined period of time. The adventures of Viktor approach the miracles of the saint when fighting the berserks. The battle against the berserks is, like the miracles of the saint, a service to the human community. The function of both consists in bringing order to the community, in helping and healing. The battle against the devilish forces that the saint is fighting has become a fight against the berserks who are likewise forces of evil.

How do we know that the berserks are the incarnation of evil? Kádor directly calls them *illmonnvm*²⁸ (evil men), but there are two more indications that tell an audience, acquainted with the beliefs and customs of antiquity, that the berserks are a maleficent force that recalls Satan and his demonic hosts. Kádor stresses that the berserks are black: *þeir ero bláir berserkir*,²⁹ and when Viktor and Blávus come to the island over which the berserks rule they are struck by their aspect and refer to them as being *blærr sem hel*³⁰ (black as hell). This twofold reference to the berserks as black is highly meaningful.



In Roman culture black, the colour of darkness, represented evil and malice. Evidence for this is found in Horace's Satires:

absentem qui rodit amicum,
 qui non defendit alio culpante, solutos
 qui captat risus hominum famamque dicacis,
 fingere qui non visa potest, comissa tacere
 qui nequit: hic niger est, hunc tu, Romane, caveto.

[The man who backbites an absent friend; who fails to defend him when another finds fault; the man who courts the loud laughter of others, and the reputation of a wit; who can invent what he never saw; who cannot keep a secret – that man is black of heart; of him beware, good Romans.³¹]

And Ovid says in *Amorum*

invidia quo properas? Quod erat tibi filius ater,
 materni fuerat pectoris ille color.

[O envious, whither dost thou haste? The son born to thee was Black, and that colour was the hue of his mother's heart.³²]

Christian literature later adopted this notion that black stands for evil. In the *Shepherd of Hermas* the angel of penitence points to twelve mountains of which the first is as black as soot. The narrator explains that the mountain is black because those from the black mountain are apostates and blasphemers against the Lord and betrayers of the servants of God. They are black because repentance is not open to them, but instead death lies before them.³³

Origen says in *Canticum Canticorum*:

But, if you do not likewise practise penitence, take heed lest your soul be described as black and ugly, and you be hideous with a double foulness - black by reason of your past sins and ugly because you are continuing in the same vices.³⁴

The examples from pagan and Christian writers of Antiquity show that the black colour serves to characterise the berserks as utterly evil and malicious. The berserks are not only described as being black, they are *blærr sem hel* (as black as hell).



What connection exists between black and *hel*, the underworld? Antiquity thought of black as the colour of death and of the realm of death. The hour of death was ‘the black hour’.³⁵ The gods of the underworld are black. Pluto, the lord of the underworld and of demons is black. He is the Zeus of the underworld,³⁶ and in contrast to the Olympian Zeus, the Jupiter of heaven, Pluto was called ‘the black Jupiter’. According to Greek popular belief Pluto, the black Zeus, the leader of the black demons, is the evil god. As the evil and black one he became an analogue to the Christian devil.³⁷

Most revealing for the transformation of the black Jupiter into ‘the Evil One’ = ‘the Black One’ i. e. Satan are *The Acts of St. Juliana*. The devil, who assumes the form of an angel, appears to the saint when the latter is in prison. Upon his appearance Juliana makes the sign of the cross and commands Satan to reveal himself. He does so with the words: ‘*Ego sum Belial daemon quem aliqui Jopher Nigrum vocant*’.³⁸ (I am the demon Belial whom some call the black Jupiter).³⁹ To an audience acquainted with the use of black in a transferred moral sense and from there to the devil, the author of all iniquity, it is obvious that the narrator intends to transmit the notion that the berserks Falur and Sóti are not merely evil men. They acquire supernatural connotations, and become fiends from hell. Another signal which points to the berserks’ more than human nature is their extraordinary strength and size which separate them from ordinary human beings. That they are outside human society finds further expression in their isolated island habitat. The berserks display demonic qualities. The antagonism between the world of monsters and man is annulled by the berserks’ shape-changing qualities, which give them access to regions beyond the human world. They possess the ability to draw the animal nature within themselves and achieve oneness with the beast like the devil who is also frequently depicted as a beast.

I mentioned above that through a closer relationship with Norway a medieval Christian time-spirit akin with that in other European countries was strengthened aiding the idea of a national monarchy propagated in the numerous treatises on the perfect prince. I also stressed that the condemnation of the love of wealth for its own sake is one of the central themes in those treatises on the perfect ruler. Another important theme is humility. John of Salisbury, Gilbert of Tournai⁴⁰ and William Perrault⁴¹ consider humility to be one of the most essential qualities in a prince. According to John of Salisbury the government of a prince does not endure without humility.⁴²



In the *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* the theme of humility is introduced by the warrior Öundur, the great sea king, who had cleansed the land of marauding Vikings. When Öundur, mortally wounded, sinks down defeated, he condemns vainglory, which he sees as the actual cause of their fall:

Eingi skýllde taka sic
 framan vr máta nie treysta sier leingur enn
 heimurenn ok hamingian duga. þviat so þottumzt
 vit brædr bera af hverium manni sem gull af
 blýe eda apalldr af grene hofvm.....
 enn nu hofvm
 vit fundit þa .ij. er bæde ero meire ok mátkari.
 [No one should take himself
 beyond strength nor trust himself further than
 the world and fate suffice. Because it seemed to us
 that we brothers might be superior to every man like gold
 to lead or an apple tree to a pine tree,....and now have
 we found there two who are both greater and mightier.]⁴³

The theme of humility is re-introduced by the wise counsellor Kádor. Impressed by the defeat of Randver and Öundur, Viktor's followers affirm that there is no one who would dare to fight him and Blávus. Overhearing this Kádor utters the cautionary words: '*Fátt so ágætt at eigi fiengizt annat slikt*'.⁴⁴ (Little (is) so excellent that there may not be obtained another like it). And when Viktor insists on finding those warriors who are a match for him, Kádor warns that more 'than overbearing and pride' is needed to defeat them (*finnast munv þeir sagdi Kador at þit fóstbrædr munid meira vit þurfa enn dreiz ok dvl*).⁴⁵ Viktor's exaltation in strength and fighting skill is seen as going hand in hand with growing pride. We may see in this a parallel to Grettir. After his return to Iceland, Grettir's exaltation in his own excessive strength is repeatedly emphasised in relation with his growing pride. As soon as Grettir comes home to Bjarg, the narrator says of him:

Þá gerðisk ofsi Grettis svá mikill, at honum þótti sér ekki ófært.⁴⁶
 [By this time Grettir's pride had grown so great that nothing
 seemed to him beyond his powers.]



Another parallel to Viktor's pride and the importance of embracing humility is found in *Parcevals saga*. Once Parceval masters humility this sets the rest of the world right for him. He marries Blankiflúr and becomes a powerful ruler over all of her kingdom, so powerful and victorious that he never fights a knight without winning.⁴⁷

The *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* is like *Parcevals saga* concerned with the protagonist's finding of his own true self. For medieval men the way towards one's own true self leads through humility. Heroic exploits and feats are accomplished by intelligence and strength, which unlike humility are innate traits. Humility is an acquired characteristic. To learn true humility Viktor has to encounter Fulgida.

The maiden king episode introduces the motif of loss of one's self, which finds metaphoric expression in the episode in which Fulgida thrusts at Viktor with her hands and pushes him off the magic carpet so that he is on the verge of bodily injury or death (*stingr hon vit honum hondunvm, ok hrindr so. Wiktor út af klæðinv at honum er buit vit meidzlvv eda bana...*).⁴⁸

An effective device in leading Viktor to the brink of existence and thus enabling him to find his own true self is the magic potion offered by Fulgida. As soon as Viktor has drunk the potion and fallen in a deep slumber, the haughty maiden ridicules and humiliates Viktor. Ridicule and humiliation find powerful expression when Fulgida cuts off Viktor's hair and has him tarred (*...reka af honum hár allt ok bera j tiorv*).⁴⁹ She rejects, abuses and mistreats the suitor who is infatuated with her and determined to marry her. She has Viktor flogged until all the skin is off his body (*liet hun hýda hann med vondum ok svipum þar til at oll hud var af hans likama*),⁵⁰ and then she has him born out into a forest.

At that instant Viktor is akin to Íven and Nebuchadnezzar. At the moment Íven takes the step into the wilderness, he initiates a confrontation with death. He is plunged into madness and turns into a beastlike creature.⁵¹ Nebuchadnezzar, after having been driven from his kingdom and cast out from among men, dwells with wild beasts and eats grass like an ox.⁵² All three men having become unaware of their identity are ready to find their true selves. Bernard of Clairvaux preaching on becoming aware of one's self and taking the Song of Songs I. 7 as a point of departure states that to become aware of his own true self, man has to become like a senseless beast.⁵³ The senseless beast is a metaphor for true humility.



The *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* portrays the journey through life as a series of heroic encounters. Each encounter can be seen as a search for Viktor's true self, and each encounter leads him nearer to his goal. Most decisive in the search for his own true self is Viktor's encounter with Fulgida and the experience of humility through her.

The *Saga af Viktor ok Blávus* upholds secular values of self-determination and worldly success and incorporates Christian impulses from hagiography. We may say that the saga absorbs Christian values into a value system distinct from that of medieval Christianity and strives to achieve a mutually supportive union of religious and secular material. Having said this, I wish to recall that in the first part of the prologue to the *Strengleikar* the translator subordinates all concerns to the acquisition of the kingdom of God. Medieval man considers everything in relation to eternity. Eternity attributes meaning to life, and eternity means God and His realm. This is why the middle and end of the saga are permeated by the medieval notion of humility.

NOTES

¹ *Hakoni Magnussýne* is Hákon V (1299-1319), See Leach, 1921: 59.

² Chappel, 1972: chapter 1(v), lines 3-6.

³ Chappel, 1972: chapter 1(v), lines 6-8.

⁴ Barnes, 1975: 145.

⁵ Cook and Tveitane, 1979: 4-5.

⁶ Gunnar Karlsson, 2000: 82.

⁷ Gjerset, 1922: 227.

⁸ Gunnar Karlsson, 2000: 86.

⁹ Gjerset, 1922: 203.

¹⁰ In Hebrew narratives men of exceptional stature and endowment use unconventional means of transportation. Abraham was transported on Gabriel's shoulder from Ur to Babylon in the twinkling of an eye. See *Abraham und Nimrod*, (Jellinek, Bet ha-Midrash 1) in Wünsche, 1907: 20.



¹¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson points out that the immediate source of the flying carpet in *Viktor's saga* is the *Gesta romanorum*, a Latin collection of tales widely popular in the Middle Ages. He makes specific reference to a medieval Icelandic translation of one of the tales known as *Jónatas ævintýr* which is preserved in AM 123, 8vo. However, the episode with the cloth reflects the scene when Fulgida steals the precious rug from Viktor and escapes back home, and not the scene in which Blávus appears mounted on a white horse on the centre of the rug. See 'Viktor's saga ok Blávus: Sources and Characteristics' in Jónas Kristjánsson, 1964: CXLV-CXLVIII. The motif of the cloth reappears in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, but there the king's daughters escape from the giants on a cloth. Among other sagas Lagerholm lists the *Saga af Sigrgarði frækna*. The episode reflects, however, the scene of Fulgida and Viktor on the flying carpet. See Lagerholm, 1927: Kap. XV, 1 and footnote, Kap. XV, both 68-69.

¹² *Salomom und die Ameise*, (Jellinek, Bet ha-Midrasch V) in Wünsche, 1907 (vol. 2): 1 and 8.

¹³ Olam, 1996: 154-55.

¹⁴ Olam, 1996: 121-122.

¹⁵ Chappel, 1972: chapter 4(r), lines 7-11.

¹⁶ Olam, 1996: 137-138.

¹⁷ Dickinson, 1963: *Policraticus* IV, 5.

¹⁸ Poorter, 1914: vol. IX., i,2,4. Cited by Kruger Born, 1928: 479. I am greatly indebted to this article.

¹⁹ Chappel, 1972: chapter 16(v), lines 22-24.

²⁰ Chappel, 1972: chapter 20(v), lines 16-17.

²¹ *Ad Opera Sancti Ambrosii Appendix*, (Paris: Migne, 1879), PL 17, chap. 2, lines 6-7.

²² *Marthe Saga ok Marie Magdalene* in Unger, 1977: 530, chapter 9, lines 16-17.

²³ Chappel, 1972: chapter 21(r), lines 9-16.

²⁴ Chappel, 1972: chapter 6(r), lines 8-9.

²⁵ Chappel, 1972: chapter 6(r), lines 21-23.



²⁶ Gjerset, 1922: 228 and 233.

²⁷ Boyesen, 1900: 430.

²⁸ Chappel, 1972: chapter 15(v), line 3.

²⁹ Chappel, 1972: chapter 14(v), lines 9-10.

³⁰ Chappel, 1972: chapter 14(v), lines 19-20. The basic significance of *blár* is 'dark blue' or 'livid'. The translation of *blár* as 'black' with relation to the berserks is, however, justified because the berserks are described as being *blár sem hel* which corresponds to the English expression 'black as death'. See Cleasby, 1957: 68. *Blár* is also the colour of morning: *falda blá* or *svörtu*, 'to hood the head in black', 'to mourn', *Ǫsl.* ii, 351. See Cleasby, 1957: 189. Johann Fritzner refers to the expression *blár sem kol*, 'black as coal'. See Fritzner, 1886: 151. *Blár* is, moreover, derived from the verb *blána*, *að* which means 'to become black', 'livid'. It is used with this significance in *Heimskringla* I, 103 of a plague-stricken corpse. See Cleasby, 1957: 68. As the compound adjective *blá-fjallaðr* 'blue-black' it is used as an epithet for the raven. See Cleasby, 1957: 67. It is related to *blá-maðr* 'a black man, Negro, i. e. an Ethiopian' and to the adjective *blá-lenzkr*, 'Ethiopian', from *Bláland*, 'Ethiopia, Nigrita, and North-west Africa in general'. See Cleasby, 1957: 67.

³¹ Horace, 1966: lib. I, sat IV, 81-84.

³² Ovid, 1973: *Amores* I. 13, 33-34.

³³ *The Pastor of Hermas*, Book III: Similitudes, chap. XIX.

³⁴ Origen, 1957: chapter 1, 276.

³⁵ *Mihi Persephone nigram denuntiat horam.* (I have warning from Persephone that the black hour is nigh). Tibullus, 1921: *Tibullus*, lib. III. 5,5.

³⁶ Homer, *Iliad*: Book IX. 457.

³⁷ Origen, 1953: Book VI, chapter 42.

³⁸ Act. SS. February II, 873-77.

³⁹ For a detailed study of the relation of the colour black with the devil see Franz Josef Dölger, 1971: 49-83. I am greatly indebted to this work.



- ⁴⁰ Poorter, 1914: I,2,9, cited by Lester Kruger Born, 1928: 479.
- ⁴¹ Perrault, 1852-71: XVI (1864), opus c, XXXVII, 390-476. On humility iii, 7-9; v, 31. Cited by Lester Kruger Born, 1928: 485.
- ⁴² Dickinson, 1963: *Policraticus IV*, 7.
- ⁴³ Chappel, 1972: chapters 13(r) and 13(v), lines 18-24 and line 1.
- ⁴⁴ Chappel, 1972: chapter 14(r), lines 22-23.
- ⁴⁵ Chappel, 1972: chapter 14(v), lines 2-4.
- ⁴⁶ Guðni Jónsson, MCMXXXVI: chapter 28, lines 6-7.
- ⁴⁷ *Parcivals saga* in Kalinke, 1999: 180 and 182.
- ⁴⁸ Chappel, 1972: chapter 21(r), lines 17-19.
- ⁴⁹ Chappel, 1972: chapter 19(v), lines 18-19.
- ⁵⁰ Chappel, 1972: chapter 19(v), lines 20-21.
- ⁵¹ *Ívens saga* in Kalinke, 1999: 69.
- ⁵² Daniel 4. 33.
- ⁵³ *Cantica*, numbers 34 and 35.

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