A note on Lilja

Peter Foote

Scholars have marvelled at the Veltalenhed of Eysteinn's Lilia at the same time as they have resigned themselves to the commonplace nature of his matter1). They have been able to adduce few specific sources. In his edition of 1870 Eiríkr Magnússon referred especially to the Elucidarius, but Paasche in 1915 pointed out that, although one can explain Eysteinn's theology with the aid of such a work, one must be cautious in fixing on precise texts as his models²) »Bare en og annen gang har Lilja klanger som tydelig og klart synes å komme fra bestemte norrøne prosaskrifter « He cited a sentence in Stjórn (hann ugdi at hon mundi stygguaz uidr), adopted (with its ready-made skothending) in Lilja 18/5 (Ugði hann, at Éva stygðiz); and Latin lines by Peter Comestor quoted in the collection of legends of the Blessed Virgin in the fifteenth-century Stock. perg. 4:0 nr 1, of which Lilja 93-4 are strongly reminiscent³). He also found similarities between Lilia and Michaels saga and Niorstigningar saga, but no verbal correspondences, and kinship between the opening of Lilja and lines by Hildebert of Lavardin⁴). Paasche expressed himself rather more firmly in 1924 - »Eystein har arbeidet med kilder I jærtegnsboken fant han et latinsk dikt av Petrus Comestor Eystein omsatte diktet.« He added to his list of sources a passage on Satan's perturbation at Christ's birth found in the Maríu saga codex mentioned above⁵). In the same year Henrik Cornell suggested that Eysteinn had received »viktiga impulser« from the Speculum humanae salvationis by Ludolf of Saxony (died 1378), Dominican turned Carthusian, in which particular Marian motifs occur that are also found in Lilia6). There was then a long lull. In 1969 Thomas D. Hill published a short paper on »Eve's light answer«, Lilja 16/7—8 (to which I return below), but he was more occupied with explaining the passage by reference to medieval exegesis than finding a specific source7). The most recent and most comprehensive study was published by Hans Schottmann in 19738). He puts Lilja alongside a variety of other poems that deal with the history of salvation and notes a number of similarities. In his review of possible and probable sources he sensibly remarks that the formal requirements of the hrynhend drapa and the »Bruchlosigkeit« of the poem make it unlikely that Eysteinn would (or could?) follow any source for long. He cites some further phrases in the poem that seem to echo Stjórn, but sees no reason to believe that it was necessarily in a Maríu saga text that Eysteinn met Peter Comestor's poem. He finds the likeness with Hildebert not distinctive enough to be valid and is less certain of the significance of the other similarities adduced by Paasche. He thinks Cornell's proposal dubious, partly because the Marian motifs are not as rare as Cornell believed, and partly because the date of the Speculum in the form supposedly known to Eysteinn is uncomfortably close to the date of Lilja9). Schottmann provides a valuable extension of our knowledge of Evsteinn's general »background« but one can only agree with him when he concludes that his discussion does little more than demonstrate how firmly anchored Eysteinn was in the Latin tradition. And he adds, »Auch wo direkte Vorlagen sicher oder wahrscheinlich sind, gestatten sie keine geistesgeschichtlichen Schlüsse«10).

Schottmann also analyses more fully and more technically than any other commentator the rhetorical figures which in Eysteinn's poem replace the kennings of the native scaldic tradition, and discusses the Latin influence to be seen in stanza construction and metrical devices. This all tends to demonstrate Eysteinn's »Vertrautheit mit der lateinischen Dichtung«, a familiarity previously posited by Paasche and Erik Noreen and, most emphatically, by Paul Lehmann.¹¹)

This is the state of play and the difficulties of the game are obvious. It is to be hoped and expected that students will continue to collect and publish parallels but it is not given that they will

bring much light with them. I may, for example, remark that Lilja 20/1, on the result of the Fall, Remman brast af rôt i kvistu, is doubtless an echo of Gregory the Great on the same matter: Unde nunc quoque humani generis rami ex hac adhuc radice amaritudinem trahunt, but since few books were better known than the Moralia and this particular passage is quoted in commentaries on Genesis by Pseudo-Bede, Hrabanus, Angelomus of Luxeuil — and how many more? — we are not much better off as a result. 13) It is another matter if use of a specific source can be observed in Lilja — as, with greater boldness, I shall now propose is possible. And perhaps this mouse of information that has strayed into the amateur source-hunter's net will, if set free, lead us some way into the labyrinth of Eysteinn's eloquence, even far enough to catch a glimmer of a seistesgeschichtlicher Schluss« at the centre of it.

It is not a rare or recondite work that Eysteinn seems to have known — and that is as it should be. Of the half-dozen »preceptive« works on poetic composition made between about 1180 and 1280 Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria nova, written about 1210, has been declared »the most popular« and it survives in over 200 manuscripts. 14) In his poem of some 2100 lines Geoffrey teaches by precepts and illustrations, the former mostly derived from authority, the latter his own exercises. Among these are for example a complaint on the death of Richard I and a summary of the »snowchild« tale, but the notable ones for our purpose are a discourse on the fall and the redemption, and another which begins with papal responsibilities but moves on to the fall of Lucifer, the temptation and fall of Eve and Adam, and the redemption. As Schottmann remarks in passing, Geoffrey's exercises show just how popular the »Heilsgeschichte« was as a subject for poetic treatment. 15) Geoffrey's chief source was the Ad Herennium, the famous handbook of rhetoric that was generally but mistakenly attributed to Cicero. 16) The first of his discourses on the history of salvation exemplifies all the figures of diction covered in Ad Herennium IV 19-41 (and in strictly the same order); the second illustrates the figures of thought, again following the sequence of the definitions in Ad Herennium IV 47-69. Lines 1139-44 contain an illustration

of *subjectio*, »when we enquire of our adversaries, or ask ourselves, what the adversaries can say in their favour«, followed in lines 1144—53 by an example of *gradatio*, »the figure in which the speaker passes to the following word only after advancing by steps to the preceding one«.¹⁷) Thus:

- 1139 Serpens invidiae nostraeque propaginis hostis, Cur cruce damnasti Christum? Meruitne? Sed expers Omnis erat maculae. Corpus fantasma putasti?
- 1142 Sed veram carnem sumpsit de virgine. Purum Credebas hominem? Sed de virtute probavit Esse Deum....
- 1147 Hostis enim primus damnaverat Evam, Eva secunda virum, vir tertius omne quod ejus Stirpis erat, stirps quarta Deum, Deus ultimus hostem,
- 1150 Cui mors ipse fuit....¹⁸)

Compare Lilja 65-6619):

Hví stundaðir, enn forni fjandi	cf. 1139
fremdar-snauðr, á Jésú dauða?	—1140
eða þóttiz þú meiri at mætti,	
máttrinn hans að guðdóm váttar,	1143—4
eða hugðir þú líkams lygðir?	1141
líkam tók hann meyjar ríkrar,	1142
óverðugan hann flengdu fyrðar;	1140
flekklausastr hann vann til ekki.	1140—41
Pú fyrdæmdir auma Évam,	1147
Éva mann fyr epli bannat,	1148
maðr bansettur allar ættir,	1148—9
ættin Krist, er spjóti nisti,	1149
Kristus þik þó, er fant í fystu	1149
fystan prett ok manndráps lystir;	
svá ódygðar-brandrinn bjúgi	
beygðiz aptr í þína kjapta.	

Here we have a version of the lines from the Poetria nova in a transfer that is sometimes more or less verbatim, sometimes more

remote.²⁰) As in Geoffrey, following the Ad Herennium sequence, subjectio is immediately followed by gradatio. The same order is naturally found in other artes,²¹) but the subject-matter here is selected by Geoffrey himself. Of course, a gradatio is explicit in the Genesis story — the serpent tempted Eve and Eve Adam, Adam blamed Eve and Eve the serpent — and the steps are variously applied in exegesis, but their extension in Geoffrey's stylish manner is not at any rate a commonplace. Altogether, and especially taking the difference in verse technique into account, the similarity of Lilja to the Poetria nova must be judged extraordinary.

With this ringing in one's ears, one soon begins to fancy other echoes — but they are elusive and none has quite the same distinctive note as in the passage just cited. We can however set *Lilja* 15—18 beside lines 1459—77 of the *Poetria nova*.²²)

2459 Quibus auctor eorum:

«Omne genus ligni gustate; bonique, malique
Notitiae lignum ne tangite.« Subdidit autem

1462 Causam, ne gustu morerentur morte. Quid iste? Vidit eos, at ad hoc formatos ut repararent Angelicum numerum qui corruit et fruerentur

Deliciis illis quas perdidit angelus. Inde, Quid faceret versans, serpentis imagine sumpta, Rectus et erectus veniens clam venit ad Evam,

1468 Affari non ausus Adam: »Cur, inquit, ab esu Praefati ligni prohiberis?« Subdidit illa: »Hoc ideo ne forte per hoc moriamur.« Ad illud

3471 »Forte« minus fortem credentem vidit; et inde Fortior his illam vicit: »Non sic, ait, immo Vescere, sicque sciens potes esse bonique malique,

1474 Sicut dii.« Tumefecit eam spes irrita tanti Polliciti; vetitum gustavit; idemque maritus, Ne turbaret eam, quamvis sit conscius, egit.

1477 Ille fuit primus error.

Prútnar, svellr ok unir við illa engill, bann sá er hafði fengit, fyrða sveitin fædd á jorðu, fái þar vist, er sjálfr hann misti, ok bruggandi dauðans dreggjar duldiz hann fyr augsýn manna; fjolkunnigr í einum innan ormi tók hann mál at forma.

Sem próvandi segir til Évu:
»svara mér skjótt, en hví hefir dróttinn
sætast ykkur blóm at bíta
bannat, en lofat þó flest alt annat?«
Svá fór þat, at svaraði Éva
sem margbrugðinn fjandinn hugði:
»At eigi við lífs af leiðum
léttliga hropum á dauðans stéttir.«

Léttliga fann þar ljósa váttan léttleika í svaranna reiki; því treystiz hann framt at freista flærðum settr ok talar með prettum: »eigi munuð it Ádám deyja andlits-hvít, þóat eplit bítið, heldr munuð með heiðr ok valdi hosk ok rík við guðdóm líkjaz.«

Auðgint mjok því Éva trúði, át hon blóm, en tapaði sóma, og til með sér Ádám teygði, át hann þat, er hann vissi bannat, ugði hann, at Éva stygðiz, ef neitaði hann bæn at veita; fjandinn gat svá í fystu blindat feðgin vár með nógu dári.

The earlier demonstration would favour counting the numerous similarities here as specific reminiscences, but since the matter is so familiar and so quickly told, it could not guarantee the connection. It is however particularly tempting to see the influence of Geoffrey's stylistically distinctive word-play in lines 1470—72:

»Hoc ideo ne forte per hoc moriamur.« Ad illud »Forte« minus fortem credentem vidit; et inde Fortior his illam vicit

on Eysteinn's equally ingenious adnominatio in Lilja 16/7—8, 17/1—2:

»At eigi við lífs af leiðum léttliga hropum á dauðans stéttir.«

Léttliga fann þar ljósa váttan léttleika í svaranna reiki.

As recognised by Fritzner and Schottmann, but by hardly anybody else, the word *léttliga* in 16/8 translates *forte* and is a calque on MHG *lihte*, cf. modern (*viel*) *leicht* (*ne forte* = *eigi* *léttliga*).²³) In 17/1 the word has its usual sense of »easily« and answers to nothing in Geoffrey, while in 17/2 *léttleiki* refers to Eve's »Letsindighed, Mangel paa Alvor«²⁴) and could be set against Geoffrey's *minus fortem credentem*. (The word *framt* 17/3 can be equated with *fortior* in line 1472, though the pun is not maintained by it.)

Of course in an age of florilegia, schoolmasters' dictation and pupils' repetition, Eysteinn might have come to know Geoffrey's poem only in fragments and only at some distant remove. But in many ways it makes sense to think he was brought up on the Poetria nova and all it typified in early fourteenth-century education. First, there is the known popularity of Geoffrey's work. Second, there is the acknowledged easy mastery of Eysteinn's rhetoric. The style is »måske noget udvendigt retorisk«, Jón Helgason has said, 25) but that perhaps expresses a modern and not a medieval misgiving, and present-day students of medieval rhetoric tend to stress that the influence of a book like Geoffrey's was pervasive, the result rather of assimilation and long schooling than of sporadic encounter and incidental imitation.²⁶) Whether Eysteinn knew the Poetria nova entire or in extracts, the connection confirms what we should expect on general grounds, namely that his »Vertrautheit mit der lateinischen Dichtung« (other than liturgical) was gained from manuals, excerpts and exercises and not from leisurely discoveries in a library of classics. Third, there is Eysteinn's famous rejection, in theory and almost entirely in practice, of the kennings and *heiti* of traditional scaldic verse. This is in keeping with Geoffrey's injunctions. After discussing the tropes, the stylistic elements pertaining to »difficult ornament« which may be said to resemble scaldic usages most closely, he adds in a passage that appears essentially his own,²⁷) i. a.

- 1074 Si qua feras igitur peregrina vel abdita verba, Quid possis ex hoc ostendis jusque loquendi Non attendis. Ab hac macula se retrahat error
- 1077 Oris et obscuris oppone repagula verbis. Utere consilio; licet omnia noveris, unus Major in hoc aliis: in verbis sis tamen unus
- 1080 Ex aliis; nec sis elati, sed socialis Eloquii. Veterum clamat doctrina: loquaris Ut plures, sapias ut pauci.

Fourth, we may recall established rhetorical influence on Norse poetic composition, evident already in the twelfth-century Háttalykill;28) Icelandic interest in analysis of scaldic style with the aid of Latin classifications, in the Málskrúðsfræði by Óláfr hvítaskáld, for example, and in the Fourth Grammatical Treatise by a contemporary of Eysteinn's;29) Norwegian familiarity with the precepts of artes dictandi, well documented in vernacular sources of the fourteenth century, and, to go further afield, but not much, assured evidence of the use of Geoffrey's Poetria by Magister Matthias of Linköping about 1320.30) Studies in grammar, rhetoric and dictamen overlapped and intertwined. Bjarne Berulfsen plausibly suggested that Eysteinn might have been close to the circle of highranking clerics who effectively made one class in Norway and Iceland in the first half of the fourteenth century, men whose learning and literacy were of international scope and standard.31) We need only remind ourselves of the names of Arni Sigurdsson (†1314), Auðfinnr Sigurðsson (†1320) and Hákon Erlingsson (†1342), bishops of Bergen, Árni Helgason (†1320) and Jón Halldórsson (†1339), bishops of Skálholt, Laurentius Kálfsson (†1331), bishop of Hólar,

Páll Bárðarson (†1346), archbishop of Nidaros — not forgetting their senior, Bishop Erlendr of Kirkjubøur (†1308), sometime canon and scholasticus of the cathedral church of Bergen.³²) Acquaintance with the *Poetria nova* in such a milieu would not be surprising, no more so than the typically Icelandic way in which Eysteinn maintains his vernacular independence.³³)

Eysteinn successfully adopts claritas as his poetic programme. Can we now see clearer than before the pressures that moved him? Churchmen periodically react against language and style that seem to obscure the Christian message, and Eysteinn in his way could echo St Augustine's melius est reprehendant nos grammatici, quam non intellegant populi.34) He could also point to the respectable stylistic recommendations of a modern, not to say fashionable, authority on rhetoric like Geoffrey of Vinsauf. There is a third factor to consider. It is noteworthy that this new plain style only established itself in religious verse in Iceland. Scaldic diction was so vigorous there that Eysteinn is constrained to give a something more than perfunctory salute to the tradition he is deserting, and in other kinds of poetry it continued to flourish. It would be hard to argue that there was any technical need for the new simplicity, whatever the subject-matter, in poetry made for Icelandic audiences. It seems reasonable to believe however that Eysteinn wished his poem to be appreciated by Norwegians as well as Icelanders; and that in achieving his stil novo, Eysteinn was not only meeting the theoretical demands of the preacher and the rhetorician, he was also meeting the practical demands of his Norwegian brother clerics who were no longer at home in the scaldic tradition and understandably impatient of hulin fornyrði. Should we perhaps begin to speculate on the influence of Elgeseter on the history of Icelandic poetry?

There is a flicker of Geistesgeschichte here; but little flames can throw big shadows, and distort them. Someone may soon catch a mouse big enough to swallow my mouse, and it will be some time yet before we trace all possible routes in the volundarhús of Eysteinn's Veltalenhed. It remains a marvellous maze from which none of us is fúss í brott.

NOTES

1) Eysteinn Asgrímsson. Lilja. Finnur Jónsson bjó til prentunar (1913), v; Finnur Jónsson, Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie (1920—24), III, 11—12; Arne Møller. Islands Lovsang gennem tusind Aar (1923), 37—41; Erik Noreen, Den norsk-isländska poesien (1926), 296—8; F. Paasche, Norges og Islands litteratur inntil utgangen av middelalderen² (1957), 534; Jón Helgason, Norrøn litteraturhistorie (1934), 219.

2) Lilja ... edited ... by Eirikr Magnusson (1870), xlv; Lilja. Et kvad til guds moder (1915), in F. Paasche, Hedenskap og kristendom (1948), 234—5.

3) Stjórn...udgivet af C. R. Unger (1862), 38; Mariu saga. Legender...udgivne af C. R. Unger (1871), 686.

4) Hedenskap og kristendom, 232-8.

5) Norges og Islands litteratur, 535; Mariu saga, 479.

⁹) Edda 21 (1924), 140-44; cf. Björn Th. Björnsson, İslenzka teiknibókin ... (1954), 148-50.

7) Mediaeval Scandinavia 2 (1969), 129-31.

8) Die isländische Mariendichtung (Münchner Germanistische Beiträge 9, 1973), 138-45, 192-204.

³) Die isländische Mariendichtung, 204. On his assessment of the relationship between Lilja and Arngrímr's Guðmundar drápa, Schottmann dates Lilja to 1344/5. Not everyone will accept the priority of Lilja, however, and it is safer to allow a wider margin, c. 1340—60; cf. Jakob Benediktsson in Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder (KL hereafter), X (1965), 557.

10) Die isländische Mariendichtung, 202.

11) Die isländische Mariendichtung, 240—46; Paasche, Norges og Islands litteratur, 534; Noreen, Den norsk-isländska poesien, 297; Paul Lehmann, Skandinaviens Anteil an der lateinischen Literatur und Wissenschaft des Mittelalters.
 2. Stück (Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Jahrgang 1937, Heft 7), 56.

12) Moralium Libri xxv, XXII, xv, 31 (Patrologia latina 76, 231).

¹³) Cf. the wise remarks on the search for sources and parallels offered by James W. Marchand in *Modern Language Notes* 91 (1976), 505, supported by Hans Bekker-Nielsen, *Sjötíu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni* (1977), 97—9.

14) Ernest Gallo in Medieval Eloquence...edited by James J. Murphy (1978), 68. Geoffrey is edited in E. Faral, Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle (1924, reprinted 1971), and in Ernest Gallo, The Poetria Nova and its sources in early rhetorical doctrine (De proprietatibus litterarum... Series maior 10, 1971). Gallo gives a translation into English; and there are other recent translations available.

15) Die isländische Mariendichtung, 144.

¹⁶) Ad C. Herennium de ratione dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium) with an English translation by Harry Caplan (1954 and reprinted).

17) Ad C. Herennium, 311, 315.

- ¹⁸) Quoted from Faral, Les arts poétiques, but with hostis in line 1139 from Gallo, The Poetria Nova, following W. B. Sedgwick, Speculum 2 (1927), 338. Gallo's line numbers here are 1144—9, 1152—5.
- ¹⁹) Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* (1912—15), B II, 390—416; commentators have made no suggestions for major improvement in any of the stanzas quoted here, but a proper critical edition of *Lilja* is badly needed.
- ²⁰) In six lines, 1153—8, Geoffrey then moves rapidly on through definitio, transitio and correctio to occupatio, 1159—62:

Unde — sed ut notum pertranseo — regula juris

Dixerat, ut, sicut hominem fallaciter hostis

Mortificavit, ea forma subtiliter hostem

Mortificaret homo, captum deitatis ab hamo.

This is a commonplace but the juxtaposition may have influenced the introduction of the very well-known hamus motif in Lilja 66/7—8 (cf. Paasche, Hedenskap og kristendom, 233—4; James W. Marchand, Scandinavian Studies 47 (1975), 328—33); and the allusion in 66/6 may echo sicut hominem fallaciter hostis mortificavit.

21) Cf. the table given by Faral, Les arts poétiques, 52.

- ²²) Gallo, *The Poetria Nova*, lines 1464—82, from whom the punctuation in 1460 and *ne* in 1461 are adopted (*ne* following W. B. Sedgwick, *Speculum* 2, 1927, 339).
- ²³) J. Fritzner, Ordbog over det gamle Norske Sprog (1883—96), II 490—91, s. v. (5); Die isländische Mariendichtung, 199; the same construction in the same passage in Stjórn, 35: lettliga fyrir pa sauk at mit dæim eigi par af. Finnur Jónsson does not give this gloss in Lexicon Poeticum, and in Skjaldedigtning, loc. cit., translates »for at vi ikke let fra livets veje skal styrte ned til dødens stier«. Thomas D. Hill would perhaps not have bothered to write his article (see note 7 above) if he had not allowed Finnur to mislead him.
 - ²⁴) Fritzner, s. v.
 - 25) Nordisk Kultur VIII:B (1953), 161.
- ²⁶) Cf. general remarks by W. B. Sedgwick, *Speculum* 3 (1928), 381; Margaret Nims, *Poetria Nova*...(1967), 9—10; James J. Murphy, *Medieval Eloquence* (1978), xii.
- ²⁷) Gallo, The Poetria Nova, lines 1079-87; he compares only Horace, Ars poetica, 128 (difficile est proprie communia dicere).
- ²⁸) Anne Holtsmark in Jón Helgason and Anne Holtsmark, Háttalykill enn forni (Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana I, 1941), 118—34.
- ²⁹) Cf. e. g. Anne Holtsmark in KL V (1960), 414—9; E. F. Halvorsen in KL XIV (1969), 89—95.
- 30) See especially Bjarne Berulfsen, Kulturtradisjon fra en storhetstid (1948); S. Sawicki, Samlaren N. F. 17 (1936), 121-3.

- 81) Kulturtradisjon, 131; and generally 47-133.
- 32) Færøske folkesagn og æventyr udgivne ... ved Jakob Jakobsen (1898—1901), xi—xiv.
 - 33) Cf. e. g. E. F. Halvorsen in KL XIV (1969), 94.
- ³⁴) Cf. Pierre Riché, Éducation et culture dans l'occident barbare (Patristica Sorbonensia 4, 1962), 126—34. Avrelii Avgustini Opera, Pars X, 3 (Corpvs Christianorvm. Series Latina XL, 1956), 2004.

ÚRTAK

Í hesi grein verður roynt at vísa á, at summi ørindi í Lilju eru týdd úr Nova Poetria. Tað er viðgitin yrking á latíni eftir Geoffrey de Vinsauf, sum var sera væl umtókt sum lærubók í talukynstri. Eysteinn Liljuskald havnaði gomlum lærusetningum um skaldskaparmál, og tað kann vera, at eisini í tí eru at finna árin frá Geoffrey. Tó eigur annað at vera havt í huga, og tað er, at Eysteinn hevur viljað latið vera at nýta »hulin fornyrði« til tess at lætta um hjá útlendingum, helst norðmonnum, ið lýddu á kvæðið.