



# Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland

*William Ian Miller*

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Dubbed by the *New York Times* as "one of the most sought-after legal academics in the country," William Ian Miller presents the arcane worlds of the Old Norse studies in a way sure to attract the interest of a wide range of readers. *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* delves beneath the chaos and brutality of the Norse world to discover a complex interplay of ordering and disordering impulses. Miller's unique and engaging readings of ancient Iceland's sagas and extensive legal code reconstruct and illuminate the society that produced them.

People in the saga world negotiated a maze of violent possibility, with strategies that frequently put life and limb in the balance. But there was a paradox in striking the balance—one could not get even without going one better. Miller shows how blood vengeance, law, and peacemaking were inextricably bound together in the feuding process.

This book offers fascinating insights into the politics of a stateless society, its methods of social control, and the role that a uniquely sophisticated and self-conscious law played in the construction of Icelandic society.

"Illuminating."—Rory McTurk, *Times Literary Supplement*

"An impressive achievement in ethnohistory; it is an amalgam of historical research with legal and anthropological interpretation. What is more, and rarer, is that it is a pleasure to read due to the inclusion of narrative case material from the sagas themselves."—Dan Bauer, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*



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