

## 'Why is your axe bloody?': A Reading of Njals Saga

William Ian Miller

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*Njals saga*, the greatest of the sagas of the Icelanders, was written around 1280. It tells the story of a complex feud that starts innocently enough--in a tiff over seating arrangement at a local feast--and expands over the course of 20 years to engulf half the country, in which both sides are effectively exterminated, Njal and his family burned to death in their farmhouse, the other faction picked off over the entire course of the feud. Law and feud feature centrally in the saga, Njal, its hero, being the greatest lawyer of his generation. No reading of the saga can do it justice unless it takes its law, its feuding strategies, as well as the author's stunning manipulation and saga conventions. In *'Why is Your Axe Bloody?'* W.I. Miller offers a lively, entertaining, and completely orignal personal reading of this lengthy saga.



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